

Town of Litchfield
Select Board Meeting Minutes
February 25, 2025

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

** Video turns on at minute 3:37 and sound at 7:45 Kelly gave a brief overview upon video and sound returning. **

2.0 Minutes of February 10th, 2025

There was a motion made by Scott to approve the minutes of February 10th, 2025. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

Kelly will correct the name he had added of the invasive plant found in Pleasant Pond.

3.0 Reports and Correspondence

3.1 Town Manager

A. Next week Kelly will receive an engineering report from Simard and Son's for the overhaul of the fuel depot. Wheeler surveying will also have a survey of the wells around the fuel depot. He will also report on Fire Marshal and EPA inspections of the facility.

B. MMA Underwriting completed building inspections where Kelly escorted them on a tour of all Town buildings. Per Kelly, they left pleased overall, though there were minor findings.

C. Kelly requested quotes from RJD (the Town assessor's agent) for a new contract. He will get two quotes. In addition to the current scope, he also asked for "quarters" where 25% of the town is surveyed (physically reviewed) each year leading to a revaluation at the end of the 4th year. The concept of quarters has been discussed in past years at several meetings.

D. The Maine Commission of Education has approved the next steps towards closing Sabattus Primary School. A public vote to approve closure will be held on April 8th, 2025. Litchfield's vote will be held at the Town Office.

E. The Select Board would like to see a periodic update from the School Board posted in the Sodalite and possibly Face Book. Kelly has started posting the "Clerks Corner" from the Sodalite on Face Book as well.

3.2 Code Officer/Plumbing Inspector

Steve will have permit reports, etc. at the next Select Board meeting.

3.3 Road Commissioner

A. Larry reports he has had a busy month. They will be watching for more winter storms, with the hope that it's finally going to be warming up.

B. Two thirds of the sand has been used to date. He feels confident there is plenty left in the shed to get through what's left of Winter/Spring.

C. Larry has spoken with the surrounding towns, the Road Crew will start posting roads tomorrow. All signage is ready to go for the project. Larry double checked that this didn't need a vote, he just needed to inform the Select Board members that it was done. That way when the calls start coming in, they wouldn't be surprised. Gary agreed that it's up to the Road Commissioner and Town Manager.

D. As a reminder, frost heaves are bad this year. The State roads are worse than the Town's roads.

E. Looking to the future Larry has gotten information from West Gardiner regarding their new Public Works building, including a set of building plans.

3.4 Fire & Rescue

A. Chief Sherman shared his call reports from December and January.

December brought 28 EMS calls while January saw 25. This has proven to be increasing over the last few months. The Fire Department saw 10 calls in December and 14 fire calls in January. This ranged from car crashes to structure fires. There were 2 mutual aid calls, one to Sabattus and then to West Gardiner for structure fires.

B. The SHAPE report has been submitted to Safety Works. This is the report that is due after their inspection has been completed. The report is due March 3rd, Chief Sherman was able to get it submitted today.

C. Engine 67's repairs have been completed. Chief Sherman reports that all the equipment is in good condition currently.

D. Ice water rescue training is coming up on March 8, 2025. Chief Sherman wanted to remind everyone of this since they will be out on the Sportsman's Club Pond in their yellow suits getting certified.

3.5 Emergency Mgmt.

A. Chief Sherman will be reviewing the contracts for public safety dispatching, as this is one of the largest parts of the budget for EMA.

B. The full budget will be presented at the next meeting on March 10, 2025.

3.6 Assessing Agent

Nothing significant to report this week.

3.7 Transfer Station

A. John has returned from vacation to a quiet and orderly transfer station.

3.8 Other Town Committees

A. Tom asked, for the purpose of the Budget Committee conversation, if there had been any word from Representative Greenwood regarding any of the legislature topics that

have been discussed in the last couple meetings. Kelly said he emailed him today and hasn't heard back from him yet.

