

**Minutes  
Town of Skowhegan  
Regular Selectmen's Meeting  
5:30 P.M.  
Tuesday, March 9, 2021**

**\*\*Public wishing to see this meeting may do so from the  
Town of Skowhegan Facebook page\*\***

**Board of Selectmen:**

Paul York, Chairman  
Betty Austin, Vice Chairman  
Charles Robbins  
Todd Smith  
Roger Staples

**Town Manager:**

Christine Almand

**Executive Secretary:**

Cara L. Mason

Call Selectmen's Meeting to order.

Paul York called the meeting to order.

1. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
2. Town Manager's Report and Department & Committee Reports

After the agenda went out, I received a Parades & Processions application from Skowhegan Federated Church to conduct the Farm to Family food box program in the island parking lot on March 10<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 24<sup>th</sup> starting at 9:00 am. Each month Rev. Tanner will update me with new dates throughout the duration of this program. I ask that the Board consider approving this application.

**A motion was made by Betty Austin and seconded by Todd Smith to approve the Parades & Processions Application to allow the Federated Church to conduct the Farm to Family Food Box Program in the Island Parking Lot at 9:00 a.m. a few times each month.**

**Vote: 5/0**

Reminder: The Maine Department of Marine Resources is holding a Public Hearing regarding the Kennebec River Management Plan on March 15<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 pm via Zoom. Anyone interested in attending must register no later than March 14<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 pm at [www.maine.gov/dmr](http://www.maine.gov/dmr).

I will be out of the office March 16<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> for vacation. If you need assistance, you may contact Chief Bucknam.

## Department Reports:

## Gail Pelotte:

- Nomination Papers are available now and are due back on Friday, April 9<sup>th</sup> by 4:30 PM.  
**Nomination papers for 2021:**  
Two Selectmen (three-year terms)  
One Assessor (three-year term)  
One Road Commissioner (three-year term)  
One Town Clerk (three-year term)  
One Town Treasurer (three-year term)  
One Overseer of the Poor (three-year term)  
Two Park Commissioners (five-year terms)  
Four Directors of SAD#54 (three-year terms)

## Jeff Hewett:

- The façade application will be submitted at the end of this month. If anyone knows of a business that may have an interest in applying, please have them contact the office at 474-6905.
- We will be posting the updated online maps with the latest parcel updates within the next couple of weeks. If anyone needs tax map info, we have the GIS maps as well as the scanned paper maps on the Town's website.
- There is a new SBDC business advisor located in the Mid Maine Chamber office in Waterville. He will be available to help with business and financial plans. Tel: 207-504-5869

## Shawn Howard:

- As we are getting into the Spring months, I just want to remind people that a burning permit is required for burning debris. You can obtain a burning permit online from the Maine Forest Service or by calling the Fire station. Now is a good time to burn while there is still snow on the ground. Once the snow is gone, burning will only be allowed after 5pm.

## Greg Dore

- H.E. Callahan has completed all the repair work on the garage wall as of yesterday. We are currently finishing up painting the rest of the walls in the sewer room to match the new wall color. I want to thank all the contractors and sub-contractors who worked on this project. It was a smooth process from start to finish, and the garage looks better than ever.
- The road posters went up last week, and we have exemption certificates available for trucks hauling fuel oil, firewood, propane, municipal waste and agricultural products.
- This morning, Maine Heat Pumps & Service started working on installing the heat pumps in the building. They should have the project completed by this Friday.

## Denise LeBlanc:

- Central Maine Power is compensating the Town in the amount of \$4,000 for the damages to the heat pumps due to the November power surge issues at the Community Center.

- Grade 1 thru 8 Basketball ended this past weekend successfully as well as the livestreaming, which was very much appreciated by families and friends near and far. We would like to again sincerely thank all the volunteer coaches, parents, officials, staff and players for making it a success.
- Ages 3 to Grade K Instructional basketball program started last Monday and will be completed at the end of March. Next week we will be starting Indoor Field Hockey for Grades K-5 and an Indoor Baseball Skills program for Ages 9-12.
- The Ice Rink remains open at this time, but with the Spring temps springing up on us this week it may be questionable for use due to ice conditions. Please stay tuned on our Facebook page for updates and/or season closure.
- We are very excited to offer Spring programs this year. We are currently finalizing the Spring program details, and the brochure will be posted soon on our Facebook page and on the town website.

