

**Minutes
Town of Skowhegan
Regular Selectmen's Meeting
5:30 P.M.
Tuesday, August 25, 2020**

****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
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/Department & Committee Reports

Town Meeting is on Saturday, August 29th at 10:00 am in the grandstands at the Skowhegan State Fairgrounds. Please use gate 2 by way of Constitutional Avenue, and parking has been moved to the infield. Town reports, budget books, and proposed ordinances are available at the Town Office and on our website.

A Public Safety Building survey has been posted on our website and Facebook page. Please take two minutes to fill out the survey now through September 1st.

The Town Office resumed regular hours on August 17th. We are open Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm.

The Cruiser Bid closes on September 2nd at 10:00 am. For more information visit our website or contact Chief Bucknam.

The Town offices will be closed on September 7th in observation of Labor Day.

Gail Pelotte:

- Office is busy accepting absentee ballot requests – as of today 534. Voters can call the office or go online at maine.gov and search absentee ballots to request. Ballots will not be mailed out until late September or 30 days before election.

- The new drop off ballot box has been installed in front of the Municipal Building and will be available for all future elections. Once absentee ballots have been mailed out – Just vote – sign the envelope where indicated and drop in the box – No Postage necessary.
- I encourage residents who want to vote in November and are not registered, to take care of that ahead of time by coming into the office with photo ID and proof of residency to avoid the line on voting day.
- Thanking everyone in advance for their patience.

Jeff Hewett:

- On August 13 at Coburn park, SkowheganEDC presented to 10 businesses, grants that ranged from \$5,000 to \$10,000. This was funded by a private donation.
- The car charging station is ready for Chargepoint to do the final installation. We have the base and electrical prep done. The installation should be done in the next couple of weeks.

Shawn Howard:

- The heavy rains yesterday caused the towns sewer to flood the basement of the station again. Once the water receded, we were left with about 3 inches of waste on the floor. ServePro is cleaning and disinfecting today. I have spoken with Greg and Brent, and we are still investigating what may be done to fix the problem. I would like to request discussion and decision to allow an expenditure of up to \$3,500 from the Fire Department Reserve account, Fire Station Building Improvements designation to pay for the cleaning. (Current account balance: \$111,700.25)

A motion was made by Betty Austin and seconded by Roger Staples to expend an amount not to exceed \$3,500.00 from the Fire Department Reserve Account, Building Improvements Designation for basement cleanup after a sewer backup.

Vote: 4/0

Greg Dore:

- We have begun the turn lane into the community center and presently are at a standstill while we wait for Consolidated Communications to move their wires from the old poles to the new poles. The next step is to have Maine Fiber/Firstlight to move their fiber optics. We are having a very difficult time to get anyone to return our calls.
- We have completed our ditching and started the preparations for paving. The manholes and catch basins have been lowered and most of the other work has been completed. I have been in touch with Pike Industries and they are hoping to start work within the next two weeks.
- The insurance company is deciding on what direction to go with the Wacker Neuson, should it be totaled or repaired.
- I still have not heard back from the adjuster about the bid for the repairs to the garage.
- Have a great evening – Greg

Paul York said that Consolidated was working on the Route 2 poles today.

3. Selectmen's Items

Betty Austin said that the grants to ten businesses were handed out at Coburn Park. It was really appreciated that an unknown donor would do this.

Charles Robbins said he completed his Zoom training with MMA.

Charles Robbins said that he has been getting feedback about the Public Safety Building Survey. There is a lot of concern about cost and location.

Paul York said that the PSB Committee has recognized that there are people who are not excited about the location or the price tag. They have gone back to the drawing board. We have options. We have locations where they can be combined and we have options to build them separately. So we will be providing locations and the associated cost. We estimated high on some of the number. We are waiting on more accurate numbers from the architects. They have also looked at different options for building materials...trying to get the cost down.

Charles Robbins said that there is a definite need for a Public Safety Building. We just had \$3,500.00 worth of damage because of sewer backup. He fears that if we rush this to get it on a ballot it will be shot down.

Paul York said that we have not rushed anything. This has been ongoing for a long time.

Betty Austin said that the survey is online. It is really easy and it takes two minutes. Don't hesitate to get your opinion in there.

Christine Almand told Charles Robbins to send people to our website for information and feel free to bring their feedback to the Committee. Instead of giving them one option, we have given them four.

Charles Robbins said that there was no place for comments on the survey. We could have gotten that feedback if we had had a comments section.