B. Andrew Moore, the Recreation Committee Treasurer, attended the meeting to give an update. Basketball has wrapped up; the committee will be holding registration for the start of baseball. There were 50 people playing/helping with basketball. Between registrations and fundraising the season will end at "break-even" with the season's expenditures equalling income. Last year there were 200 children participating in the various sports offered through the Recreation Committee for the town of Litchfield. Tom gave Andrew information about his Budget Committee contact and some budgetary information. Gary asked what the plan is moving forward for the ball fields. Andrew replied that as soon as the ground thaws they will be having someone dig up the old grass and taking care of the placement of lines, etc. for the smaller version of the field.

4.0 Scheduled Business

4.1 MDOT Stream Crossing Grant Offer - \$200k for Dennis Hill Culvert

Kelly reminded the Select Board that last fall he received word that Litchfield did not qualify for the most recent round of grants pertaining stream crossings. Now Kelly has received word that a town that was offered the grant pulled out of the running, so Litchfield has been offered a \$200,000 grant for replacement of the culvert on Dennis Hill Road [where the road crosses Dennis Brook]. Kelly has asked that the Select Board give him the ability to sign the acceptance on behalf of the Select Board/Town. There was a motion made by Scott to allow the Town Manager to accept the grant offering from DOT of \$200,000.00 for Dennis Hill Road. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

Larry said that he had spoken with Calderwood Engineering who helped write the verbiage for the grant. They are busy, however, per Larry they are happy to help as they can. Per Kelly, he believes this is a matching grant, where the town would be able to use in-house labor to be billed at standard hours to put towards the matching funds.

4.2 Liquor license renewal for Route 197 Diner

The State has gone to an electronic process for liquor license renewals vs. the stack of papers the members of the board are used to seeing. Kelly printed out the renewal request, he will however need to go online to sign electronically.

There was a motion made by Scott to approve the liquor license renewal for Rt 197 Diner and to give permission for the Town Manager to sign electronically on behalf of the Select Board. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

Rayna asked if they are going to be expanding the hours they are going to be open? Kelly said he knew they are doing a renovation but hadn't heard anything about expanding the hours.

4.3 Replaced broken plow on 1-ton – request to draw from Highway Equipment Reserve Funds

Larry shared with the board that the town's 2016 plow [on the 1-ton truck] was damaged in one of the last heavy/wet snowstorms we had. The front wing hit something, and it ripped the entire front wing off the plow. This plow has had a number of things fixed to date, considering it's age it would be due to be replaced soon. However, this expense was not in this year's budget. After contacting a couple of vendors, Larry found a plow at O'Connors that they discounted for us. He was able to acquire and install it in time to meet the next storm. The final bill was \$8,341.24. Gary and Kelly had discussed funding options with the plan being to see where the end of the year budget finds Public Works. If the purchase doesn't fit in the budget, the next option is contingency funds, and if contingency can't cover it then the last resort will be to draw from the highway equipment reserve. Gary explained that his reasoning about why it's not a good idea to go directly to the equipment reserve funds because it can be a slippery slope to just dip into reserve accounts for multiple projects here and there since those accounts are funded according to planned purchases.

4.4 Discuss PW paid training (with time commitment) for CDL B

One of the town crew members has expressed interest in obtaining his CDL B so he can drive the larger plow trucks as well as help more with larger projects. He is willing to take time off without pay during the training; however, he cannot do that and afford the cost of the class as well. Lewiston has a program where an employee can go through training and then is required to stay with the municipality for a certain period. If they do not stay, they are required to pay back the cost of the training at a prorated rate. Larry added that Lewiston's requirement is only 6 months' return on their investment. Larry feels that this should be closer to an eighteen-month requirement for the town of Litchfield, Gary agreed. Larry said the employee has been with the Town for over a year, and he is happy with the employee. Larry is a full supporter of this program with the caveat of Kelly reaching out to the town's legal counsel to make sure the contract is written up appropriately to ensure reimbursement occurs if the employee left early. Larry and Kelly have the support of the Select Board members to move forward with their investigating costs and a discussion with legal counsel to get more information and bring back a proposal for review.