3. Selectmen's Items

Betty Austin reminded everyone to set their clocks ahead this weekend.

Roger Staples reminded everyone to check their smoke detectors.

Charles Robbins said spring is in the air.

Todd Smith said that Snack Shack opens tomorrow. He also congratulated the Skowhegan Speech Team for the state championship.

**Consent Agenda:**

1. Approve the Minutes from the following:

Regular Selectmen's Meeting – February 23, 2021

2. Sign a Quit Claim Deed for the following:

Victor Pomerleau – 3 East Leavitt Street – Map 29, Lot 223A (taxes paid)

**A motion was made by Betty Austin and seconded by Roger Staples to approve the Consent Agenda as written.**

**Vote: 5/0**

**Public Hearing:**

1. Public Hearing: Discussion and decision to approve, contingent upon approval from the Code Enforcement Officer, the Application for Victualer License for:

High Powered Nutrition  
119 Madison Avenue

Paul York opened the Public Hearing at 5:38 p.m.

Christine Almand said that typically we do not have comments on these Public Hearings, but we are putting the call-in information on the Agendas on our website.

Paul York closed the Public Hearing at 5:39 p.m.

**A motion was made by Betty Austin and seconded by Todd Smith to approve, contingent upon approval from the Code Enforcement Officer, the Application for Victualer License for High Powered Nutrition.**

**Vote: 5/0**

2. Public Hearing: Discussion and decision to approve the Application for an On-Premises Malt License for:

GC Pizza Hut LLC d/b/a Pizza Hut  
318 Madison Avenue

Paul York opened the Public Hearing at 5:39 p.m.

There were no comments.

Paul York closed the Public Hearing at 5:39 p.m.

**A motion was made by Betty Austin and seconded by Charles Robbins to approve the Application for an On-Premises Malt License for GC Pizza Hut LLC d/b/a Pizza Hut.**

**Vote: 5/0**

Recording Time: 11:55

Christine Almand said there was a question on Facebook regarding if there was a traffic plan for the Parades & Processions.

Chief Bucknam responded to that via Facebook. There will be an officer in that area to ensure a smooth transition. This starts at 9:00 a.m. which is after the school rush.

**Regular Agenda:**

1. Discussion and decision to appoint one Selectman to participate in the AFSCME union negotiations.

**A motion was made by Betty Austin and seconded by Todd Smith to appoint Roger Staples to participate in the AFSCME union negotiations.**

**Vote: 5/0**

- 2. Discussion and decision to approve the Application for an On-Premises Malt, wine and Spirits License renewal for:

Chapters Restaurant LLC d/b/a Whits End Grill & Bar  
 123 Madison Avenue

**A motion was made by Charles Robbins and seconded by Roger Staples to approve the Application for an On-Premises Malt, wine and Spirits License renewal for Chapters Restaurant LLC d/b/a Whits End Grill & Bar.**

**Vote: 5/0**

- 3. Discussion and decision to approve the Understanding of Services with Brantner, Thibodeau & Associates for the 2020 audit.

**A motion was made by Betty Austin and seconded by Charles Robbins to approve the Understanding of Services with Brantner, Thibodeau & Associates for the 2020 audit.**

**Vote: 5/0**

- 4. Discussion and decision to authorize the Town Manager to finalize the refinancing of the Siemen Energy Project with Municipal Leasing Consultants.

**A motion was made by Betty Austin and seconded by Todd Smith to authorize the Town Manager to finalize the refinancing of the Siemen Energy Project with Municipal Leasing Consultants.**

**Vote: 5/0**

Christine Almand said that Municipal Leasing helped us obtain financing for that project. With this refinancing, we will save approximately \$70,000.00.

