

**Town of Litchfield**  
**Select Board Meeting Minutes**  
**August 26, 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.; Steve Ochmanski, Code Enforcement Officer (absent); and others per the sign in sheet.

**2.0 Minutes of July 22, 2024, and Aug 12, 2024**

There was a motion made by Rick to approve the minutes from July 22, 2024. This was seconded by Gary, vote 2-0 (1 abstention)

No minutes for August 12, 2024, as they are not currently complete. See notes under Public Discussion.

**3.0 Reports and Correspondence**

**3.1 Town Manager**

A. The round two RSU4 public vote will be held on September 11, 2024, at the high school. Followed by a referendum vote on September 24, 2024, held at the Town Office.

B. There was another public auction held in which the town sold a truck for \$4,850.00 and for the second time the antique cast iron fencing for \$510.00 that used to be at the Plains Road Cemetery.

C. Kelly noted that the Gardiner City Manager has resigned and taken a job in the Waterville Public School system as of August 30, 2024.

D. Woodbury Pond has extended the hours of operation this week, with the last day being Labor Day. Per Kelly a little bit of the financial deficiency was made up for this year.

E. September will kick off the start of the Rec Soccer Season. Sports Engine has been successful in getting people to sign up and communicate through the online service.

F. Kelly gave an update on the IT project that has commenced. The older of the two servers has been switched over to a new server with Windows Active Directory this past weekend. The equipment still has a little bit of life in it and will be repurposed to a low impact duty at the Litchfield Fire Station.

**3.2 Code Officer/Plumbing Inspector**

Per Kelly, Steve will be back with a report during the first meeting in September. Also, per Kelly, there is nothing pressing to report currently.

**3.3 Road Commissioner**

- A. Shouldering has been completed on Huntington Hill Road, which had to be finished off with the excavator. Grinding has started over on Stevenstown Road.
- B. Unfortunately for the town, Richard Lane has given Larry his notice after being with the department for 10 years. He will be moving on to full retirement state, after helping to see the road project through to the end. Larry and the Town wish him the best and thank him for his service. Larry noted he always has a place on the Road crew.
- C. A few crew members are going to be out for vacation(s), etc.. This will make the coming week a little slower than usual.
- D. Per Larry, there is a new employee starting this week, he holds a Class B license so he will be able to help Plow the roads when the weather turns. Larry reports he has quite a bit of experience and will be a good addition to the team.
- E. Rick brought up the Numeric(s) Project that the fire department initiated a few years ago. There are signs placed at intersections telling the emergency vehicle drivers which directions to turn to get to certain property numbers. There is one in front of Gowell's that has worn with time. Rick would like to see this replaced. Per Kelly the sign(s) can be replaced and will be investigated. Chief Sherman noted there are a couple others that he would like to be replaced.

#### 3.4 Fire & Rescue

- A. Engine '65 is back in the shop as there are a couple of electrical issues they need to chase down. Chief Sherman expects to have that back in another day or two. Overall, the Chief is happy with the work done on the truck. As he noted if something is 100% taken apart there are bound to be a couple of kinks to work out once it goes back together.
- B. Per Chief Sherman, there was another application received to join the department. Background checks are completed, and the applicant is coming in for an interview next week.

#### 3.5 Emergency Mgmt.

Nothing to report currently.

#### 3.6 Assessing Agent

Per Kelly, Thursday August 29, 2024, Ellery will be back in the office working to finish up the Spring work necessary to the commitment. Kelly also mentioned that the board will want to start thinking about the date to set the commitment, Gary added this to 5.1 in the agenda.

#### 3.7 Transfer Station

- A. Per Kelly, the freon was removed from air conditioners and refrigerators this week.
- B. Both bulky bins were emptied this week.
- C. This past weekend was the last Sunday open for the Transfer Station this season. The team is back to a Friday/Saturday schedule again until next Spring/Summer season.

