

**Town of Litchfield**  
**Select Board Meeting Minutes**  
**October 28th, 2024**

**1.0 Convenes 6:30 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; Larry Nadeau, Road Comm.; John Upham, Transfer Station Manager (absent); Tom Wood, Chm. Budget Comm. (Zoom); Steve Ochmanski, Code Enforcement Officer (absent); and others per the sign in sheet.

**2.0 Minutes of October 15th, 2024, minutes of August 15th, 2024 (bid review)**

There was a motion made by Scott to approve the minutes for October 15th, 2024. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

There was a motion made by Scott to approve the minutes for August 15, 2024. This was seconded by Gary, as Rick abstained from the approval. Vote was still 2-0 with one abstention.

**3.0 Reports and Correspondence**

**3.1 Town Manager**

A. The Office has been busy with tax season and payments coming in. There have also been a lot of early voters coming into the office. Kelly said that greater than 30% of Litchfield's registered voters have either voted early or requested absentee ballots.

B. The Town Office parking lot project has been completed. The lot now has lines delineating spots to park in. The deck is currently a work in progress, most likely the stairs will be moved to the end by the handicap ramp. There was discussion of the usability of the lot and Kelly had recommended waiting a few weeks to see how people park in the rest of the lot before making changes. Gary wants to be certain that the personnel handrail is all that's needed to stop folks from driving off the edge of the lot. He would like to make sure the State's/OSHA/etc. rules and regulations are checked before investing in a handrail, in case there is something more extensive needed.

Larry asked if the steps to the porch are going to be completed soon, he is concerned about safety. Per Kelly, he has spoken with Elwell Construction, and they have informed Kelly that the project is being prioritized. He will be finding out tomorrow what that means. Larry said he will improve the temporary railing tomorrow where the previous set of steps were.

Also on the table is the possibility of opening the basement door for visitors to enter the Town Office. Further discussion considered how entry to the basement would be signaled, as well as monitoring devices. Kelly said that MMA's grant for nearly \$3,000.00 had come through so the office will be upgrading/expanding its video surveillance to include the basement.

C. Per Kelly, Buker Road Bridge is owned by MDOT, and this bridge is on their list for maintenance. Rick asked about putting stop signs on both ends of the bridge to slow traffic down going through there. As previously discussed, Larry noted, that's not something that can be enforced by the town of Litchfield, as the MDOT would have to make that decision after some planning with engineers, etc. Gary mentioned he had seen a new four-way stop put in on Rt.197 and 202 and that the rumor was it had been voted in by the town of Richmond at one of their meetings. Kelly will be looking into this and getting back to the Select Board about how that traffic change had occurred.

D. Kelly concluded with correspondences. There are a few folks in town that would like the two abandoned boats on Lunts Hill Road addressed. Kelly will talk with the Code Enforcement Officer to see if there are any enforcement action available. Previously there was no information tying the boats to any individual, so no one person could be held responsible. Kelly will be investigating with Steve to see what can be done at this point to get the information needed. If that doesn't work, then he will bring the topic back to the Select Board. Gary mentioned the boat that has been on the side of the Whippoorwill Road in the same condition that needs to be removed as it's sat all summer with a FREE sign on it. Scott would like Kelly to discuss Buker Road bridge with the MDOT informing them of the sinkhole that is present at the edge of the bridge. Kelly will reach out and see if he can get that fixed immediately vs waiting for them to look at the project as a whole.

E. When Ellery Bane was in last, a resident had stopped into the Town Office expressing concerns about the way personal property tax is handled in Litchfield. Kelly will be doing some research and inviting Ellery to speak to the board, perhaps at the next meeting on November 12, 2024. He can then explain the town's current actions regarding property tax, and the plan moving forward. The resident would like to have a State tax representative present at a meeting to educate the Select Board regarding personal property tax. Rick suggested starting to offer a Tax Increment Financing program for folks to bring their businesses to the town of Litchfield. Rick would like to see the topic added to a future agenda.

F. Kelly wanted to remind all to vote November 5, 2024!

### 3.2 Code Officer/Plumbing Inspector

A. No additional movement regarding the illegal junk yard in town. Kelly would need to speak with Steve about what has been done on the Town's end to try and fix the issue.

B. Sean and Doris Lahey's attorney reached out to the town's attorney regarding their administrative consent agreement. Per Kelly, there will be more information regarding this at the next meeting. Kelly will forward the email to the members of the board.

### 3.3 Road Commissioner

A. Per Larry, he has received a call from a resident on Oak Hill Road regarding the speed humps on the road. Many of the residents would like to see the humps removed. There was recently an emergency on the road, and State Police as well as mutual aid moving quickly to the scene were

not aware of the speed humps. According to Larry there is at least one warning sign missing. Larry said he had let the residents know that he would bring the topic to the Select Board and report back to them what the response was. Per Larry the humps could be ground out as they are 100% hot top. Chief Sherman also agreed that he has never liked them being there. Gary said there were 3 families on Oak Hill Road that originally wanted them placed. The select board seems to be in agreement that if the residents want the humps removed, then there needs to be documentation via a petition signed by all the residents affected.

B. Winter sand is going in since winter is coming.

C. There are 2 trucks currently ready to go for the plow season. The town one-ton truck's computer is still down. Larry is being told "any day now" for the return to duty of the truck.

D. Parking lot project is all done, paved and lined. Per Larry the project was completed in the town's favor as there was more hot top put down than required in the bid.

### 3.4 Fire & Rescue

A. Chief Sherman listed off the calls for September. This included 32 medical calls. The town of Litchfield was able to cover 14 of them with Gardiner Rescue covering all 32.