- 5. Discussion and decision to award the Foreclosure Sale Bids. The following Bids were received:

Bid #1 – Map 29, Lot 107 (6 Edward Court)

Marc Patenaude	\$9,999.99
John Martins	\$12,743.00
Joe Wyman	\$17,601.00
Bernard Thomas, Jr.	\$5,001.00
Todd & Janine Folsom	\$5,600.00
Matt Smith & Kelly Rossignol	\$30,005.00
Ross Neathawk	\$6,010.00
Robert Poulin	\$16,900.00
Richard LaCasse	\$12,000.00
Thomas Harville	\$15,555.00
Red Pine Homes LLC	\$18,500.00

Ernest George	\$15,000.00
Becke Hand	\$2,000.00
Christopher Poirier	\$24,900.00

Bid #2 – Map 29, Lot 223A (3 East Leavitt Street)

No bids – taxes paid in full

Bid #3 – Map 21, Lot 14-6-ON4 (10 Butler Street)

Becke Hand	\$1,000.00
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Christine Almand recommends awarding the Foreclosure Sales Bid #1 to Matt Smith & Kelly Rossignol with a total bid amount of \$30,005.00 and Foreclosure Sale Bid #3 to Becke Hand with a total bid amount of \$1,000.00.

**A motion was made by Betty Austin and seconded by Roger staples to award the Foreclosure Sales Bid #1 to Matt Smith & Kelly Rossignol with a total bid amount of \$30,005.00 and Foreclosure Sale Bid #3 to Becke Hand with a total bid amount of \$1,000.00.**

Todd Smith said that to only end up with two, with the numbers we started out with, is pretty remarkable.

Paul York said a lot of work goes into that. We certainly don't want to take anyone's property.

**Vote: 5/0**

Recording Time: 17:13

6. Discussion and decision to expend an amount not to exceed \$4,000.00 from the Police Department Reserve Account, Protective Vests Designation to purchase body armor for five officers.

**A motion was made by Roger staples and seconded by Todd Smith to expend an amount not to exceed \$4,000.00 from the Police Department Reserve Account, Protective Vests Designation to purchase body armor for five officers.**

**Vote: 5/0**

7. Discussion and decision to expend an amount not to exceed \$4,500.00 from the Fire Department Reserve Account, Fire Hose Replacement Designation to purchase 1400' of fire hose.

**A motion was made by Betty Austin and seconded by Roger Staples to expend an amount not to exceed \$4,500.00 from the Fire Department Reserve Account, Fire Hose Replacement Designation to purchase 1400' of fire hose.**

Todd Smith said that he would abstain from voting because his company is part of the process. One of the things that was not discussed when we reviewed the Purchasing Policy was purchasing items online. The Chief's recommendation is in fact an online retailer. He wants it added to the Purchasing Policy that it be noted that it is an online retailer, so that we know. He wants to keep this as close to home as we can. If not in town, at least in state. There are a lot of places where you can buy a lot of things. There is a cost of doing business, but there is a service aspect.

Christine Almand asked if he was more interested in knowing that it is online, or that it is out-of-state.

Todd Smith said, online. There are some products that you can find in state, or out-of-state without doing online. Sales or purchase of anything...when there is a contact. You don't have a contact with an online purchase. You don't have a sales rep. or somebody that you can call on. There is an added value to having that. You can always find a cheaper price. When we have pricing put in front of us, we should be notified if it is an online vendor or an actual vendor...brick and mortar establishment versus online.

Betty Austin said that if we are going to know online, she would also like to know out-of-state.

Todd Smith said that this doesn't hit the \$7,500.00 mark to go out to bid, so there are no specs. In this case, it was a phone call.

Roger Staples said he is sure that Chief Howard did his due diligence here.

Betty Austin said that he also used the local preference amount for Todd Smith.

Christine Almand said she is trying to figure out how best to meet what is being asked for. Some online retailers also have a brick-and-mortar business. Some you can make online purchases, but you can also deal with a sales person. With all of the different things that we purchase and the different ways these things are purchased, she is trying to figure out a way to properly respond to this request.

Betty Austin said that Mainely Stitching is a brick-and-mortar, but they do a lot of online sales. There are probably a lot of places like that. It might be difficult.

Todd Smith said that if we were buying a flag, we wouldn't buy it online.

Christine Almand said that as time goes on, we are doing more and more purchasing online. Sometimes that includes calling and talking to somebody at the company.