#### 3.8 Other Town Committees

### **4.0 Scheduled Business**

#### 4.1 Purgatory Dam FERC number comments

Per Kelly, Mr. Hilton of Litchfield (as previously discussed at SB meetings) has put in a request for a FERC number to start his hobby project of a micro hydro project on the Purgatory Dam in Purgatory Village. This is now requiring public comment as Kelly has received a call from the Cobbossee Watershed District wondering exactly what is going on with Purgatory Dam since there is a public declaration of intention and soliciting comments, protests and motions to intervene regarding that application. Kelly is looking for the Select Board to formally take an opinion on the topic so he can make an official comment to those asking now and in the future. Comments and questions were heard and discussed.

-Scott's initial opinion is that if the Town of Litchfield isn't held liable and it doesn't cost anything then he doesn't care.

- The opinion from the Town's attorney will be attached to the minutes. A summary is: The opinion of Legal is that there is a liability to the town as it's town property and eventually there will be a cost to the town. More so than what has already been accrued as people are being paid, including lawyers to give opinions, etc. Also, as Kelly mentioned there may be a need for a fish ladder if the project proceeds, which would include rebuilding the dam or at least parts of it.

As Rick mentioned there also will be potential cost with the removal of the project down the road (Scott also mentioned maintenance) and he would want to see proof that the project will fund all the town's expenses.

- When Rayna asked if the application being submitted implied that the Select Board was in agreement with the project moving forward. Gary wanted it to be clear that there has never been any indication from the Select Board of approval of this project. Going back to look at the minutes would show there has been questions with no direct approval regarding the project. The purpose of the topic on the agenda is to have an official motion made to clearly state that in hopes of ending the discussion.

There was a motion made by Gary to send a letter to FERC that the Litchfield Select Board is not in favor of having any kind of hydro facility at Purgatory Dam.

- Discussion continued and ended with Rick asking if Gary needed to put the motion back on the table. To which Gary replied, he would ask for a motion to be made.

There was a motion made by Rick to oppose the Purgatory Hydro project. This was seconded by Scott, vote 3-0.

\*\*Special Town Meeting was held to discuss 5 articles needing to be brought before the Town of Litchfield Citizens.

A Moderator was elected through the electoral process. The special town meeting was conducted with each article being discussed with time for questions and comments. All warrant articles passed after discussion and questions. The meeting was adjourned at 7:38pm.

\*\* The Select Board meeting was reconvened at 7:42pm.

#### 4.2 Road Bond Expenditure Summary

Kelly reminded everyone that the Town has a 4.4-million-dollar road bond that was planned for by the Road Advisory Committee 6 years ago. This was taken to rejuvenate, renovate and reconstruct the town roads in Litchfield. When the plan was discussed originally this was going to take 7 years to get to a point where the roads just needed to be maintained. The project was actually completed in 4 years, Kelly reports that he has a spread sheet that looks at everything that went into the project for costs. Between the Road Bond and the Road Maintenance Carryforward funds, the current numbers show an available amount remaining of \$160,000.00. This is based on all invoices received, with all the planned work being completed with the exception of the final overlay on Dennis Hill Road. Kelly gave examples of how the numbers have gotten to where they are now. Questions and comments were heard with Larry explaining future plans.

#### 4.3 Bridge Mats for Woodbury Pond Dam, Engineering - David Howes – Taken out of order to be conscious of time.

Kelly gave a brief overview of the project as this has been discussed before. Mr. Howes has more information from the engineers as well as a company picked out to supply the mats. Litchfield's Legal advisor recommended that the town might want to do the work as it's a town way. Questions and comments between Mr. Howes, Larry and the Select Board ended with a plan for Larry going to the company providing the mats to inspect said mats. Public Works will be doing the work to get them in place after the company gets them off the trailer and close to where they are needed. Future inspections of the mats will be conducted on an agreed upon schedule, set by Larry and the Town Manager. All expenses are being paid by the property owner, Mr. Howes. Larry and Kelly will be putting together an estimate for public works to do the project. Once all the t(s) are crossed and i(s) are dotted the final plan should have a motion passed before the mats are placed. Everyone is aware of the plan and is onboard.