4.5 Choose date for Select Board's road discontinuance meeting

Kelly has recommended the end of March or early April so all paperwork can be set up. This is the meeting to determine how the right of way will be handled as well as if each household will be compensated or not.

Kelly has reached out to an assessor [an appraising firm], who was under the impression that he wanted an assessment on each home done. When Kelly clarified that was not the case they let him know they are not able to assist. Kelly has requested an opinion from the town's assessor's agent, RJD.

There was a motion made by Rick to set the Road discontinuance meeting for March 31, 2025, at 6:30 pm. This was seconded by Scott, vote 3-0.

4.6 Budget review

A. Kelly has budgets for Rec. Department, Senior Center, and Public Works lined up for tonight. Kelly introduced Rec. Department first. They are looking for \$7,500.00 for the year, which is a decrease of \$3,500.00 from last year. This will cover field maintenance as well as some repairs that are planned. According to the representatives Hancock Lumber will be donating the materials to rebuild the snack shack/storage building. There were no questions from the board.

B. Senior Center. Kelly presented Pat's budget as she was having technical difficulties on Zoom. There is a split budget of \$2,500 for the Sportsman's Club as well as \$2,500.00 for the Senior Center. The Director's Salary increases 3%. and a \$500 increase in the trips budget line as seniors are taking more trips for their band performances and the line dancing performances. Scott asked where the funds come from to cover maintenance on the bus. Kelly said that the donations they receive for their performances go toward bus maintenance. Kelly and Pat have discussed the need to make a reserve account for the projected cost of having to replace the bus in the future so the town and group can start preparing for that. Kelly will be looking for advice regarding cost and what a realistic time frame should be to look at replacing the bus. Scott suggested speaking with Larry Stewarts in Lisbon.

C. Public Works. Larry presented and answered questions. Gary noted that the maintenance line has increased, which makes him pause, since when new equipment is purchased there should be less maintenance needed. Kelly agreed that is the expectation and asked Larry to explain what he had found out about the new trucks. Larry reported that the emission controls on the new dump trucks are expensive to maintain. The replacement of the DEF system on the 2013 wheeler which is needed this next year is estimated to be \$15,000 (much of which is due to the catalytic converters). Rick asked about replacement time frame for plow trucks. Larry noted it's about 8-10 years; at this time the oldest truck is 13 years old per Larry. The cost of supplies and parts were discussed, as well as the wear and tear associated with the medium used on the roads. Larry does use a protective coating on the truck chassis. The replacement schedule was also briefly reviewed. A training schedule/line item will need to be added to the Public Works budget for the training discussed previously in the meeting. Tom has requested electronic copies from Kelly to be able to distribute them to the Budget Committee.

Kelly will be sharing the Transfer Station, Town Office and Fire Department budgets with the Select Board during the next meeting. Gary noted he would like to see the bottom line for the overall budget sooner rather than later.

5.0 Unscheduled Business

5.1 Gary would like to resume the tour of town properties. Gary would like to have the group pick a day and time. Rick and Scott decided on May 2nd, 2025, at 7:30am – 10am.

5.2 Town Properties

Rick would like to discuss the town property such as foreclosed properties, etc. He is curious about why they are being held onto and could the town profit from selling them. Scott reminded Rick that the properties are sold at fair market value, and the excess of funds goes to the original owner or surviving heir(s). So, there is a lot of work that goes in for little return. Per Kelly, most of the land that in the town's name is sitting in Conservation Trust. He agrees that after April [the next foreclosure deadline] it can be investigated.

5.3 Cobbossee Watershed funding concerning the warrant

Gary had realized after reviewing the minutes from the last meeting, that there was one presentation where there perhaps should have been more. Kelly explained that the Friends of Cobbossee Watershed presents on behalf of the Tacoma Lakes Association and the Cobbossee Lake Association. The budget combines the TLA and CLA on one line. Gary suggested to Kelly that this line could be split up. Kelly then said all three are looking for a total increase in budgetary funds of \$2,100.00 and agreed that breaking that line up would make it clearer to the attendees of the Town Meeting.