Charles Robbins asked if this comes with a warranty.

Todd Smith said that the warranties are all over the place.

Paul York said that we could discuss the Purchasing Policy on the next Agenda.

Roger Staples asked Chief Howard if he had done business with this company before.

Todd Smith said it is a reputable company...that is not the case at all.

Chief Howard said that they used to do a lot of business with them over the years. Typically, we order valves from them. They back their products. In all of his years, he only remembers once that a fire hose went back for a warranty issue. It just doesn't happen that often. We are doing more and more online business. We want to do business locally when we can. It is hard sometimes. At the same time, we want to save as much money as we can with taxpayer money.

Paul York said it isn't the dollar amount as much as it is, we want to know where we are spending that money. We may choose to spend a little more to keep the money local.

Christine Almand said that she thinks that we meet that with the local preference portion of the Purchasing Policy.

Todd Smith said that we have that in there but we don't know.

Chief Howard said that this is where, we have these written policies in place. By policy, we have to reach out to get these quotes...which is understandable. In the fire service industry, there are not a lot of local vendors...sometimes not even in the state...sometimes not even in the northeast. While the intent is good, it forces us into these situations.

Paul York said he doesn't think that the intention is to not purchase from outside. It's just that the more information we have, so that we have some idea where these companies are. This can be accomplished in the memo.

Christine Almand said she could add it to the Purchasing Form.

**Vote: 4/0/1 (Todd Smith abstained)**

Recording Time: 34:21

8. Discussion and decision to waive the bid process in order to add 2022 paving onto the 2021 contract that we have with Pike Industries contingent upon Town Meeting vote.

**A motion was made by Betty Austin and seconded by Roger Staples to waive the bid process in order to add 2022 paving onto the 2021 contract that we have with Pike Industries.**

Paul York is not for waiving the bid process. It seems like there is a lot of behind the scenes negotiating. If these things go on people are not going to want to bid. We don't know if we are saving money or not, because we don't know what the other bids would come in at.

Roger Staples said he spoke with Greg Dore about this today. He gets the premise and we probably could save money, but without concrete figures or a commitment from Pike...what is the price.

Greg Dore said that the numbers are in the current contract. Their price is \$74.90 per ton. That is with the escalation at \$540 per ton. Right now the escalation is at \$512 per ton. With the escalation we would pay less than the quoted \$74.90 for the driving course paving. There are also costs for other things in the contract.

He also spoke to three of the other bidders to see what they thought they would come in at. They all said that their costs were going up. The closest to Pike's price last year was Roundy's Paving and they were \$77.00 per ton, which is \$2.10 more than Pike. B&B Paving was \$78.75 per ton. Vaughn was at \$84.37 per ton.

Another thing to consider is that he will not be here for this paving season. If the person replacing him doesn't have experience, you want an experienced paving company that won't cut corners. Things like flagging, signage, mobilization may not be done properly with a smaller paving company. Pike is a top-notch company that you wouldn't have these issues with. The product wouldn't be any different it is just the expertise and the ability to put it down in a professional manner. With the \$750,000.00 that we are spending on paving we want it done right and in a safe manner. He does not believe that we will get a better price than we got last year. The paving plants prices are going up. The state has also put out a lot of work this year. These companies are not going to be very hungry for work.

Charles Robbins asked if there is anything in the contracts with these companies to guarantee what we get for work.

Greg Dore said that we do testing to make sure that the equipment meets the specs. Flagging and signage are in the contract. What happens is that they show up at six in the morning to start paving with no signs and no flaggers. They haven't even said anything about showing up that day. Greg gets a call asking what they are doing...so he has to go out and stop them. Just because it's in the contract doesn't mean they don't try to cut corners. There is no real recourse. If he was new and didn't know what he was doing, they could have gotten away with it.

Charles Robbins said if Pike is willing to hold their price, wouldn't they be willing to put that down as a bid. Waiving a bid process for that amount of money is a scary road to go down.

Greg Dore said that Pike has paved for us for 22 of the 29 years he has worked for the Town. Many of those years we didn't go out to bid, because they either held their price or they limited the increase. He said he personally likes working with Pike. They do a good job. They are dependable. If we put this out to bid we are not going to get a better price.