Christine Almand said that there was an earlier survey for the Public Safety Building. We did allow comments in that survey. We used that survey and those comments to come up with the location options that are in the current survey.

Recording Time: 15:15

Cara Mason read a question from Facebook. April Foss asked why Town Meeting was on a Saturday and not a weeknight. Many people work on Saturday.

Christine Almand said that we originally looked at having it on Monday evening, like we typically do. Having it on a weeknight we would have to turn the lights on in the grandstands that would drive the cost up significantly. We went with a Saturday so that we wouldn't need the lights. We have had comments in the past that people would prefer it in Saturday. Many years ago Town Meeting was on a Saturday.

Paul York said that he had a meeting with Charles Robbins and Denise LeBlanc to discuss the reopening of the Community Center. They thought that a soft opening would be the best way to go.

We need to follow the CDC Guidelines. We will need to be restricted to 50 people in the building, somebody at the door, to take names and know where people are going. The weight room hold less people that the gym.

It would be nice to be able to start football, soccer and field hockey for drills and skills. They could scrimmage amongst themselves. Since these are all volunteer coaches, Denise will have a Town Employee as a contact for them, and to make sure that procedures are being followed. As things change, that could also change. We could end up closing down again, or we could move further into normalcy with games and whatnot. The suggested times for the reopening would be 7:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. As things change maybe we can get back to normal hours.

Charles Robbins said that athletics are important to our children. We want to get that back out there. All surrounding Community Centers are still closed. They are holding these skills and drills clinics, which is acceptable by CDC Guidelines. Football and field hockey are huge in Skowhegan. We have to take baby steps to do it. We still have to adhere to CDC Guidelines. This is a step in the right direction. These are all outdoor activities. Indoor activities are still limited.

Paul York said that Denise was going to try to work on something so that it wasn't always the same 50 people at the Community Center after school. Maybe with time limits or something. We are the poster child for this, since no other Recs are open right now.

Roger Staples asked about limiting spectators when we get back to having games.

Paul York said that that has not been discussed yet. We are not really sure. Some of these things will change as we move forward.

Christine Almand said that with the current guidelines, outdoor gatherings are still up to 100 people. We have to take all of that into account as we move through the different stages.

Paul York said maybe we put out bleachers away so that people are not crowding onto them. Maybe they have to bring their own chairs.

We have to do something. This is a great step in the right direction. Everything is subject to change without notice.

Betty Austin asked when this soft opening would be happening.

Paul York said mid-September.

Charles Robbins said that it was going to take that long to get everything in place.

Paul York said that that timeframe falls in line with school sports.

Charles Robbins said that the school still doesn't know if they will be plating. The MPA is supposed to make a decision on Thursday. This isn't going to change what it costs to staff the Community Center.

Paul York said that Denise will be looking at what it will take to manage the front door. We have to have somebody to make sure that we stay under 50 people.

Betty Austin asked if the staff is working in the building.

Charles Robbins said that they have been doing outdoor work.

Paul York said that some staff has been doing the food program as well.

Betty Austin said she would like to see it sooner. School starts on September 1st.

A motion was made by Charles Robbins and seconded by Betty Austin to allow Denise LeBlanc to move forward with the soft opening as soon as possible.

Paul York said it may happen sooner, but there are certain things that Denise has to get and policies, procedures and release paperwork she needs to have in place first.

Charles Robbins said that entrances and exits need to be marked, doors need to be one-way. Markings and signage for social distancing.

Paul York said that Denise will also be doing up a book like she did when we opened the fields.

Vote: 4/0

Consent Agenda:

1. Approve the minutes from the following:

Regular Selectmen's Meeting August 11, 2020

2. Approve and sign Cemetery Deeds in the East Skowhegan Cemetery for the following:

William and Carolyn Vining Lot 178, 3rd South Grave
Carol Smith Lot 178, 2 South Graves

3. Accept the resignation of Mike Savage as a firefighter effective October 10, 2020.

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

Paul York said that we are sad to say that Mike Savage is retiring after 28 years of service. We hate to accept that. It will be hard to replace him.

Christine Almand said that it is a well-deserved retirement. Mike Savage wrote the grant, and worked very hard to make sure that we could get the ladder truck. Over \$900,000.00. Among many other things he has done for the Town over the years.

Recording Time: 37:03

Paul York said it is sad to see our long-term employees move on.

Vote: 4/0

Regular Agenda:

1. Discussion and decision to expend an amount not to exceed \$3,556.64 from the Solid Waste Reserve Account, Equipment Designation for emergency repairs to the horizontal baler.

