

Town of Litchfield
Selectboard Meeting Minutes
June 24, 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 (Zoom); 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.

1.0.B Elect Chairperson of the Select Board

Per Gary, since there has been a new election process completed there needs to be a Chair elected for the ongoing proceedings.

There was a motion made by Rick to elect Gary Parker as the Chair of the Select Board. This was seconded by Scott, vote 2-0 (Gary abstained).

2.0.A Minutes of May 30, 2024

There was a motion made by Scott to approve the minutes from May 30, 2024. This was seconded by Gary, vote 2-0 (Rick abstained).

2.0.B Minutes of June 10, 2024.

There was a motion made by Scott to approve the minutes from June 10, 2024. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

3.0 Reports and Correspondence

3.1 Town Manager

A. The town office continues to deal with staffing shortages. Per Kelly Diana is no longer employed by the town. Kelly will be looking to hire soon.

B. Woodbury Pond Park is now officially open. The first clean-up day got rained out and will be rescheduled. There are 2 new attendants as well as a volunteer that will be helping with the organization of events, etc. Kelly is hopeful this will draw good attention to the park.

C. There is a red zone price increase being noted recently that Kelly wanted to make everyone aware of. There is an increase in cost seen by the company regarding their fiber optic lines, and they are passing this along to the consumer. It's an increase of \$7 dollars per month.

D. Kelly wants to let everyone know that the second round of RSU4 budget talks is in progress. The public vote is scheduled for July 10, 2024, at the High School. Subsequently the referendum vote is scheduled for July 30, 2024. Kelly notes that due to the votes more

than likely taking more than one round, voting will be held at the Town Office instead of the Sportsman's Club. This should money on space rental, and ballot clerks. This was discussed amongst the room and settled with Kelly going to try this at the Town office and will revise the plan if needed. In addition to the Sodalite, web, and Facebook, he plans to have signs at the Sportsman's Club directing voters to the Town Office.

3.2 Code Officer/Plumbing Inspector

Nothing to report

3.3 Road Commissioner

A. Per Larry all the major excavation of Dennis Hill Road should be done this week. The ditches held up very well to the recent rainstorm. There are still some cross culverts to be done and a few driveway culverts to be replaced but overall the project is coming along well. The grinding is supposed to take place in July.

B. Chip sealing is going to commence soon, they will be starting to stockpile behind the salt shed and possibly to the left of the Town Office (looking at the building). The Pine Tree Road and the Ferrin Road are scheduled to be chip sealed.

C. Larry and Kelly are working on resubmitting the grant for the Dennis Hill Culvert replacement. That should be sent in before June 30, 2024.

D. Transfer Station work will continue with the building of the garage.

E. Larry is waiting for a dumpster to be dropped off so the crew can get the grounds cleaned up around the 2 new bridges recently built in town.

F. Per Rayna, Buker Road seems to be breaking up more than one might expect or like. She asked Larry if he had been over that way and noticed any issues. Larry briefly went through the history of the work done on the road in the last 10 years. The road will be ditched again and is on the schedule. He is aware of the shoulder issues and plans to address them once Dennis Hill is complete.

G. Larry also wanted to ask if the beavers are seen on Huntington Hill Road, he is requesting that citizens simply text or call him. They can build their damn back up within 24 hours and Larry doesn't always travel over that way.

H. Larry has seen the new truck that is reportedly coming for July 1, 2024. He was disappointed that it wasn't ready for the town meeting. He personally went to check in on the progress and has asked the company to make a couple of minor adjustments to the install. Again, the truck should arrive in Litchfield by July 1, 2024.

I. The topic of roads, stop signs, one way(s), etc. were discussed and it was asked if maybe Buker Road bridge should be made into a one lane bridge. Also, the speed limit signs on Rt197 were discussed, there seems to be a missing 30 MPH sign.

3.4 Fire & Rescue; Chief Sherman joined the meeting via Zoom.

A. After years of fundraising the Fire Department has acquired a new boat that the association is donating. Chief Sherman wanted to let everyone know they will be seeing

Fire / Rescue out and about on the lakes practicing and determining how best to outfit the boat with what's needed.

B. Engine 65 will be fully repaired and back to Litchfield by the end of June. Chief Sherman was also disappointed that he didn't have this truck back by the town meeting to show the citizens. He has been in touch with the company fixing the truck, they will be sending along the invoice and Kelly will be taking care of that during this fiscal year.

C. The public comment section for the new OSHA standard has been extended to July 22, 2024. Chief Sherman has asked that folks go and make comments as directed. He will work with Kelly and get information out to the town to aid them in making the comments.

3.5 Emergency Mgmt.

A. Chief noted they are starting to look for shelter volunteers for the Winter months. They are starting early on purpose.

B. If the boat and the truck are ready for July 30, 2024, Rick suggested having it parked out by the town office so people can see it when they are coming in to vote on the RSU4 budget.

3.6 Assessing Agent

Ellery will be back in the office on July 11, 2024. The State has sent a notification of acceptance regarding the declared ratio of 100%. Kelly explained that due to factoring in for tax year 2023, no change was needed for the upcoming tax year 2024, but some adjustment may be needed the following year.

