

Town of Litchfield
Select Board Meeting Minutes
March 10, 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; Larry Nadeau, Road Comm. (Absent); John Upham, Transfer Station Manager; Tom Wood, Chm. Budget Comm.; Steve Ochmanski, Code Enforcement Officer; and others per the sign in sheet.

2.0 Minutes of February 24th, 2025

There was a motion made by Scott to approve the minutes from February 24, 2025. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

3.0 Reports and Correspondence

3.1 Town Manager

A. The Town Office will be open for in person voting on the Sabattus Primary Closing referendum on March 8, 2025. Absentee ballots are available starting March 10, 2025. Information from the RSU is available for residents and Kelly will be posting on the Facebook page as well.

B. Kelly has heard back from the Bureau of Labor Standards regarding the safety fines they had set for Public Works and the Transfer Station. They have reduced them by 50% totaling \$1,050.00 and \$350.00 respectively.

C. Kelly has been in touch with Rep. Greenwood to get a status update on the questions regarding the legislation discussed during the last few Select Board meetings. Rep. Greenwood pointed out that a bill to allow County tax collection to be split up instead of collected all at once, has been submitted by another representative. He said he is ready to schedule a meeting with Turnpike representatives and asked that Kelly and Chief Sherman come up with a few possible times. Property tax legislation has not yet been formulated. Rep. Greenwood also was able to get verbiage for a bill that would require vehicle insurance companies to pay municipal emergency response invoices. However, on talking through the proposed bill, Kelly and Chief Sherman came to the conclusion that the current economic environment (insurance increases due to national fire and weather events) was not the best for this type of bill. Out of concern the bill could result in increased insurance rates for everyone, instead of enforcing existing coverage, they requested that bill not be introduced at this time.

3.2 Code Officer/Plumbing Inspector

A. Steve handed out his report for the members of the Select Board to review. No questions resulted.

B. Steve updated the Board members on the most recent Planning Board meeting. The Solar Power Moratorium review has been completed. They are going to start putting the verbiage into Litchfield's Ordinance and formulating a warrant article. Steve noted that there will be a Public Hearing in May to complete the process. Gary would like to see the final before it goes into the Ordinance. Steve will get copies to the Select Board after the April Planning Board meeting.

3.3 Road Commissioner

A. Larry is out sick today, Kelly noted that they have been doing well in response to the recent storms and the roads are starting the freeze thaw cycle of the Spring. The Road Crew has been working to maintain spots of danger diligently.

B. One ton transmission was in question. However, the transmission has been drained and reset and appears to be in working order.

3.4 Fire & Rescue

A. Trucks are all up and running at this point. Engine 65 is going back into O'Connors next week for the bumper repair as well as a couple minor repairs Chief Sherman wants done to the dashboard.

B. Chief Sherman has been focused on the budget for the Fire Department, which will be reviewed later in this meeting.

3.5 Emergency Management.

A. Pipeline safety training will be held in April. The Chief has accepted the invitation for increased training.

B. National Incident Management System (NIMS) training will be also be available and a schedule will be out soon. Chief Sherman will get the information to Kelly to have him disperse to the appropriate staff. He believes there is a module for Public Works as well.

A. Gary asked Chief Sherman if the water rescue training had been completed. Chief Sherman reported that it was with great success. The ice conditions were quite a mess, but it's never a perfect time for water rescues. There were 8 inches of water on top of the ice. There was an introduction of a new rigging system that the Chief will be looking for funding to purchase (grants, etc.). He believes the rigging will have great value for the town in the future should it be needed.

*** Pause for Winter Sand Bid ***

3.6 Assessing Agent

A. RJD will be back on Thursday as they are maintaining their regular schedule. Ellery will be back next week after being out sick.

B. Kelly has contacted RJD regarding a new contract as their 3-year contract will be completed in June. Kelly has the numbers for this as well as the fees for the quarterly valuation where at the end of 4 years the town will be ready for a revaluation. This has

been spoken about in previous Select Board meetings. There will be continued discussion and presentation of fees during the Town Office budget review.

3.7 Transfer Station

- A. There were 5 new stickers issued.
- B. Bulky Bin and Cardboard will be emptied this week.
- C. John is expecting the pace to pick up soon.
- D. Gary asked how the new building is treating the crew. John reports that it has served them well and yes, they have been comfortable in there during the winter.
- E. Kelly and John have been speaking about hauling fees and the contract. John had done some research and found a new company that may be a good option. There will be a bid review for this down the road as it might save Litchfield some money.

