

Town of Northport

Select Board Meeting

January 24, 2022 @ 6:05 pm

Chair: Shelly Patten

Vice Chair: Jeanine Tucker

Municipal Officer: Breanna Pinkham Bebb

Town Administrator: James Kossuth

Finance Director: Vicki Eugley

Town Clerk: Amy Eldridge (Approved Absence)

Road Commissioner: Amon Morse

NVC Representative: Jeffrey Wilt

Present: Shelly Patten, Jeanine Tucker, Breanna Pinkham Bebb, Vicki Eugley, James Kossuth, Amon Morse, Jeffrey Wilt, Paul Rooney, Bill Frysinger, Karl Beiser

Citizen Concerns: None at this time.

Fire Department: Rooney reported that the Fire Department had recently received two donations, one for \$20,000 and one for \$2000. Rooney reported that much of the Department's forestry equipment does not fit in the truck that the Department purchased last year, and he would like to use some of the donated funds to purchase a cargo trailer. He estimates that he could purchase a trailer for less than \$6000. **Pinkham Bebb moved to authorize Rooney to spend up to \$6000 on a cargo trailer for the Fire Department, seconded by Patten. Board voted 3-0.**

Broadband Committee: Frysinger reported that the Broadband Committee has received the final feasibility study from Axiom, and has been meeting with both Axiom and GWI to discuss how to proceed with a plan for providing affordable high-speed internet to every home in Northport. As part of those discussions, GWI mentioned that it intends to apply for a grant from Connect Maine to provide fiber-optic internet to some number of "unserved" homes in town. The number and location of those homes is to be determined by the state, and the Committee will find out in its next meeting with GWI, on February 3.

Beiser reported that, in order to support that grant application, the Town will be asked to contribute some ARPA funds – perhaps \$700 per home to be connected – as a show of support, per the grant application requirements. The application deadline is mid-March, and GWI will do most of the work. The Town will have to hold a Special Town Meeting to approve the expenditure of the funds. Kossuth explained that it may be \$50,000 - \$70,000, depending on the exact number of homes, at \$700 per home.

Beiser also reported that there may be additional millions of federal grant money coming to Maine for broadband, but there is no way to know at this point what the requirements for those grants will be, so it is important to try for what we can, while we can.

Kossuth explained the timeline for noticing the Special Town Meeting, and the constraints to ensure that the meeting can be held in time to let GWI submit the application. The Board agreed to have a Special Select Board meeting on February 7, 2022, at 6:00 pm, to finalize the wording of the warrant articles, and to hold the Special Town Meeting on either February 19 or 26, 2022, depending on venue availability. [NB: Due to scheduling conflicts, the February 7 meeting was cancelled, and a regular Select Board meeting was held on February 14, 2022.]

NVC: Wilt reported that the Overseers had approved the revised Real Estate Tax Commitment Memorandum of Understanding between the Town and the Northport Village Corporation (NVC).

Wilt also reported that the NVC had approved a moratorium for new hookups to the NVC sewer system. The Overseers had intended the moratorium to be for the rest of 2022, but Kossuth explained that by state law, a moratorium can last for only 180 days, subject to renewal. Wilt said that the Overseers would amend the moratorium to expire in 180 days, with the possibility of renewal.

The Overseers approved the moratorium because the NVC had failed a test from the state last summer, and failing three consecutive tests would force the NVC to upgrade its wastewater treatment facility for higher capacity, which could cost upwards of \$15 million. The moratorium is intended to give the NVC some time to see how they can remain below capacity for the plant.

The Overseers also approved a new waterfront ordinance, with an emphasis on safety. The ordinance also instituted a mandatory registration provision for small watercraft stored in the NVC (kayaks, dinghies, paddleboards, etc.), raised fees, and instituted a non-resident surcharge for people who live outside Northport.

The NVC is still looking for a bookkeeper.

Wilt reported that he will be missing the next three meetings because of travel, and Janae Novotny will be attending in his place.

Road Commissioner: Morse has been trying to contact Morton Salt to place another order for 120 yards of salt, and we still have not been billed for the first order.

Town Administrator: Mailbox Policy: Kossuth presented a draft mailbox policy for the Town. The Board had no edits, and Kossuth will post notice of a public hearing for the next regular meeting to vote on its adoption for the Town.

Sand Pile Update: Kossuth spoke with Brad Aitken regarding the sand pile, and Aitken offered to provide 100 yards of sand, well short of the 300-500 yards that the pile may be short. The Board agreed that accepting 100 yards would not fully compensate the Town for the suspected shortage and would set a bad precedent. The Board instructed Kossuth to seek the full amount of suspected outstanding sand.

Tax Acquired Property: Kossuth reported that Buck Sawyer will be listing the property at 17 Oak Drive for sale on MLS.

Browntail Moths: Kossuth reported on a product that one resident has used successfully against browntails on the resident's own property, and Kossuth will add that information to the forthcoming Town newsletter.

OSHA Vaccine Mandate: Kossuth reported that in light of the recent Supreme Court decision, the Town will not be required to ensure covid-19 vaccination of all employees.

Website Redesign: Kossuth recommended that the Board accept the proposal from Sephone to redesign the Town's website. Eugley reported that there are sufficient funds in the Office Operations budget to pay for the project (approximately \$2700-\$3100). The Board agreed, and instructed Kossuth to accept the proposal.

Patten asked about the status of the research for remote-meeting technology. Kossuth reported that he had spoken to Archangel Computers about their initial proposal and asked for some modifications, and that Archangel was still working on an affordable and workable solution.

Newsletter: Kossuth had circulated a draft e-newsletter, which the Board approved. Kossuth will finalize it and distribute it as soon as possible.

Volunteer Sign-Up Form: Kossuth had circulated a sign-up form used by Lincolnville for various town committees, and he drafted a similar one for Northport. The Board agreed that it is a good idea and should go on the Town website.

Town Clerk: The Board reviewed and approved, as amended, minutes for the December 13 and 27, 2021, Select Board meetings.

Finance Director: Eugley provided the Accounts Payable and Payroll Warrants to the Board for approval and signature. Upon review the Board approved the Accounts Payable and Payroll Warrants.

Eugley asked the Board to schedule budget meetings for the FY 2023 budget. The Board decided to schedule meetings for March 7 and 21 and April 4 and 11, 2022.

Old Business: None.

New Business: The Board will hold a Special Select Board Meeting on February 7, 2022, for the 6-month review for Town Administrator James Kossuth. The next regular Select Board meeting will be February 14, 2022.

Adjourn: Patten moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:45 pm, seconded by Pinkham Bebb. Board voted 3-0