

Town of Litchfield
Selectboard Meeting Minutes
January 8, 2024

1.0 Convenes 6:37 P.M.; Pledge to Flag; Selectmen and Guests present.

Selectmen: Gary Parker, Chairman; Clarence Gowell III (identified as Rick in these minutes); Scott Weeks.

Staff: Kelly Weissenfels, Town Manager; Michael Sherman, Fire Chief(absent); Larry Nadeau, Road Comm.; John Upham, Transfer Station Manager; Tom Wood, Chm.(Zoom), Elton Wade, Budget Comm. (absent); Steve Ochmanski, Code Enforcement Officer(absent); and others per the sign in sheet.

2.0 Minutes of Nov 27, 2023; Dec 5, 2023, Dec 18, 2023

There was a motion made by Scott Weeks to approve the minutes from November 27, 2023. This was 2nd by Gary, vote 3-0.

There was a motion made by Scott Weeks to approve the minutes from December 5, 2023. This was 2nd by Rick, vote 3-0.

There was a motion made by Scott Weeks to approve the minutes from December 18, 2023. This was 2nd by Gary, vote 2-0 (1 abstain, Rick wasn't present at this meeting).

3.0 Reports and Correspondence

3.1 Town Manager - Kelly Weissenfels

A. Kelly started his report with the December 18, 2023, severe storm that included power outages across the whole town as well as road/driveway washouts. The Road Crew as well as the Fire and Rescue crew were busy with emergency calls, tree removal, safety cone placement as well as replacement all day. Gustin Road washout was a significant expense the town will be reporting to FEMA. Kelly and Chief Sherman are keeping the county up to date with the stats as the storm ended and clean up progressed. A Warming Center was open for several hours over a couple of days so folks could go in and take showers, warm up with a snack and/or a warm beverage as well as charge cell phones.

B. Elections are quickly approaching March 5, 2023, primary elections will be held in person at the Sportsman's Club in Litchfield. Absentee ballots are not available yet; however, people can request a ballot through the town office. They will be mailed when they are available.

Kelly wanted to let it be known there is something new this year. If you are registered as an unenrolled voter, often referred to as independent, you can vote for either party.

C. Gary asked what the resolution (if there was one yet) is to the property that has been spoken about in past meetings on Cobbosseecontee Lake [S. Lakeview Dr]. Kelly reported that the person looking to sell it back to the town found someone wanting to buy it for a right of way. So, it's all worked out and the town is no longer a part of the equation.

3.2 Code Officer/Plumbing Inspector - Kelly Weissenfels as Steve was unable to attend.

See item number 4.2, otherwise Kelly had nothing urgent to report on Steve's behalf.

3.3 Road Commissioner - Larry Nadeau

A. Winter is here. During the previous nights' storm there was unfortunately a truck stuck, another had a couple broken parts (which have since been fixed) and the Road Crew got the "old Ford" out and it held up great until the very last round to clear things up. A rock caused some issues with the sander, but it has been fixed.

B. Larry had requested an update on the new truck the town has purchased, it will not be arriving until March of 2024.

C. Larry's report regarding Gustin Road started with how impressively destructive the amount of rain was during this storm. A group from FEMA visited to survey the damage caused. FEMA may be reimbursing for the culverts that have to be replaced as well as one round of aggregate that was placed. The aggregate materials placed to fix the road will be reimbursed, but not any used to upgrade culverts that were already placed since the storm.

D. The ball field's driveway across from the Transfer Station will be getting filled back in this week, weather permitting. Larry is in hopes Thursday will be the day they will be repairing the portion of the circular drive next to the pond.

A permanent fix for the overflow issue in this area was discussed as Rayna asked if anyone has investigated fixing the problem instead of constantly repairing it. Larry went into detail, describing what he feels about the issue, as well as the fix. With the pond and the adjacent property not belonging to the town it will take some time and discussion to be able to come to an agreement. It was noted that it's time to set up a meeting and have the process started to come up with a permanent solution. Kelly will oversee getting all parties involved to the table for a discussion.

E. Rick wanted to know about the cones that were out for the downed trees and subsequent clean up after the December storm. Larry reports that more have been purchased, the town lost 17 cones (runover and broken, or taken). He recently purchased another 75 cones, so between Fire and Rescue and Town Crew there should be enough to share until Fire and Rescue orders some.

3.4 Fire & Rescue - Kelly Weissenfels on behalf of Chief Sherman

A. There is a new Junior Firefighter that will be attending Fire I & II Training. Also, a new member has started attending EMT Basic Course this month.

B. There was a complete cold water rescue kit including suits, life vests, ropes, etc. The Crew will be training over the coming months. Over \$7,000.00 of this expense (nearly the total cost) was paid for by the Fire Association, not by tax dollars.

