**Select Board Meeting Minutes August 11, 2025 Zoom Teleconference 5:30 pm**

**Call to Order**: Rick LaPierre called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. Others present: Selectboard members Andrew Baker and Rod McBride and Town Administrator Terry Narkewicz.

A motion was put forth by Rod to approve the minutes of July 28. This was seconded by Andrew. Roll call vote: Rod – yes; Andrew – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

A motion was made by Andrew, seconded by Rod, to approve the minutes of August 7. Roll call vote: Rod – yes; Andrew – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**Department Liaison Reports:**

**Police Department** – The search for an administrative assistant has been narrowed down from more than 20 applicants to five or six. Preliminary interviews will narrow that number further.

**Police Advisory Committee –** The committee has not met.

**FRTA** – The next meeting will be September 18.

**Tree Warden** ­– Progress is being made on establishing a wood bank.

**Highway Department** – New employee, Seth Girard, is being trained and is fitting in well. Grading of dirt roads has been completed, with 1,100 tons of gravel being spread. A Conservation Commission hearing is coming up for drainage on Carpenter Road. The crew is doing weed-whacking since the roadside mower is down for repairs. The pothole deck has been repaired. Crosswalks and parking spaces have been re-striped. The two new trucks, approved at Town Meeting, are expected to be delivered by the end of September.

**Arms Library** – Andrew, representing the Selectboard, and Jim Burnham, representing the Finance Committee, met with Arms Library people to discuss how to develop a memorandum of understanding between Shelburne, Buckland, the Arms Library Association, and the Pratt Committee.

**Memorial Hall** – Andrew said that the painting has been completed. The next step is to refinish the floors. The new chairs will be arriving in mid-September.

**Pothole Deck** – Andrew has sent an inquiry to the Community Preservation Committee about funding a new deck.

**Town Hall** – Terry said that the draft report of the FY’24 audit had eight observations, none of them were serious.

The Hampshire County Group Insurance Trust needs another 20% increase in addition to the 20% increase already assessed. The new increase is due to high claims and the increasing use of weight loss drugs. The town treasurer estimates that another $53,691 will be needed to pay the increased costs. Terry said the town typically has a balance left in that account and can wait a while to see how it goes, but a deficit will appear by the end of the fiscal year. In the meantime, FRCOG is investigating other insurance options.

**Appointments:**

**5:45 pm Eversource Pole Hearing RE: Installation of new pole 6/B16M due to Bridge Replacement** – The hearing was opened at 5:45 pm. In attendance Peter Bednarz from Eversource and several abutters. The new pole will be an additional pole due to the bridge replacement. It will be located on the west side of Bardwells Ferry Road, about five feet from the edge of the pavement. Terry Caldwell said the pole would be on her property. It is expected the installation will take place in three or four weeks. Highway Superintendent Jeff Johnston asked for a few day’s notice since the road is part of a bus route and the bus company will need notification. Sue Bishop asked, and was told, that the bridge will be closed to all traffic during the pole installation. The hearing was closed at 5:53 pm.

A motion was made by Andrew, seconded by Rod, to approve the installation of a new pole on Bardwells Ferry Road, as described. Roll call vote: Rod – yes; Rick – yes; Andrew – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**6:00 pm Nathan Moreau, MEMA & Tom Williams, EMD RE: Continuity of Operations Plan** – The plan, known as COOP, would clarify what happens to municipal functions in the case of emergencies or other disruptions. Nathan plans to give each department, board, and commission a one-page form which would include the location of each group, alternate locations, functions, order of secession, ad how to access central records and databases. The hope is to get this done in a couple of months. The form can be done by email or Nathan would be willing to have in-person meetings. The Selectboard was in support of the idea.

