

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

2.0 Minutes of May 28, 2024

There was a motion made by Scott to approve the minutes from May 28, 2024, as written. This was seconded by Gary, vote 2-0 (Rick abstained as he was not in attendance at the that meeting).

3.0 Reports and Correspondence

3.1 Town Manager

A. Kelly reminded everyone that elections are to be held at the Litchfield Sportsman's club on June 11, 2024, 8am-8pm. This is the statewide primary as well as the RSU4 budget and municipal elections.

B. Annual Report / Town Meeting -- Town Meeting is scheduled for Saturday June 15, 2024, the report should be in mailboxes soon and if you didn't get one there are copies available at the Town Office.

C. Kelly Spoke with Calderwood Engineering regarding the grant for the replacement of the culvert near the Rt. 126 end of Dennis Hill Road. The town will be submitting again this year for a grant.

3.2 Code Officer/Plumbing Inspector

A. Steve handed his report to the Members of the Select Board, per discussion, looks like Steve has been busy. There are a couple large projects in town that have had high price tags.

B. Steve reported briefly on the last meeting of the Planning Board. Focusing on the moratorium of solar farms coming into Litchfield that Gary would like investigated. Paul is to speak on the topic a little later in the meeting.

3.3 Road Commissioner

A. Per Larry the guardrail projects have been completed on Buker Road and Dead River Road.

B. The Dennis Hill Road project is coming along. The crew is making progress with ditching. Larry notes that the current plan is to have grinding/injection and paving done in August.

C. Larry plans to have the steel left behind at the recent bridge project picked up in the next 7 days.

3.4 Fire & Rescue

A. Kelly gave Chief Sherman's report again this week. He announced Chief Sherman, and his wife Betsy recently had a new arrival to their family. The Couple recently welcomed a baby boy to the family and Chief Sherman is currently on leave. Chief Sherman plans to attend the Town Meeting.

Otherwise, there are no significant events regarding Fire & Rescue.

3.5 Emergency Mgmt.

Nothing to report

3.6 Assessing Agent

Per Kelly, Ellery was in the office this past Thursday and will be back in a few weeks.

3.7 Transfer Station

A. One bulky and others picked up this week.

B. Per Kelly the electrical for the new attendant's quarters is scheduled to be completed on June 20, 2024. The project is getting started tomorrow with the groundwork per Larry.

3.8 Other Town Committees

A. The Planning Board was represented by Paul Hempstead, the vice co-chair of the Planning Board. He was present to discuss the topic of a moratorium on Solar Farms coming into Litchfield. He reported that the Planning Board was informed the Select Board would like to have a moratorium in place until some firm regulations can be set regarding Solar Farms. There was a lengthy discussion amongst the Planning Board members with an outcome that the ban or any moratorium should not include any residential or personal use. The Planning Board also feels there to be too many questions on the definitions of solar use (scale, size, etc.). If the Select Board wants to proceed, the Planning Board would need time to work out appropriate scales, sizes, etc. allowed in order to appropriately phrase an ordinance/moratorium. The Planning Board has requested the Select Board's help with what exactly the ordinance/moratorium should address. Per Paul this could be addressed at the next meeting. This was discussed further with questions, opinions and suggestions.

The Planning Board will continue to accumulate information going forward.

B. Tom, representing the budget committee, noted they will be meeting this coming Thursday to vote on the recommendation on article 59 in the town warrant.

C. Kelly reported that the Conservation Committee is working diligently to get rid of the knot weed around town that is affecting the roads in town. Lindsay Nelson is working with a contractor to spray knot weed in the town right-of-way. She is also circulating a letter from the Town giving landowners adjacent to knot weed in the right-of-way to opt into allowing knot weed on their land to be sprayed as well.

4.0 Scheduled Business

4.1 Presentation by the RSU4 withdrawal advisor/consultant.

Percy introduced Jack Turcotte as the RSU4 withdrawal investigation advisor/consultant. Mr. Turcotte's presentation was a large amount of information. Some of the major points he covered are:

- A. He presented a seemingly comprehensive list of all the costs that the town would need to consider if they were to start their own school system. Jack explained that there is no way to account for all the items needed to tell the town how much it will cost to withdraw and keep the school functional.
- B. There needs to be a good relationship and/or an open line of communication with the current leaders in the RSU4 system to be assured that the town of Litchfield would retain its assets as well as be sure the kids are treated fairly.
- C. Jack felt that there would be no financial savings resulting from withdrawing from the RSU. He thought that the consolidation plan was never a good idea in his opinion. Litchfield needs to decide if they want to withdraw based only on whether they want to be the leaders of their own destiny, as that would be the goal achieved by withdrawing.

The presentation was followed by discussion as well as questions and opinions.

4.2 Small Rd detour repair – Maine Turnpike Authority offer

There are two options for the repairs needed on the Rt. 197 end of the Small Road.

- A. Have the Turnpike Authority repair what they feel is wrong with the road, this could result in a patch job. They do not want to dig up the area and fix the road. They want to patch it over and fix the shoulder.
- B. Take the monetary amount offered by the Turnpike Authority which per Larry is \$30,000.00. He would recommend this going towards the cost of repair if the town chooses option B.

There was a motion made by Scott to accept the offer from the Maine Turnpike Authority of a check for the repairs to the end of the Small road, with the Town arranging for completion of the road repair. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

4.3 Review/sign CMP pole permits (additional for Oak Hill Rd)

The documents were signed by the board after asking if Larry had any issues with the poles going up.