3.8 Other Town Committees

4.0 Scheduled Business

4.1 Open bids for winter sand, 7 pm

Bids were handed to the Select Board members and read as follows:

- A. Country Fair Inc. (Locations in Sabattus and Greene) Price per cubic yard: \$19.50
- B. McGee Construction (Location in Monmouth) Price per cubic yard: \$17.10
- C. Bubier Construction Price per cubic yard: \$17.20

Per Gary (members in agreement) the sand needs to be inspected and accepted by the town. Larry will review upon return from his sick leave.

A motion was made by Scott to accept the bid sent by McGee Construction for \$17.10 per cubic yard, pending the approval of the Road Commissioner (Larry Nadeau). This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

4.2 Fuel Depot well survey, Fire Marshal / DEP inspections

A local surveyor was consulted to have the residential and public wells surveyed. Kelly said the report came back noting that the public wells at the fire station and the lodge across from the fire station overlap the fuel depot site within the 1000-foot radius. This means the site needs to be moved and ends discussion of any above ground tanks on the current site.

The Fire Marshal in charge of all above ground fuel tank sites came to inspect and confirmed what we had known about the current site not being up to code (see the Special Meeting of February 2, 2025, for more information). It was noted that the existing underground tank location and lot (next to the Public Works garage is grandfathered for tank replacements.

Kelly will respond to the Fire Marshal's request for correction regarding the current fuel depot. He let the Fire Marshal know of the proposed contracting of new tanks and the temporary measures of protective fencing and concrete blocks to correct the distance between crash barriers.

Rick said that the video of the individual doing doughnuts around the fuel tanks in their pickup truck made its way to him. He's curious if the individual had been spoken to? Kelly said that a Sheriff's Deputy spoke with the individual's parents. This is very concerning to Rick and to the town. Kelly will be working to get the existing tanks properly barricaded, until the proposed site is approved and completed.

4.3 Review of Underground Storage Tank replacement budget proposals

Simard and Sons have provided the requested list of needs (see Fuel Depot Special meeting Feb 2, 2025) that can be put out for bid. The budget estimate for a fiberglass tank with two compartments of 8 thousand and 4 thousand gallons each was \$260,000. This included removal of the existing underground tanks. This option was about \$14,000 more than a similar sized fiberglass jacketed steel option. Toby Jutras asked why the Road Crew and Emergency Management needs a fuel depot instead of filling up at local gas stations. The importance of this change and upgrade was spoken to by Rick, Gary and Chief Sherman. Tom requested a copy(s) for the Budget Committee to have. Rick wants to have the 3 quotes that Simard and Sons offered during the previous meeting, top of the line middle of the road and with fuel monitoring data transfer with a thumb drive. Also, Rick noted that having the RSU contract gets the town a decent savings on fuel prices.

4.4 Request for bid, mowing contract

Kelly let the board know that the contracts that went out to bid last year need to be renewed. Isaac Butler Mowing, that took two of the three bid last year has let him know that they will not be seeking renewal of their contracts. Currently the ball fields are covered, however the Town Office, Purgatory Fire Station, the cemeteries and Woodbury Pond Park need to be put out again for bid.

The Select Board would like to see the verbiage changed to include that trimming to the road needs to be done every-other mowing to keep up with weed whacking. Chief Sherman asked if there is a provision for winter clean up. There needs to be a specific line that states spring cleaning needs to happen before the season's lawn mowing begins. Kelly received multiple questions about changing who does which area and residents checking to see if areas are covered by the contract(s). Kelly will bring the request for bid(s) to the next meeting for review and approval.

4.5 Budget review – Capital Road Improvement

Toby handed out the budget for the Select Board members to review and presented his list of needs and requests.

Dennis Hill Road – resurfacing. Culvert on Dennis Hill also needs to be completed before the resurfacing is completed.

Buker Road – Is showing some wear and tear.

Toby continued with the plan to move forward and look to the future, i.e. next year.

They are looking for a budget request for 672,000.00 which will give the team a good start to next year with the roads that will need work next year. Rick suggested adding

the possibility of getting some rip rap onto the shoulder of Huntington Hill Road since the shoulder is continuing to wash away.