A motion was made by Betty Austin and seconded by Roger Staples to expend an amount not to exceed \$3,556.64 from the Solid Waste Reserve Account, Equipment Designation for emergency repairs to the horizontal baler.

Vote: 4/0

2. Discussion and decision to expend an amount not to exceed \$2,100.00 from the Fire Department Reserve Account, Protective Equipment Designation for 25 pair of firefighting gloves and 10 protective hoods.

A motion was made by Betty Austin and seconded by Charles Robbins to expend an amount not to exceed \$2,100.00 from the Fire Department Reserve Account, Protective Equipment Designation for 25 pair of firefighting gloves and 10 protective hoods.

Vote: 4/0

3. Discussion and decision to award the Highway Garage Painting & Repairs Bid. The following bids were received:

Paint It Right Painters	\$19,975.00
Maine Highlands Contracting	\$98,700.00

Greg Dore recommends awarding the Highway Garage Painting & Repairs Bid to Paint It Right Painters with a total bid price of \$19,975.00, and expending that amount from the Highway Department Building Repairs Account, contingent upon Town Meeting Vote.

A motion was made by Betty Austin and seconded by Roger Staples to award the Highway Garage Painting & Repairs Bid to Paint It Right Painters with a total bid price of \$19,975.00, and expend that amount from the Highway Department Building Repairs Account, contingent upon Town Meeting Vote.

Charles Robbins asked if we were not doing the \$98,000.00. Are we leaving that out?

Christine Almand said those are two separate bids for the same project.

Paul York said it is great to see us using our local contractors.

Vote: 4/0

4. Discussion and decision award the Loader bid. The following bids were received:

Frank Martin	\$141,079.00
NORTRAX	\$150,000.00
Chadwick BaRoss	\$160,430.00
Central Equipment	\$160,867.00
Beauregard	\$178,900.00
Milton CAT	\$179,900.00
Northland JCB	\$179,400.00

Greg Dore recommends awarding the Loader bid to Frank Martin with a total bid price of \$141,079.00 and expending that amount from the Highway Department Equipment Reserve Account, Vehicle Purchase Designation.

A motion was made by Betty Austin and seconded by Roger Staples to award the Loader bid to Frank Martin with a total bid price of \$141,079.00 and expend that amount from the Highway Department Equipment Reserve Account, Vehicle Purchase Designation.

Paul York said that he feels it should be contingent upon Town Meeting vote. That was part of his reserve account request. He understands that he has the money to buy it. It is great that we are buying and not leasing. His concern is that if we go through with this now and the voters decided to cut money from the reserve account at Town Meeting...he won't have the money there if something major comes up.

Charles Robbins said that it is a lot of money, it is a local company that has the bid...but it should be the Town people that make that decision. It should be a Town Meeting vote, not a four person decision.

Christine Almand said that the Selectmen have the authorization to expend the funds. The voters do have this information. They approve the amount that goes into that account. The Selectmen have the ability to approve the expenditure.

Greg Dore said that this has been on his schedule for the last five years. That is why we do the schedule for the reserve account. To wait until Saturday isn't going to make a bit of difference. It does cause an issue with the whole idea of a capital reserve account. That is why we put the money away. This is due to be replaced. We have the money...we should do it.

Betty Austin said that we have been putting this money away for this. If we have the money to do it, she doesn't see why we wouldn't.

Paul York asked why it was in the write-up that is going before the voters. We have the money and we have the right to spend that money. Don't put it in the budget process. If we buy it now the taxpayers will think we don't need that money.

Christine Almand said it is on page 59 of the Budget Book. She read the paragraph. She said it isn't a straight line "I am requesting this in order to do this". Greg's narrative is more of a conversational type of narrative to give a picture of what has been replaced and what will be replaced. He also had the pump replacement in this narrative, but because he had the money the Selectmen have already approved that. These are things that he plans out...it is a long term planning process. His request directly correlates to how much it depreciates.

Paul York said normally we would have already had Town Meeting and this wouldn't be an issue. We have no idea what the vote may be. Decreasing these items is always a possibility. If they do that, we won't have any money in this reserve account. If something blew up and had to be replaced, we would have to have another Town Meeting to ask for more money.

Christine Almand said that with some of our reserve accounts, we are in that situation every year. Each year we budget for one cruiser and we buy one cruiser. After we buy that cruiser, that account is almost zero. If we don't get the funding the next year, we are in that exact situation.