B. This month there will be a training event for the crew using a junk car in the pit near Community Park. Chief Sherman wanted to give everyone notice this would be happening as well as letting all know the clean up will take place faster than last time so there would be no confusion that a car had been abandoned.

C. There is no open burning at this time as fire danger is high, and all open burns require a permit. The State Forest Service has passed a new law this fall requiring permits for all open burns larger than three feet by three feet by three feet. This used to be a guideline which has now been turned into a law. Chief Sherman reminded everyone that permits are free. Also, the permit can be shown on a smart phone, with no need to print it.

D. In one month's time there will be a SHAPE (Safety and Health Awards for Public Employees) inspection for the Litchfield Fire Department of all records and at all locations. Chief Sherman will be working to set up the date for this inspection soon. He did note that if BLS comes in and marks anything wrong there will be time allotted to make corrections vs. just being marked in violation.

E. There is currently a lack of rainfall for this time of year, this is showing drastically in the Sportsman's Club Pond. Chief Sherman is concerned as that is a place where the tanker truck would generally get water if there is a fire on that side of town. There are limited alternatives for water in the immediate area surrounding the Town Office/Fire Station area. However, Chief Sherman does have one lead that he feels is promising -- the new residents of Jungle Lane may be willing to help. A training exercise is intended for the pond on Jungle Lane, and Chief Sherman hopes it will be in November.

F. Rick requested that Chief Sherman get him a price for an Electric Vehicle (EV) fire blanket. Rick would be willing to work on a fund raiser to help the town purchase a blanket. The extreme

danger of the Electric Vehicles and chargers were discussed. Scott noted that he thinks a Public Service Announcement from the fire department about things like EVs and lithium batteries that are not UL rated would be helpful.

G. The tree stumps will be removed for free at some point. There currently is no timeframe but it's being done at no cost. Per Gary, the town should acknowledge Ben Goodall's work in volunteering to remove the stumps as he also had done the first set of stumps at no charge.

### 3.5 Emergency Mgmt.

A. Chief Sherman has been in contact with the new Facilities Manager for RSU4 to make sure they still have the agreement in place for the warming shelter at Carrie Ricker School. Chief Sherman also had a great meeting with the principal after a live fire drill during which they discussed the safety of gathering locations.

B. Chief Sherman plans to have the Emergency Plan outline done by Friday November 1, 2024. The Chief believes he has the Election Day 2024 emergency plan well nailed down at this point. He wasn't willing to go into details with it being an emergency plan, however he believes that they are pretty well set.

### 3.6 Assessing Agent

Ellery was in the office as scheduled and will be back on November 7, 2024. He did have a full schedule of appointments while he was there. Kelly will be working on more information for the personal property question with a possible addition to the agenda. He will forward any information he acquires regarding this to the members of the board.

### 3.7 Transfer Station

A. Per Kelly, both the bulky bins needed to be emptied this week.

B. The news was received today that one of the crew that was out injured has been cleared to return to work.

### 3.8 Other Town Committees

## **4.0 Scheduled Business**

### 4.1 Summary of County Commissioner Open Forum – Town manager

Kelly attended the Kennebec County Commissioner's Forum on Thursday the seventeenth. His first question during the Forum was why a single payment is asked for/required for County taxes. The response was that it was required by the State Legislation. Kelly was able to look this up and found "the County Commissioners will determine the date that taxes are due." But also that the additional verbiage seemed to indicate only one payment. Seemingly the interpretation of the legislation doesn't fall in favor of the towns paying the bill in installments. Kelly recommended writing to the newly elected/re-elected representatives and seeing if they are willing to help.

The largest part of County expenses is the County Jail and the group in attendance got a tour of the jail. The largest new expense at the jail is the relatively new requirement to provide medical

and dental care for inmates at the time of intake. There are also a number of cost-saving measures that have been put in place to try to keep costs in check.

The County also implemented a pilot program that sends a doctor along with the ambulance to selected emergency calls. Though the program seems to be successful, and is attracting doctors to Maine that may not have considered Maine otherwise, the tradeoff is that the County will need funding to continue the program. Kelly also stated it's an option to have the folks he was speaking with come to a board meeting, or work with Fire and Rescue to provide training.

#### 4.2 Abatement – \$141.75 for R03-088D, Glen Dube Excavation, Inc

A trailer assessed to the lot had been sold prior to April 1<sup>st</sup> 2023, but still taxed to R03-088D.

There was a motion made by Scott to approve the abatement in the amount of \$141.75 for R03-088D, Glen Dube Excavation, Inc for the tax year of 2023. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

### **5.0 Unscheduled Business**

5.1 Gary would like to see a notice through text to those who have done early voting. He would like to inform the community that has done this that they have not voted on the RSU4 budget. Kelly will do this through Facebook as well.

### **6.0 Appointments/Resignations**

6.1

### **7.0 Warrants**

#### 7.1 Town Warrant #8 \$794,782.11

There was a motion made by Scott to approve Town Warrant #8 in the amount of \$794,782.11. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

#### 7.2 Town Payroll #8 \$32,918.13

There was a motion made by Scott to approve Town Payroll #8 in the amount of \$32,918.13. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

### **8.0 Selectmen/Public Discussion/ Communication**

8.1 Rayna asked if anyone had any idea who the oldest citizen in the Town of Litchfield is. She would like to see this pursued again. The town used to give a cane to the oldest living resident.

8.2 Rayna also noted an article in today's Kennebec Journal paper titled "Free speech vs Hate speech."

### **9.0 Future Agenda Items**

9.1

**10.0 Adjournment** The meeting was adjourned at 8:14pm.

Respectfully submitted by Angela Parker