C. The Fire department is ready for the next storm being forecasted for Wednesday this week.

D. Central Fire Station had a cap blow off, which reportedly be fixed this week. Gary noted that that repair should be part of the FEMA report. Kelly noted the expense will be minimal but he will include in the report, he has written down all things (including the little ones) and will be sending the report along to FEMA.

E. Gary wanted an update on the signage needed for replacement at the Purgatory Fire Station. There is no update currently, Kelly has made note to ask Chief Sherman. Also, the stumps at the Central Fire Station were brought up, requesting an update. Some suggestions were made but there is no specific update at this time. Kelly will get an update from Chief Sherman.

3.5 Emergency Mgmt. - Kelly Weissenfels on behalf of Chief Sherman

A. The generator at Central Station is scheduled for service tomorrow to ensure it will be ready ahead of the storm.

B. Bruce Slattery and Chief Sherman will be available and monitoring the storm Wednesday to respond as necessary. Evaluation during the storm will be a continued effort, the Warming Station will be opened again if needed. Chief Sherman recommends planning ahead and having all tools needed for generators, extra water, batteries, etc. in case this is another bad storm.

Chief Sherman wanted to remind everyone if a road is blocked that means it is not safe to travel on! Downed power lines could remain charged or become live at any time due to the back feed of a generator. Please stay away from down wires.

3.6 Assessing Agent - Kelly Weissenfels

Kelly reports that the Assessing Agent will be in the office next on January 10, 2024.

3.7 Transfer Station - John Upham

A. John reported that there have been 5 more stickers issued for a total of 2,639 new stickers for admittance to the Litchfield Transfer Station.

B. Also, both bulky containers, a cardboard, and the paper container as well as the metal container needed to be emptied this week.

C. Also John updated the room on the auction items that haven't been picked up yet. The wrought iron fencing being one of the items. The purchasers will be called and asked if he will be coming to get the item(s).

3.8 Other Town Committees

A. Kelly reported that the Ad Hoc Transfer Station Relocation Committee will be having it's first meeting on Thursday January 11, 2024, at 5pm at the Town Office

B. Tom Woods reports that the budget committee has a candidate for the vacant seat on the committee. The Candidate's name is Hillary Strong, she will be meeting with the budget committee at the next meeting, then sending along a letter of intent/interest to the Select Board shortly after.

4.0 Scheduled Business *a couple topics were taken out of order to be respectful of time*

4.1 Roads Project Summary Report – Toby Jutras

Toby Jutras attended tonight's meeting on behalf of the Town of Litchfield, Road Advisory Committee to present the update for the 2023 season as well as the coming 2024 season. There was an explanatory letter handed out prior to the presentation.

Per the letter, 2023 surpassed the 2022 construction season with an incredible amount of work completed. The letter goes on to thank the Town of Litchfield Public Works for their outstanding work during the full year and going above and beyond expectations in self-performing one of two bridge replacement projects. Also listed are projects completed in 2023, estimated cost(s), as well as the actual cost(s). Lastly listed is the plan for moving forward in 2024. The letter states: The advisory committee projects the 2024 construction season will find the town with funds enough to complete reconstruction of the roads, including adding the last of the wearing surfaces from construction in prior years. The ending balances provide adequate funding to cover expected maintenance aligned with annual roads surveys to determine the need for resurfacing, crack sealing and ditching.

The Road Advisory Committee is recommending a budget of \$700,000.00 to complete the reconstruction of the town roads as planned in 2024 and entering Spring of 2025 with enough funds to commit resources for maintenance.

The Select Board and the room had a chance to review and respond with discussion and questions. There may be a need for further funds later, however collection of and appropriate allocation of grants, etc. back into the road maintenance budget will play a factor in that.

A couple of the concerns & questions asked:

Rick would like to see ditching of the roads. Larry noted that is in the plan moving forward and having all equipment and personnel needed has always been a major factor in this getting done.

Kelly noted that it's been a question brought into the office a couple times of taxpayers wanting the roads lined. Gary and Larry both agree that lining the roads is not an option moving forward for various reasons discussed at length. No one else on the Select Board disagreed.

4.2 Dennis Hill Road Culvert

Kelly and Larry presented Dennis Hill Road culvert replacement. There is a grant program for \$200,000.00 being offered by the state. However, the issue is the area of this culvert is almost at emergency status. The timing of the hot top and overlay on Dennis Hill needs to be planned carefully so not to be driving large fully loaded dump trucks/equipment over the newly paved road. Larry believes it will be an easy fix with either a bridge or a culvert. Meaning if the Town of Litchfield can fix the road with State funds and not have to spend town tax dollars on this project, then money can be allocated to other road projects.

4.3 Transfer station fee increases – John Upham

John presented the plan for a fee increase for taking items at the Litchfield Transfer Station. He noted this will be a well announced transition, this will not be in full affect until March or April of 2024. Meaning, the taxpayers will have notice with signs being put up and verbal notice when speaking with the attendants. A couple increases noted on the list are as follows:

Tires \$5/\$20, mattress \$5 single/double & \$10 queen/king, monitors \$5, rugs 50 sq ft \$15 & rug pads \$15.