Roger Staples asked if he could get a letter of commitment from them.

Greg Dore said that he could.

Charles Robbins said that this should be tabled until we have something in writing.

Paul York said he doesn't like forgoing the bid process. It is the appearance that we are playing favorites with companies. He doesn't think that we want to go there. He is all for saving money, but we have nothing to compare it to. We shouldn't be doing behind the scenes negotiating.

Betty Austin said she understands the feelings about the bid process. In the last five years we had a smaller company and we had trouble with getting them to fix what they had done and it cost us more money. At least twice we had projects going across the river, with smaller companies, and she called Greg because people were over there doing paving with no flaggers. She doesn't believe we have ever had a problem with Pike doing anything like that.

Greg Dore said that putting it out to bid, there are some things that will affect our pricing. The price of asphalt is lower than it was last April. That means on the \$74.90 we wouldn't get any discount with the escalation. With the existing contract the \$74.90 and the escalation clause we get \$1.80 off from the \$74.90 price...so we pay \$73.90.

Paul York said he feels like they will give us this price if we just give it to them, but if we make them bid then the price will go up.

Greg Dore said that is not the case. When you go out to bid, the bid is based on the liquid asphalt price. That is what the escalation clause is all about. The fluctuation of those liquid asphalt prices affects the bid price. If the price goes up, we pay more...if the price goes down, we pay less than the bid price. 6.2% of the price difference is added or subtracted from the bid price. This is what is in the contract for all paving bids.

Paul York said that if they go with the current contract then they would be taking a hit?

Greg Dore said the asphalt price would have to go up over \$540 before our price would change with the current contract. If we go out to bid, the bid would be based on today's liquid asphalt cost of \$512, which is expected to go up...so we would lose our discounted price. This would be good for the Town. Pike has done a lot of work for us over the years. We have not lost anybody putting in a bid. Having Pike do the work would also be helpful for somebody new in Greg's position.

Charles Robbins wanted to know how we were going to lose if the cost is cheaper today.

Greg Dore said let's say we put the bid out and they come in at the same price as last year, \$74.90, with the asphalt price at \$512. That is the base of the escalation clause. Last year when the bids came in the liquid asphalt price was \$540, \$28 more than what today's liquid asphalt price is...so 6.2% of that \$28 dollar difference is deducted from our contract price of \$74.90 with our current contract. With a new contract and \$512 as the base, there is no reduction in our price unless the liquid asphalt price goes down.

Charles Robbins said he is just as confused as he was five minutes ago.

Christine said that all of the companies use the escalation clause in their contracts.

Paul York said he is confused how it is going to go up because we are bidding.

The difference is the contract is the liquid asphalt price base, which dictates what we pay for our paving. Because the liquid asphalt price is lower than what it was last year, we would pay the full \$74.90 based on \$512. Last years contract is based on \$540, so we get a discount of \$1.73 per ton at the current \$512 price.

Roger Staples said he agrees that Pike is a reputable company. Their professionalism shows in the way they operate. For him to be agreeable he would need something in writing.

Charles Robbins asked to table this to get something from Pike. Not saying that we will go with them, but can we just table this until the next meeting to put more thought into this?

Greg Dore said he would like to get the bids out early, if that is what we are going to do...so that we get the best pricing. He isn't sure when the State bids are going out. That will affect our price. If they have a lot of work, that affects how hungry these companies are for work. He is guessing that the State bids will go out in the next week or so.

Christine Almand asked Greg Dore to prepare both options for the next meeting. Something in writing from Pike and bid specs...so that if we don't go with Pike's option we can go out to bid and not have to wait another two weeks for another meeting.

Paul York said that we need to tread very lightly with waiving the bid process.