There was a motion made by Scott to approve and sign the CMP pole permits for Oak Hill Road. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

4.4 ARPA remaining funds (\$10,755)—project recommendations

American Rescue Plan Act had very specific rules on how the funds offered could be spent. Litchfield chose to spend the funds on Broadband. They have since changed the rules and

per Kelly now the money may be spent on anything. Kelly reports the town of Litchfield was the recipient of the \$10,755.00 that needs to be spent/allocated by the end of December. Kelly would like the Board and taxpayers to be thinking of things to use the money for. He does however have a couple quotes on the way for heat pumps. Kelly is to come up with options and present them to the Board.

4.5 Preview of expense and revenue charts for Town Meeting - Kelly

There were 3 chart drafts reviewed with the Board and attendees in the room. It was discussed and suggestions made for improvements; Kelly is to make the changes to and have final drafts by town meeting.

4.6 Preview of Road/Bridge Expense charts for Town Meeting - Kelly

There was one draft reviewed with the Board and attendees in the room. It was discussed and explained. Larry made a suggestion that would maybe make it more clear for people attending town meeting why the town did the bridge replacement(s) the way they did. Kelly will work to make sure there are hard copies for attendees of the town meeting. Rayna asked that all the documents get dated with FY25.

5.0 Unscheduled Business

5.1

6.0 Appointments/Resignations

6.1 Appoint Steve Ochmanski as Code Enforcement Officer & Local Plumbing Inspector

There was a motion made by Scott to appoint Steve Ochmanski as Code Enforcement Officer & Local Plumbing Inspector. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

6.2 Appoint Lawrence Nadeau II as Road Commissioner

There was a motion made by Scott to appoint Lawrence Nadeau II as Road Commissioner. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

6.3 Appoint Tina Gowell as Litchfield Representative to the Gardiner Ambulance Advisory Committee

There was a motion made by Scott to appoint Tina Gowell as Litchfield Representative to the Gardiner Ambulance Advisory Committee. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

6.4 Appoint Jay Danforth as 2nd Litchfield Representative to the Gardiner Ambulance Advisory Committee

There was a motion made by Scott to appoint Jay Danforth as 2nd Litchfield Representative to the Gardiner Ambulance Advisory Committee. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0

6.5 Appoint Kelly Weissenfels as Town Manager

There was a motion made by Scott to appoint Kelly Weissenfels as Town Manager. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

6.6 Appoint Kelly Weissenfels as Tax Collector

There was a motion made by Scott to appoint Kelly Weissenfels as Tax Collector. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

6.7 Appoint Kelly Weissenfels as Treasurer

There was a motion made by Scott to appoint Kelly Weissenfels as Treasurer. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

6.8 Appoint Kelly Weissenfels as Town Clerk

There was a motion made by Scott to appoint Kelly Weissenfels as Town Clerk. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

7.0 Warrants

7.1 Town Warrant #34 \$98,982.80

There was a motion made by Scott to approve Town Warrant #34 in the amount of \$98,982.80. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

7.2 RSU 4 Warrant #35 \$360,364.63

There was a motion made by Scott to approve RSU 4 Warrant #35 in the amount of \$360,364.63. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

7.3 Town Payroll #24 \$42,352.67

There was a motion made by Scott to approve Town Payroll #24 in the amount of \$42,352.67. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

8.0 Selectmen/Public Discussion/ Communication

8.1 Mr. Russell expressed disagreement with the Cashflow chart that Kelly had presented at the previous meeting, and felt the baseline number of \$1.6m was too high. He also said that the number Kelly had said would be remaining did not take into account the amount of money in the bank from the Road Bond. Kelly responded that the Road Bond money would be completely used up by the time Dennis Hill Road reconstruction was done this summer, and that he would look again at the spreadsheet he had used to calculate the \$1.6m but felt the school budget was a large driver of that number. Mr. Russell also noted a few errors in the Annual Report, focusing on warrant articles 53 and 54 (County Tax and Cobbossee Watershed) which are not completely in accordance with financial warrant practice. Kelly agreed, but also pointed out that those articles were not changed this year. Rayna confirmed that they were the same last year. Mr. Russell conceded that as long as no one complains, they will be ok this year, but need to be corrected for next year. Mr. Russell also asked if article 11 (insurance payments appropriated to the Fire Department) was passed, would the Fire Department budget be reduced, and Kelly replied that yes, Chief Sherman had asked for the articles to be in that order so that he could request to reduce the Fire Department Budget if article 11 passed. Mr. Russell also reported that a FOAA request he had submitted regarding FOAA training certificates had failed to produce any certificates and since there were no certificates, there must have been no training. Kelly responded

that when began filling in as Town Manager he made sure all required FOAA training was accomplished, but due to short staffing at the time, and COVID-19 contingencies, the certificates were misplaced. Select Board members affirmed that they had taken the training and turned in the certificates. FOAA training is due upon election to Select Board, budget committee, and other positions as listed in the frequently asked questions of the FOAA page of Maine.gov.

9.0 Future Agenda Items

9.1 Select Board Web Page

9.2 Select Board Plaque for Special Recognition Recipients

10.0 Adjournment at 9:02pm

Respectfully submitted by Angela Parker