4.6 Budget review – Fire Rescue

Chief Sherman made sure members had his budget report and noted that Fire & Rescue's budget request has decreased by \$19,200.00. He is working to get the budget to a place where the budget only changes due to the increase in living and as expenses of items increase. He believes he is close to that point.

There is an increase from \$1,500.00 to \$3,000.00 for repairs to gravel areas as well as hydrant(s). Larry has said that Litchfield Public Works will be able to get the jobs done to save a little money. Chief Sherman has a better handle with what is needed to do the job. His final total for the request is \$253,100.00.

Tom wanted to know if the option of a dry hydrant over on Jungle Lane. Per Chief Sherman, this relies largely on the owner of the property doing the rehab work he wants to complete on the property. This might have to wait until next year's budget season.

4.7 Budget review – Emergency Management

Chief Sherman said that minor changes to this budgetary request can be expected.

There is an increase in the compensation for the Deputy Director stipend of \$250 from the last budget, since there has been no increase in a few years.

The dispatch line also has a change, there will be an increase for the upcoming first half of the 2-year contract. Chief Sherman went on to go over the budget requests in detail.

The final request coming from Emergency Management is \$52,683.00, which will need to be double checked prior to the warrant going out to the residents of Litchfield.

4.8 Budget review – Transfer Station

John Upham is requesting a \$3,200.00 increase for this season's budget cycle. Part of the increase is that electric rates are likely to go up. Tipping and hauling is also likely to increase, so that is allowed for as well.

Gary asked if there has been any movement or more information regarding the leaf and brush pile removal. John said there was supposed to be, but unforeseen circumstances has pushed the process out again. There are numerous moving parts that he and Kelly are looking into to get the pile taken care of.

4.9 Budget review – Conservation Commission

Kelly presented this budget request, starting with the increase under special projects for a \$2,000.00 match for combating invasive species. In addition to \$4,500.00 increase for a team to come to help with the battle. This totaling \$6,500.00 increase.

4.10 Budget review – Town Office

Kelly said he has added cost-of-living increases for staffing. Gary asked why there is a position (CEO assistant) still on the request when the position has never been filled. Kelly told him that the position was filled, but has not been used, and that it could be adjusted, but to keep in mind that the line is also used for the CEO admin assistant. The assessing budgetary line is in this budget request as well. Rick requested that the CEO line item be revamped.

General Government is going to increase for mileage and postage as it's increasing for everyone.

Rick wanted to know when/where the cost for an announcement sign for the town would come from. Tom let him know it would come out of a capital improvement project since it's a one-time larger purchase. Chief Sherman will be looking into the cost of the signage.

Employee Benefits: Health insurance costs increased by 9% this year and are estimated for 10% next year.

Town's risk insurance: no change

Legal: no change

Heating oil will decrease since there are heat pumps now.

Office equipment: 5.32% increase

Kelly let the select board know that he was looking at the Capital Improvement Plan and found that since the large ticket item of the road grader isn't needed anymore due to the plan of keeping the roads updated, there are enough reserve funds to cover the fuel depot underground tank replacement raising additional tax dollars for it. Kelly will have details at the next meeting.

4.11 Sign RSU4 Notices of Election

After Kelly handed out the Notice of Election to the members, there was a motion made by Scott to sign the Notices of Election. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

5.0 Unscheduled Business

5.1

6.0 Appointments/Resignations

6.1

7.0 Warrants

7.1 Town Warrant #17 \$432,166.20 (of which \$371, 544.55 is for RSU4)

There was a motion made by Scott to approve Town Warrant #17 in the amount of \$432,166.20 (of which \$371, 544.55 is for RSU4). This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

7.2 Town Payroll #18 \$34,008.02

There was a motion made by Rick to approve the Town Payroll in the amount of \$34,008.02. This was seconded by Scott, vote 3-0.

8.0 Selectmen/Public Discussion/ Communication

8.1 Rick said that he possibly will be able to purchase the school building on Huntington Hill Road and return it to the original state. He and Rayna will talk outside the meeting.

8.2 Tom referenced the discussion about the ball fields signage discussed at the last Select Board meeting. He would like to know if the party responsible has been named yet. The representative from the Recreation Committee will take this back to the

Recreation Committee. Tom will be in contact with the Recreation Committee to work out the details.

9.0 Future Agenda Items

9.1 Tax Increment Finance (TIF) Program – to be removed for now

10.0 Adjournment at 9:27 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Kelly Weissenfels