**Motion Withdrawn**

**A motion was made by Betty Austin and seconded by Todd Smith to table this item.**

**Vote: 5/0**

Recording Time: 01:03:42

9. Discussion and decision to allow Greg Dore to go out to bid for a single axle dump truck.

**A motion was made by Betty Austin and seconded by Charles Robbins to allow Greg Dore to go out to bid for a single axle dump truck.**

**Vote: 5/0**

10. Discussion and decision to allow Brent Dickey to go out to bid for Polymer and Sodium Hypochlorite.

**A motion was made by Betty Austin and seconded by Charles Robbins to allow Brent Dickey to go out to bid for Polymer and Sodium Hypochlorite.**

**Vote: 5/0**

11. Discussion and decision to approve an RLF loan in the amount of \$40,000.00 for Pete Bastien d/b/a Meadow Flower Farm and to expend \$40,030.00 from the RLF Reserve Account for the loan and filing fees.

This item was removed from the Agenda. They received other financing.

12. Discussion and decision to approve an RLF loan in the amount of \$45,000.00 for Billie and Allen Clark and to expend \$45,030.00 from the RLF Reserve Account for the loan and filing fees.

**A motion was made by Betty Austin and Seconded by Todd Smith to approve an RLF loan in the amount of \$45,000.00 for Billie and Allen Clark and to expend \$45,030.00 from the RLF Reserve Account for the loan and filing fees.**

**Vote: 5/0**

13. Discussion and decision to allow Denise LeBlanc to apply for the Land and Water Conservation Fund grant in the amount of \$350,000.00 for the Ballfield Compound Expansion Project. There is a 50% match for this grant.

**A motion was made by Betty Austin and seconded by Roger Staples to allow Denise LeBlanc to apply for the Land and Water Conservation Fund grant in the amount of \$350,000.00 for the Ballfield Compound Expansion Project.**

Todd Smith asked if the match would be coming out of the funds set aside for this project.

Paul York answered, yes.

**Vote: 5/0**

14. Discussion and decision to approve an amendment to the engineering contract with Olver Associates, Inc. for Phase 3.6 of the CSO Project.

**A motion was made by Charles Robbins and seconded by Roger Staples to approve an amendment to the engineering contract with Olver Associates, Inc. for Phase 3.6 of the CSO Project.**

**Vote: 5/0**

15. Discussion and decision to approve the letter of support for Lake George Regional Park.

**A motion was made by Betty Austin and seconded by Roger Staples to approve the letter of support for Lake George Regional Park.**

Todd Smith asked what we were supporting.

Christine Almand said that they are submitting an application for LWCF funds...the same grant that you just approved for Denise to apply for. Christine Almand did talk to Denise LeBlanc to make sure that us writing a letter of support for Lake George wouldn't hurt our chances of receiving those funds.

Charles Robbins asked if we write the letter or if they wrote it.

Christine Almand said that we wrote the letter. They didn't provide a template.

**Vote: 5/0**

16. Discussion regarding opening the meetings up to the public.

Charles Robbins said that every county is green as far as the school system goes. It is time that we open these meetings to the public. CDC guidelines are nothing new. We have been following them. The vaccination shots are rolling out. It is time to open the doors. Facebook live is not the same. Madison, Norridgewock and Fairfield are open to the public.

Todd Smith said that New Portland is open to the public. With the public hearings we had tonight. There isn't always a lot of feedback...but it seems weird to have a public hearing without public. People can make arrangements to come in and speak, but that is not how the system was designed. There are ways to do this without putting people at risk. Things are turning and we can do this. We need to have a plan in place.

Betty Austin said she would like to wait a bit longer. In Skowhegan the other day there was somebody who tested positive again. People are getting vaccines, but not enough. She doesn't want to see us move from here to the Community Center. People can still call and be here in the hallway to listen. Unless there is an issue, people very rarely come. She would like us to wait until more people have been vaccinated.

Christine Almand said that we recently purchased sound equipment. The majority of those items will arrive during her vacation. Once that all gets here, she is hoping that Cara Mason can get Chad from the Fairfield station up here to help get that set up. We did spend more than initially thought. Paul suggested that we have equipment for both places (Council Room and Community Center), so we weren't lugging equipment back and forth. She does still need to order the speakers for the Community Center. Some of it is not easily available. We are working on getting the spaces set up. We hope that it is ready next month. Other than the issues with sound and recording...being up there doesn't give us access to the information that is available here. There is an inconvenience of that aspect.