**6:15 pm Jeff Johnston, Highway Superintendent & Hill Cemetery Commission RE: Hill Cemetery Burials** (Joe Judd, Hill Cemetery Commission) – Jeff had requested that the Highway Department be removed from any obligation to open and close graves at the town-owned Hill Cemetery.This also includes measuring and locating plots and recording the locations. As the spaces in the cemetery fill up and space gets tighter it will soon be too tight for town equipment to maneuver and the town would need to rent an excavator. Rick thought the town could sub-contract in the future but might be obligated to attend to plots that have already been sold. Plot prices would need to be updated in the future. Joe said he was unaware that the highway department would need to rent a machine to do the work. Joe has been on the committee since 2019, before that time the situation with deeds to plots was poor. The oldest plots sold for $25, more recently the price was $300 with the idea that the digging would be taken care of by the town. The Selectboard felt the highway crew’s time could be better spent on tasks other than grave opening and closing. Snow and Sons would agree to open and close graves for $800, cremation $350, and green burial $1,025, Other options are paying the highway department to do the digging, or purchasing a small mini-loader for the department. Joe estimated that there could be as many as 50 unoccupied plots. He knew 19 had been sold since 2019. There is also an un-surveyed area in the front of the cemetery where there could be a lot more plots. Joe said he had no records in hand but knew that highway superintendents had maps with names of plot owners. It was felt that the town would be responsible for the 19 already sold plots, but for those yet unsold a legal opinion is probably needed. Andrew was concerned about the need for liability insurance. It was agreed that the cemetery commission would meet and come back with a recommendation and a proposed new contract for future deeds.

**Old Business:**

**Pocket Park – Landscaping Proposals –** Terry, Andrew and Rod met with Earth Moving Solutions, the successful bidder. Earth Moving Solutions is proposing to start the work after Labor Day and expect it to be done in about two weeks. The group will meet again in a few weeks to lay out the plan before the actual digging begins.

**Buildings, Facilities & Grounds Position –** So far only one person has been interviewed. Another interview will be scheduled during the last week of August.

**New** **Business:**

**John &Carolyn Wheeler RE: APR Project ID #25A03 – Certificate of Notice** – The Board had received a request from the state asking that they announce that the Commonwealth is considering acquiring land from the Wheelers to put into the APR program. The Certificate of Notice was read, in its entirety, during the meeting. The next step is for the Board to sign and send back a form, acknowledging that the notice has been read. Andrew asked how putting the land into the APR program might affect taxes. The assessors will be consulted on that. The Board was also asked to reduce the notice period from the standard 120 days to 60 days. A motion was made by Andrew, seconded by Rod, to reduce the notice period for the Certificate of Notice from 120 days to 60 days. Roll call vote: Rod – yes; Rick – yes; Andrew – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**John & Carolyn Wheeler RE: APR Application 222 Acres** – The Wheelers hope to put 222 acres into the APR program. The program requires that there be a local contribution of 5 to 10% of the APR appraised value. This project would require a contribution of $85,000. The funds can come from the municipality, a land trust, or a reduced sale price/donation by the owner. The Board must decide if 1) they agree to contribute; 2) they plan to seek Town Meeting approval before contributing; or 3) they are not willing to contribute. Rick noted that while it is a great idea to preserve property, the town has not contributed to APRs in the past. Andrew thought the town should be a “last resort” contributor. The Board reasoned that since the Wheelers had asked that the time period be shortened, they must not be expecting a Town Meeting vote to approve a contribution and instead planned to make the donation themselves. If that assumption was incorrect, the Wheelers should come to the Board and explain the situation. A motion was put forth by Andrew, seconded by Rod, to decline providing a contribution to the Wheeler APR. Roll call vote: Rod – yes; Rick – yes; Andrew – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**Joan LaPierre RE: Appointment of Caitlyn Slowinski to Open Space Committee** – The Open Space Committee had unanimously voted to recommend that Caitlyn Slowinski be appointed to the committee. A motion was put forth by Rod, seconded by Andrew, to appoint Caitlyn Slowinski to the Open Space Committee. Roll call vote: Rod – yes; Andrew – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

**Any Other Business:** None

**Next Meeting** – The next Board meeting was to be on August 25, but as there were no pressing matters, it was decided to cancel that meeting and meet again on September 8.

**Correspondence:**

**Philip Bragdon RE: Resignation from Energy Committee** – It was understood that Philip wants to resign from the Energy Committee and join the Community Preservation Committee. His resignation was acknowledged and accepted with thanks.

**Matthew Marchese RE: Did Not Accept Reappointment to Sewer Commission** – Matt’s resignation was acknowledged and accepted with thanks for his many years of service to the town.

**West Nile Virus** – An email was received from FRCOG Regional Health Nurse Meg Ryan advising that the West Nile Virus risk level had risen from low to moderate.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Adjournment**: At 7:08 pm a motion was made by Andrew to adjourn the meeting. This was seconded by Rod. Roll call vote: Rod – yes; Andrew – yes; Rick – yes. Motion passed 3-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Faye Whitney, Recording Secretary