6.0 Appointments/Resignations Kelly explained that 6.1 – 6.6 were appointments of continuing committee members that were overlooked in June, and that after a thorough review of the appointment records this catches us up to present.

6.1 Appoint to Smithfield Plantation Board of Trustees: Christine Stenberg; Terry Tracy; Elton Wade; Dian White

There was a motion made by Scott to appoint Christine Stenberg; Terry Tracy; Elton Wade; and Dian White to the Smithfield Plantation Board of Trustees. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

6.2 Appoint to Senior Advisory Committee: Richard Cutliffe; Eileen Turcotte; Dian White
There was a motion made by Scott to appoint Richard Cutliffe; Eileen Turcotte; Dian White to the Senior Advisory Committee. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

6.3 Appoint to Planning Board: Paul Hempstead

There was a motion made by Scott to appoint Paul Hempstead to the Planning Board. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

6.4 Appoint to Historic Preservation Committee: Christine Stenberg; Earl Lamoreau; Judith Rogers

There was a motion made by Scott to appoint Christine Stenberg; Earl Lamoreau; Judith Rogers to the to the Historic Preservation Committee. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

6.5 Appoint to Conservation Commission: Lindsay Nelson

There was a motion made by Scott to appoint Lindsay Nelson to the Conservation Commission. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

6.6 Appoint to New Mills Dam Committee: Pat Sirois

There was a motion made by Scott to appoint Pat Sirois to the New Mills Dam Committee. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

7.0 Warrants

7.1 Town Warrant #16 \$105,865.03

There was a motion made by Scott to approve Town Warrant #16 in the amount of \$105,865.03. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

7.2 Town Payroll #17 \$45,517.07

There was a motion made by Scott to approve Town Payroll #17 in the amount of \$45,517.07. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

8.0 Selectmen/Public Discussion/ Communication

8.1 Rick wanted to know if there had been any news on the properties in probate. Kelly noted there haven't been any changes, the family is still ironing out details.

8.2 Rick also asked if there has been more information obtained for the cemetery and headstone(s) that was vandalized at the end of Wenzel Road. He wanted to be sure the headstone(s) can be fixed or replaced if needed. Kelly said he is looking into the corrective actions that can be taken and where the funds are going to come from.

Also, Rick asked if the Plains Road Cemetery Memorial needs any further upkeep or is missing any of the components that were discussed last year. Kelly said he thought the only thing missing at this time was the plaque on the side. Gary reminded Kelly that they had discussed in the past adding a line item of a reserve to the cemetery as well for such projects. Kelly admittedly lost track of this and will work on that for the coming budget. Rayna added that several of the cemeteries in town have trust funds associated with them and if the cemetery at the end of Wenzel Road is one with a trust fund, the money to repair could come out of that. Rayna said that was the Randal Maxwell Cemetery trust fund. Kelly will look into this.

8.3 Gary noted there was/is a trust for the Babe Ruth field. Rayna believes this is the Pollard Veteran Memorial fund. Rayna said Mr. Pollard was a resident of the town who was supported by the town for many years. After he passed a son in southern Maine who had not realized that the town had supported his father made a donation to the town in his father's name.

8.4 Scott asked if there was any update on the renaming of the Purgatory Fire Station. He had asked a while back why it had been changed and who made the decision to change the name. Per Kelly there is a plaque that Chief Sherman intends to have placed on the building to explain the history of the building. Scott made it clear he was happy with that plan. Gary would like the Red Cook Fire Station to go back on the front of the building (and that it could be added above the existing sign). Along the same note, Scott would like to see signage for the ball fields noting the memorial names of those as well. The Babe Ruth Field is the Jim (William) Hyde Memorial Field and there is a Maggie Eaton Field. Tom will investigate getting someone to make the signs.

9.0 Future Agenda Items

9.1 Tax Increment Finance (TIF) Program

10.0 Adjournment at 9:03pm

Respectfully submitted by Angela Parker and Kelly Weissenfels.