Christine Almand said that she wanted to respond to the comment about the public hearings. In her 13 years, we have had one of those types of public hearings that we had folks speak to. They had contacted us before they came to the hearing. Every single person that has requested to come to a meeting, has been allowed to do so. There are currently 12 people viewing on Facebook, she has seen as many as 20 viewing.

Roger Staples said he agrees with Betty Austin. It is a bit early. This virus is still happening. If we do open up, he would like to keep it in this building. If we get an influx of people (which he highly doubts) we could spread them out into the hallway.

Recording Time: 01:15:13

Cara Mason asked Christine Almand if she remembered what the capacity of the Council Room is.

Christine Almand said she didn't recall, but she has the information in her binder.

Christine Almand said that the 50% capacity and the 75% capacity limits are misleading. We need to contact the State. We still need to comply with physical distancing. We are going to get that clarified. The Opera House is a good space, just not this time of year. It costs way too much to heat it for a meeting. She does not believe that the capacity forgoes the distancing, especially sitting in a space for long periods of time.

Charles Robbins said he understands arguments on both sides. Having it here, we have access to information in the office if and when we need it. Very seldom, maybe two meetings since he has been here, have we needed that. Nobody in this room is living under a rock. We are going to restaurants and grocery stores. We are out in public...we are leaving our houses. There is just as much risk in a restaurant as there would be at a meeting with people here.

Charles Robbins said that the Town of Fairfield limits it to 4 people from the public...first come, first served. If you are the 5<sup>th</sup> person, it doesn't happen. He has had enough of it. If one citizen wants to come, just because they have nothing to do...then that one citizen should be allowed there. It is time to open up. If these masks work, what are we scared of?

Roger Staples said he hasn't been to a restaurant in a year.

Betty Austin doesn't have a problem as long as we are socially distanced and can have the meetings here. She doesn't want to move to the Community Center. It's not just access to information...it is also setting up all of the equipment up there for one person that might want to come in.

Charles Robbins said that we aren't lugging equipment if we have the equipment there already.

Cara Mason said we do not have it. It has been ordered.

Christine Almand said that on Facebook Kim Gray asked about tentative plans for Town Meeting.

Christine Almand said that options are being juggled right now. We are talking about possibly at the Fairgrounds...possibly at the high school...there is also a possibility of the Opera House. With COVID, we have learned to be prepared for anything. We are leaving our options open right now.

Barry Sites asked about meeting in the Opera House.

Christine Almand said she thinks that she already answered that.

Paul York said that we have been making steps toward opening up. The Community Center is Town property...he thinks it was set up well last time. We are trying to fix the issue that we had with sound. He certainly is not for lugging equipment back and forth. Our COVID numbers are going down. We need to realize that COVID is going to be around for a while. They don't really know what is going to happen...anything is possible. He doesn't see why we can't open back up to the public. It is rare that we need information here. We could table whatever it is until we get the information later. We have to do this at some point. We need to have a goal of when that will happen. He thinks that April is a good goal.

Charles Robbins asked why we ordered equipment for the Community Center, if we had no intentions of moving the meetings there.

Paul York said that we should have the equipment anyway. There are other things that happen up there.

Christine Almand said that she has been trying to figure out how to do joint meetings. The only way, with the current guidelines, is to do it up there. The Opera House isn't a great space for joint meetings.

Betty Austin said that while working on the Comprehensive Plan, there are necessary public meetings that we did up there. The age to be eligible for vaccines keeps changing it was 60 and over...in April it will be 50 and over. Things keep getting better.

Charles Robbins said that without a vote we are just going to keep pushing this back. Everything during COVID has been to-be-determined. We had one meeting up there and then everything went haywire.

Paul York said he would shoot for the second meeting in April. At any given time, we could have to put the brakes on because everything went haywire. By that time, we have gotten through March with the new age group and more people being vaccinated. It will also give us time to get this equipment and get it set up and tested.