3.7 Transfer Station

A. The bins needed to be emptied last week, along with the freon from air conditioners and refrigerators.

B. Electrical and phone/internet swapped from the old shack to the new building. The next step for the site is getting the pads poured for the CONEX boxes being used to build the garage.

3.8 Other Town Committees

A. Tom discussed the RSU4 Ad Hoc Committee meeting recently held where they voted unanimously to have the chair enter into negotiations with Mr. Turcotte (Jack) to get the ball rolling to find a path forward in possible withdrawal from the RSU.

B. Pat let everyone know that the Sr. Advisory Committee has voted to donate \$200.00 to the pickleball association to help them purchase a container to keep equipment in.

Pat also mentions that, the Senior Steppers and the Carol Baily String Band are always announced as being a program of the Town of Litchfield Senior Center.

4.0 Scheduled Business

4.1 Warrant Article by petition (Art 64) corrective action for missing public hearing

After receiving the petition to place the amendment to the Land Use District Map on the Town Warrant, the Select Board should have been advised (by Kelly or Steve) to either

schedule a public hearing, or refer the article to the Planning Board, so that they could schedule a public hearing. Since we missed this step, the amendment is invalid. MMA advised us to have the Planning Board hold the hearing and the Select Board schedule a special town meeting to properly re-approve the amendment. This was discussed and a plan to move forward was made.

There was a motion made by Scott to send the Warrant Article by petition (Art 64) of the citizen's initiative to the Planning Board for review and public hearing. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

4.2 Request to waive permit fee for Farmer's Club fairground project

Rayna presented the topic to the Select Board. The historical significance was questioned by Gary. Rayna was able to present that information as well with a brief history of the buildings.

There was a motion made by Scott to waive the permit fee for the Farmer's Club fairgrounds project. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

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

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

4.4 Excavator purchase recommendation review

Kelly informed the board of estimates provided to the Town based on specifications provided by the Road Commissioner and handed the discussion over to Larry. Larry informed the Select Board members what they would like and why. There was time for questions, answers and thoughts.

There was a motion made by Scott to approve the purchase of a KUBOTA KX80 excavator from Union Farm Equipment per the quote provided for the Town of Litchfield in the amount of \$151,800.00. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

4.5 Heat pump installation options review

Kelly went over with the Select board the estimates and locations for the heat pumps he wanted to have installed.

Augusta Natural Gas = \$8,800.00 (including rebates)

Coolant Refrigeration = \$12,800.00

Hometown Heat Pumps = \$11,600.00 (including rebates)

Gary suggested checking in with Dave's Appliance, or their heat pump division. Rayna said she had good luck with them.

There was a motion made by Scott to for Kelly to move forward with the heat pump installation by Augusta Natural Gas as quoted. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

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

Multiple projects were discussed.

Gary suggested that half the funds be put towards the heat pumps project and the other half to go towards the revitalizing the Babe Ruth Baseball field. Discussion was had regarding the suggestion and all agreed that this would be in the best interests of the town. No other suggestions/recommendations were made.

There was a motion made by Scott to accept the funds ARPA funds of \$10,755.00 to be split equally between the purchase and installation of heat pumps at the town office and the other half going to the Rec department for field improvement. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

4.7 Request use of contingency funds for expected department overages

Kelly explained that there are 4 items that need attention. The first being the two audits that were done this year, while only one was budgeted for. This was an overage of \$15,000.00 under General Government. The second item is the legal department, being over by \$2,158.75. Office equipment per Kelly is \$3,700.00 primarily from the mail server failure, and the Sodalite is over by \$300.00. Kelly and members discussed these topics and others as projects like the Woodbury Dam has a reserve fund that they will need to use for their projects.

There was a motion made by Scott to authorize the use of contingency funds not to exceed the amount of \$22,000.00 to help cover the overages in (general government, legal department, office equipment and the Sodalite) the town budget. This was seconded by Rick with Gary's amendment (to get slightly more specific). Vote was 3-0.

There was a motion made by Scott to take \$3,600.00 from contingency to help pay for part of the Woodbury Pond Dam survey (in an amount not to exceed \$3,600.00). This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

5.0 Unscheduled Business

5.1 Rick brought up the topic of getting information out on Facebook again. This has been discussed in the past, Kelly plans to have the person that takes the next position being hired for. This led to another discussion about the RSU budget discussions.

6.0 Appointments/Resignations

6.1 Appoint Ed Avis to New Mills Dam committee

There was a motion made by Scott to appoint Ed Avis as an alternate to the New Mills Dam Committee. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

6.2 Appoint Kelly Weissenfels as Motor Vehicle Agent

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

7.0 Warrants

7.1 Town Warrant #36 \$192,162.40

There was a motion made by Scott to approve town warrant #36 in the amount of \$192,162.40. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

7.2 Town Payroll #25 \$31,413.25

There was a motion made to approve town payroll #25 in the amount of \$31,413.25. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

8.0 Selectmen/Public Discussion/ Communication

8.1

9.0 Future Agenda Items

9.1 Select Board Web Page/Communications

9.2 Select Board Plaque for Special Recognition Recipients - Rick had a suggestion on who to contact to help this project. He will be giving Kelly the contact information.

10.0 Adjournment at 8:52pm (2:21:06)

Respectfully submitted by Angela Parker