4.4 Precedence of living at 2 Labbe Lane – Steve Ochmanski (presented by Kelly)

Kelly handed out a packet of information to the Select Board. There was time for discussion and questions. Rick moved the conversation along by stating that he doesn't feel anyone should be living in the building at 2 Labbe Lane. Kelly is to find out where the property sits in the probate process, also to find out if there is by legal terms a junkyard being formed on the property. Gary also feels the town should move forward with eviction as there are now 2 issues with the property as there is a potential junk yard being formed on the property.

There was a motion made by Rick to approve the CEO to move forward with the process of enforcement action with the tenant of 2 Labbe Lane as well as issuing a violation letter with the Registry of Deeds, find out if the area is legally classified as a junk yard. Scott 2nd, vote 3-0.

*This topic has been moved to future agenda items as it will be a process that needs to be moved along.

4.5 Storm Damage assessment – FEMA funding status

Kelly reported we have not yet been assessed by FEMA for federal aid pertaining to the big December storm, he is working closely with Kennebec County to be sure that Gustin Road gets evaluated and added to the list of items the town is to be reimbursed for. Kelly will be sure all information gets to Ted Marshall as his contact. There will be multiple visits soon.

The future responses to storms were also a large topic of discussion at this time. The roads need to be cleared as a first response to storms such as this.

4.6 Purgatory Dam Streambed Environmental Samples

Kelly passed out a handout regarding the dam. Samples would be taken to find out if what was previously on the site would contaminate downstream if the dam were removed. The discussion brought up some very good questions.

If the dam is going to come out is there a program to do that process not on the town dime.

The major question is the town liable if something happens to the dam and the road washes out? If the town is not liable, then leave the dam alone and wait till it comes down naturally. The Dam is at the corner of two state roads, so if something happens to the roads the state should be coming up with the solution.

4.7 Review Road Discontinuance Letter

There will be 2 letters going out to the taxpayers of Litchfield informing them of intent to discontinue maintenance of 9 roads in the town of Litchfield. The topic will come to a vote at the town meeting for the taxpayers to decide road by road. Voting to approve the letter is the next step of many to move this topic to an end. The letter(s), one is from the lawyer and then other is explaining the letter from the lawyer. Kelly was very clear that when the letter is received and there are questions the town office will be ready to help with any concerns. However, this topic will be decided by the community that is present at the 2024 town meeting. Kelly is still working on compiling the information (dollar amounts/time spent/manpower spent on road maintenance) that Scott had asked for a few meetings ago.

There was a motion made by Scott Weeks to approve sending out of the Road Discontinuance Letter. Rick 2nd, vote 3-0.

4.8 Approve/Sign Town Manager Contract

There was a motion made by Scott to approve the Town Manager Contract. Rick 2nd, vote 3-0. The contract was signed by the members of the Select Board.

The contract is for 2.5 years in order currently to move renewal to coincide with the town's fiscal year.

4.9 Municipal Quit Claim - U17-001, Jane Hahnel

This is a completion of repurchase agreement.

There was a motion made by Scott to approve the Municipal Quit Claim - U17-001 for Jane Hahnel. Rick 2nd, vote 3-0.

5.0 Unscheduled Business

5.1

6.0 Appointments/Resignations

7.0 Warrants

7.1 Town Warrant #19 \$314,391.80

There was a motion made by Scott Weeks to approve town warrant #19 in the amount of \$314,391.80. Rick 2nd, vote 3-0.

7.2 RSU4 Warrant #20 \$360,364.63

There was a motion made by Scott Weeks to approve RSU4 warrant #20 in the amount of \$360,364.63. Rick 2nd, vote 3-0.

7.3 Town Payroll #12 \$32,299.43

There was a motion made by Scott Weeks to approve town payroll #12 in the amount of \$32,299.43. Rick 2nd, vote 3-0.

7.4 Town Payroll #13 \$28,359.91

There was a motion made by Scott Weeks to approve town payroll #13 in the amount of \$28,359.91. Rick 2nd, vote 3-0.

8.0 Selectmen/Public Discussion/ Communication

8.1 Scott recently noticed that he doesn't know of all the town committees and would like to see a list of all town committees as well as get an agenda for their meetings moving forward. Kelly will work on getting those. He will send them along with the read ahead(s) for the Select Board meetings.

8.2 As at last meeting Gary would like to find out who it is that needs to be contacted to have the flags taken down at the cemetery. He volunteered to help take the flags down as it's now winter and they should have been taken down already. Kelly is to contact the correct person and see if help is needed and when the flags will be removed.

9.0 Future Agenda Items

9.1 Two Labbe Lane - Steve Ochmanski

10.0 Adjournment at 9:19pm

Respectfully submitted by Angela Parker