**A motion was made by Betty Austin and seconded by Charles Robbins to have the meeting open to the public at the April 27<sup>th</sup> meeting, if possible, in the Council Room.**

**Vote: 4/1 (Roger Staples opposed)**

Recording Time: 01:30:09

17. Treasurer's Warrants to be approved:

#67	\$	50,962.03 (Payroll #8)
#68	\$	48,183.33 (Payroll #9)
#69	\$	18,871.61 (State Payables)
#70	\$	1,192,755.70 (FY 2021 Accounts Payables)
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>1,310,772.67</b>

**A motion was made by Betty Austin and seconded by Roger Staples to approve the Treasurer's Warrants as written.**

**Vote: 5/0**

18. Other Business

There was no Other Business.

19. Unfinished Business

- Review Policies and Ordinances
- Run of River/Economic Development
- Utilizing Outside Services
- Marketing/Celebrating Skowhegan
- Public Safety Building
- Sidewalks and Bike Trails/Lanes
- Second Bridge
- Solar Power

Todd Smith said he would like to see the Planning Board look at the Victualer/Inn Keepers License Ordinance. The application asks for the Police Chief's signature. The Police Chief has no idea why he needs to sign that...because we have always done it that way. He can't imagine why a Police Chief would need to sign that.

Betty Austin said that in the past the Police Chief signed that because they would know if there had been problems at that facility.

Todd Smith said that this really affects our businesses with the licensing and the public hearings.

Cara Mason said that there may be a reason for his signature in the Statute.

Christine Almand said that some of these are required by State Statute, so we don't have an option. We have gone through some of them to strip some of the additional hurdles. We have changed public hearing requirements where possible to save on their advertising costs.

Todd Smith said that we have a lot of solar projects in town. There is a site review going on, on Friday. This is a chance for you to go see first-hand what is going on. We may want to consider putting an end to this with a Moratorium. Enough is enough, push for developing our land for something more than solar.

Christine Almand said that we have received a lot of comments on those meetings. In response to that, our planner, Joel Greenwood, put together a summarization of the process for site plan review. That is on the Town's website and the Town's Facebook page. Where a solar field goes...we had a lot of comments about whether it is residential or commercial. What a lot of people don't realize is that we do not have zoning in Skowhegan. We can't tell them that they

can't put it in a specific area. The only zoning we have is Shoreland Zoning. The Planning Board can't decide not to allow a solar field in a certain area because it is perceived as residential. We cannot restrict that type of activity. There were also a lot of people concerned that they were not alerted. We follow the Ordinance. All of the abutters were notified. Just because you live a mile down the road, and you happen to drive by there every day, that doesn't mean that we are going to send you a notice. How we let the public know that this is going on is, it's on the Agenda. We post it. It's out there. We don't mail it to the public...we mail it to abutters.

At that meeting, they weren't accepting comments because we are not at that stage in the process. There will come a time for a public hearing. Even when there is a public hearing, and someone is necessarily opposed to a type of development, the Planning Board doesn't automatically...they don't have the ability to say no. If it meets all of the criteria that is set forth in our local laws, we have to allow the development. If we really want to restrict something like that, we have to consider zoning. Every time it goes to that conversation of zoning, the residents of Skowhegan do not have the desire for it. We have to remind everybody...every time something like this comes up that you don't like...the only thing that we could do to prevent it is zoning. Even zoning doesn't allow us to completely turn down development.

We had people upset with the development of CMS on the Waterville Road. Even with zoning, the Waterville Road would be considered commercial. Yes, there is residential right next to it...but we don't have that type of ability.

She just wants people to realize that there is a process and we have to follow it.

Todd Smith said that part pf that process is the site visit. That is a chance for the public to see what is going on and for the abutters to share their thoughts. The Planning Board has worked with the abutters and the developer on their concerns. If you have concerns, get involved.

Christine Almand read a comment from Jason Gayne...It also needs some other work. That was in reference to the Victualer License. She asked Jason Gayne to get ahold of her to let her know what those issues are.

20. Sign Documents

The Selectmen signed documents.

**Executive Session:**

1. Executive Session in accordance with M.R.S.A Title 1 § 405(6)(A) to discuss AFSCME union negotiations.

**A motion was made by Betty Austin and seconded by Roger Staples to enter into Executive Session in accordance with M.R.S.A Title 1 § 405(6)(A) at 7:13 p.m. to discuss AFSCME union negotiations.**

**Vote: 5/0**