Greg Dore said that even if the Town decided to not fund that account this year, that just means that the 2008 truck that we are supposed to replace next year...we would either have to finance or put it off a few years. The money is there today, because we plan ahead. Even if the Town votes not to fund it, it doesn't mean we don't need this piece of equipment.

Paul York said if the 2008 truck dies, we wouldn't have the money to replace it now.

Greg Dore said that we would go back to what we were doing, which is to finance it. He doesn't think that we should go away from the plan that we have.

Paul York said we could look at it again after Town Meeting. From now until Saturday isn't going to make a difference on this.

Greg Dore said that we won't have this loader until November. The point he wanted to make is that if the Town turns down the request for equipment replacement...he hopes that the Selectmen don't turn down this loader.

Paul York said it depends on how bad it is.

Betty Austin said that Town Meeting is not going to vote whether or not Greg gets this piece of equipment. Town Meeting will decide whether or not to put money in the reserve account. This equipment is going to be bought anyway. She doesn't see the purpose of making it contingent upon Town Meeting. If we need the loader, we need the loader.

Charles Robbins said he asked this question when it went out to bid and was told that this and the cruiser were contingent upon Town Meeting Vote.

Cara Mason said that it was the Painting and the Cruiser that were contingent upon Town Meeting vote.

Christine Almand said that this was not, because the money was there already. When you are asked to approve the bid, that is when you decide whether it is contingent upon Town Meeting vote or not.

An amended motion was made by Betty Austin and seconded by Roger Staples to award the Loader bid to Frank Martin with a total bid price of \$141,079.00 and expend that amount from the Highway Department Equipment Reserve Account, Vehicle Purchase Designation contingent upon Town Meeting vote.

Betty Austin said it doesn't even make sense why we are doing this, this way, but ok. We hope we get more money in the reserve account, but we need this equipment.

Vote: 4/0

Recording Time: 56:16

5. Discussion and decision to allow Greg Dore to go out to bid for Winter Sand.

A motion was made by Roger Staples and seconded by Charles Robbins to allow Greg Dore to go out to bid for Winter Sand.

Vote: 4/0

6. Discussion and decision to place the questions to change the Town Clerk, Town Treasurer and Road Commissioner positions from elected to appointed positions on the November 3, 2020 ballot for referendum vote.

A motion was made by Roger Staples and seconded by Charles Robbins to place the questions to change the Town Clerk, Town Treasurer and Road Commissioner positions from elected to appointed positions on the November 3, 2020 ballot for referendum vote.

Christine Almand said she tried to reach out to other towns to see which were appointed and which were elected. Information was provided from the last couple time this has been voted.

Roger Staples said that we have talked about how the jobs have evolved over the years and become more technical.

Christine Almand said this should be voted tonight in order to get it on the printed, machine count ballots. Otherwise, it would require a hand count. We certainly want to reduce the amount of work during a presidential election.

Gail Pelotte said that she likes the way that it is. If she does her job, then the taxpayers will vote her back in. Every three years it can be a little nervous if somebody runs against you. The voters have been asked several times. The people feel like that is the one last voice that they have. They overwhelmingly want these positions to be elected.

Paul York said if it was appointed, and you are doing your job, you are good to go. Isn't it a concern for you that somebody with no experience could get voted into that position?

Gail Pelotte said it goes both ways. There could be two or three people on the Board of Selectmen who could make it so she doesn't have her job. There are two ways to look at it.

Paul York said that there is more to it than just that. If somebody gets elected because they are well know, we could run into a lot of issues.

Gail Pelotte said if it is going to be on a ballot, it should be decided tonight.

Roger Staples asked if her job would be more secure if it was appointed.

Gail Pelotte said she feels pretty secure the way it is. There are very few elected clerks in the state of Maine. She takes great pride in the fact that she is elected.

Greg Dore said that he has kept his job for 30 years because he was elected. There were times that there was some turmoil with the Selectmen. It could have become an issue, like Gail was just saying. It would be up to five people, instead of the voters of Skowhegan.

Christine Almand said that the appointed department heads work under her.

Greg Dore said that it is scary that we could elect somebody who doesn't have any idea. They would need to be certified in several areas. Let the voters decide. Many people want that right, to vote for their Road Commissioner.

Paul York said that his concern has been that somebody gets elected and they have no experience. Then we are left to deal with it. We would like to have somebody in these positions that are familiar with the State regulations. We are bid enough now that that could be very troublesome, with the potential to have somebody new in there every three years.