#### 4.4 Ambulance contract

The reasoning behind the contract and plan to pay off the uncollectable(s) was discussed as it has been at previous meetings.

A motion was made by Scott to sign and date the 2024/2025 Ambulance Contract. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

#### 4.5 CMP Pole Permit

Per Kelly, this is for the approval of 1 pole on Huntington Hill Road Serving the new subdivision that is being constructed.

There was a motion made by Rick to approve CMP's pole request on Huntington Hill Road. This was seconded by Scott, vote 3-0.

### **5.0 Unscheduled Business**

#### 5.1 Commitment Date

Kelly recommended that the town plan to commit property taxes based on the RSU4 budget that will be approved at the public meeting on September 11, 2024. Even though the referendum on the 24th may fail, Kelly would like to set September 23, 2024, as the commitment date. This is to aid not getting tax bills out to the residents late and to avoid drawing down available funds to unacceptable levels.

There was a motion made by Scott to set September 23, 2024, as the date to set the tax commitment date. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

#### 5.2 RSU4 consolidation

Tom sent the members of the town government an application from RSU4 to the Department of Education for Libby Tozier for capital improvements. There was also one sent out for Sabattus Primary School. The School Board will know in a couple months if they have met the criteria, by mid-summer of 2025 there will have been a visit from the representatives of the DOE. A publication will come out by the end of August 2025 reporting on everyone's standings regarding their need for assistance from the State. Per Tom, after some analysis, the School Board is recommending closing Libby Tozier and Sabattus Primary. Tom went on to report that he is in the process of making a summary of the report, which he will send out to the members of the town government. He also reviewed what the plan moving forward is.

### **6.0 Appointments/Resignations**

#### 6.1

### **7.0 Warrants**

#### 7.1 Town Warrant #4 \$979,934.89

There was a motion made by Scott to approve Town Warrant #4 in the amount of \$979,934.89. This was seconded by Scott, vote 3-0.

#### 7.2 Town Payroll #4 \$38,233.15

There was a motion made by Scott to approve Town Payroll #4 in the amount of \$38,233.15. This was seconded by Rick, vote 3-0.

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

8.1 Gary asked Kelly how the hiring of new staff is coming along, also asking how many others Kelly has plans to hire. Gary is investigating why there were no minutes for the August 12, 2024, meeting presented this evening. Per Kelly there was a scheduling issue, as the minute taker didn't have time to type the minutes in the 3 days in which that she was allotted to do so. When asked for more detail, Kelly reports that it's a communication/scheduling issue. Gary stated that he doesn't like getting the agenda and minutes the Sunday night or Monday morning before the scheduled Select Board meeting.

8.2 Chief Sherman went over his numbers for this quarter's activities of the Fire Department. Gary would like that sent to or handed to Kelly so it can be attached to these minutes.

8.3 Discussed after 9.1 during meeting: Fire and Rescue/OSHA

Per Chief Sherman the public hearing will be in early November, this is for anyone else, over and above the public comment(s) that have been submitted. Per Chief Sherman this will be via Zoom.

### **9.0 Future Agenda Items**

9.1 Select Board Communications

Per Kelly, Face Book communications are going well, consistency and frequency seems to be staying above par. He feels the community is getting a lot more information from the posts. Scott would like to see the agenda accompany the posts in the future. Rick suggested setting aside some budgetary funds to cover boosting the posts so they stay "relevant" for longer so more folks can see them.

9.2 Select Board Plaque for Special Recognition Recipients

Per Kelly, he has the symbol in the format needed to move forward with this project.

**10.0 Adjournment** at 9:00pm

Respectfully submitted by Angela Parker