Greg Dore said he can agree with that...but it has worked well for him to be elected. And it has worked well for the Town. He feels that he initially got elected because of name recognition. He thinks that it should be put on the ballot and let the people decide.

Roger Stapes said that he thinks this town has been really lucky so far. It is time that these positions are appointed.

Charles Robbins asked if we could just have the Road Commissioner position on the ballot.

Betty Austin said that they are all voted separately.

Christine Almand said that they could choose to just put one position on the ballot, knowing that Greg Dore is retiring at the end of his term.

Charles Robbins said the Selectmen are not out for any elected official, we are just trying to do what is best for the Town.

Christine Almand said that when we do MPI projects with the State, in order to get those state funds our Road Commissioner needs to be certified. That is a funding source that we wouldn't be able to partake in until the Road Commissioner could get certified.

Paul York said you don't know if the voters are looking into qualifications before they vote. If he wasn't on the Board of Selectmen, he wouldn't know that the Road Commissioner needed to have these certifications.

Christine Almand said that the other concern about having elected officials is what happens when something goes wrong. We have a Recall Ordinance but you have to pull off an election in order to recall an elected official.

A recent issue at the county went through a very long process in order to resolve their issue. We have been very fortunate. These situations are very difficult to get out of.

Paul York said that we are lucky with the Code Enforcement Officer. He was able to get all of his certifications.

Christine Almand said that because that position is appointed, we interviews and found the right person that would fit well in that position...even though he didn't have all of the qualifications and certifications. We found the right person, to be able to train. When you hire somebody you can hire the person who is the right fit. If it doesn't work out, you can let them go and hire again. You can't do that with an elected official.

Betty Austin said that when Gail Pelotte got elected, she wouldn't have been appointed. There were a lot of people who thought she couldn't do the job. She got elected and she worked hard to get to where she is.

Paul York said with elections you just don't know.

Roger Staples said there is also an accountability factor.

Vote: 4/0

Recording Time: 01:23:08

7. Discussion and decision to allow CMP and Northern New England Telephone Operations to place 2 poles on the Palmer Road, beginning 4,832 feet from the intersection of Palmer Road and Middle Road.

A motion was made by Roger Staples and seconded by Betty Austin to allow CMP and Northern New England Telephone Operations to place 2 poles on the Palmer Road, beginning 4,832 feet from the intersection of Palmer Road and Middle Road.

Vote: 4/0

8. Discussion and decision to approve the Second Amendment to the Lease Agreement between the Town of Skowhegan and the Bureau of Motor Vehicles for the Community Center, extending the lease through December 31, 2021.

A motion was made by Betty Austin and seconded by Roger Staples to approve the Second Amendment to the Lease Agreement between the Town of Skowhegan and the Bureau of Motor Vehicles for the Community Center, extending the lease through December 31, 2021.

Vote: 4/0

9. Treasurer's Warrants to be approved:

#102	\$	5,210.34 (FY 2020 Accounts Payables)
#13	\$	43,719.79 (Payroll #33)
#14	\$	43,516.22 (Payroll #34)
#15	\$	13,932.94 (State Payables)
#16	\$	102,379.54 (FY 2021 Accounts Payables)
Total	\$	208,758.83

A motion was made by Charles Robbins and seconded by Betty Austin to approve the Treasurer's Warrants as written.

Vote: 4/0

10. Other Business

There was no Other Business.

11. Unfinished Business

- Review Policies and Ordinances
- Run of River/Economic Development
- Utilizing Outside Services
- Marketing/Celebrating Skowhegan
- Vehicle Charging Station – received an update on this.
- Public Safety Building – Next Meeting September 2, 2020 – There is currently a survey through September 1st – possibly looking to place on the November Ballot.
- Sidewalks and Bike Trails/Lanes
- Second Bridge – Study Team will be meeting – Next Public Meeting sometime in October.
- Solar Power

Paul York said that the West Front Street sidewalks are being done.

Christine Almand responded to some comments on Facebook regarding there not being a comments section on the survey. In a prior survey we had provide comment sections. The committee reviewed all of those responses which is how they came up with the four options presented in the current survey. We certainly want to hear from the public, but we already took that particular feedback. She asked people to complete the survey.

12. Sign Documents

The Selectmen signed documents.

Adjourn Selectmen's Meeting.

Approved and signed on September 8, 2020.

A True Copy Attest: _____
Cara L. Mason, Executive Secretary