

Select Board & Board of Assessors Meeting- Agenda

July 24, 2023 @ 7:00 p.m.

Fire Station Community Room, 86 River Rd.

Present Board Members-Karen Paz, Joel Lind, Tor Glendinning, Thomas Kostenbader, and Rufus Percy.

Interim Town Manager- Kevin Sutherland. Minutes transcribed by Lauren Allen- Town Clerk

- 1. Call to Order- Karen Paz called the meeting to order at 7:01pm.**
- 2. Pledge of Allegiance**
- 3. Amendments to the Agenda - Joel Lind made a motion to add an Executive Session to the agenda. Rufus Percy seconded the motion. Vote 5-0. Motion passed.**
- 4. Minutes of the previous meeting**
 - a. July 10, 2023 -Tor Glendinning made a motion to accept the minutes. Joel Lind seconded the motion. Vote 5-0. Motion passed.**
- 5. Public Comments on Items Not on the Agenda - There were no public comments.**
- 6. New Business**
 - a. Special Town Meeting - Kevin Sutherland requested a Special Town Meeting to discuss state-funded water testing and several other topics. Tor Glendinning made a motion to approve the request. Thomas Kostenbader seconded the motion. Mal Carey (58 Spruce Road) asked if there was a vicinity zone that testing would need to occur. Kevin Sutherland stated there is a vicinity and could provide that to Mr. Carey. Vote 5-0. Motion passed. The Special Town Meeting will be held at the Fire Station Community Room located at 86 River Road on Monday, August 7, 2023, at 7pm.**
 - b. Hagar Enterprises Road Maintenance Contract for Fiscal Year 2024 – The Select Board asked for details on contract changes which Kevin Sutherland answered. The Select Board discussed the changes and amended the contract. Mal Carey (58 Spruce Road) commented that he “liked the changes made, including invoice details, and adding the Town Manager as part of the steps”. He also brought up questions about the Independent Contractors section. Ben Frey helped answer several of Mr. Carey’s questions. Joel Lind made a motion to accept the contract as modified. Rufus Percy seconded the motion. Vote 5-0. Motion passed.**
- 7. Unfinished Business**
 - a. Treasurer and Tax Collector Appointment – Kevin Sutherland requested the confirmation of Michelle Cameron as Tax Collector, Treasurer and General Assistant effective 07/24/2023. Tor Glendinning made a motion to confirm the appointment. Joel Lind seconded the motion. Vote 5-0. Motion passed.**
 - b. Tax Commitment for Tax Year 2023 / Fiscal Year 2023-2024 -Kevin Sutherland explained the mil rate increase from \$15.90/\$1,000 to \$16.00/\$1,000. He also stated that the senior Tax Stabilization Program had been changed at the state level recently but was in place for this tax year and that we’ll be requesting just over \$5,000 for reimbursement for this state program. Joel Lind made a motion to accept the 2023 tax commitment at the new mil rate. Tor Glendinning seconded the motion. Vote 5-0. Motion passed.**
 - c. Select Board Bylaws – Bylaws were reviewed as presented with modifications. Joel Lind made a motion to accept. Tor Glendinning seconded the motion. Vote 5-0. Motion passed.**
 - d. Project Priorities for Newcastle - Kevin Sutherland’s questionnaire and results were discussed. The questionnaire was sent to Town of Newcastle staff and elected officials of the Select Board last week. The results showed several issues of immediate concern and a timeline of when to address them as answered**

by staff and the Select Board. Joel Lind made a motion to accept and support the Project Priorities list as presented with a quarterly review. Rufus Percy seconded the motion. Vote 5-0. Motion passed.

8. **Town Manager Report and Communications** -Kevin Sutherland briefly mentioned the Lynch Road work and the Historic Preservation draft review. The draft will be discussed at Lincoln Academy on Wednesday, July 26, 2023, at 6:30pm. The North Dyer Neck Road work has been completed and positive feedback has been received regarding the work completed. Lastly, Kevin announced the resignation of the current Town Clerk, Lauren Allen effective Friday, July 28, 2023.
9. **Fiscal Warrants- Tor Glendinning made a motion to accept both Warrants. Joel Lind seconded the motion. Vote 5-0. Motion passed.**
 - a. FY23 End of Year Warrant 2: \$ 29,196.59
 - b. FY24 Second Warrant: \$215,944.08
10. **Executive Session - Joel Lind made a motion to move into Executive Session. Thomas Kostenbader seconded the motion. Vote 5-0. Motion passed. The Select Board moved to Executive Session at 8:20pm. The Executive Session ended at 9:05pm.**
11. **Future Agenda Items**
12. **Adjournment of Meeting – Joel Lind made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Rufus Percy seconded the motion. Vote 5-0. Motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 9:05pm.**

Upcoming Events

August 7 at 7PM – Special Town Meeting, Fire Station Community Room, 86 River Road
August 14 at 7PM — Select Board Meeting, Fire Station Community Room, 86 River Road
August 28 at 7PM — Select Board Meeting, Fire Station Community Room, 86 River Road

Manager commentary for July 24th, 2023 Agenda packet items.

NOTE: While the Select Board discussed the distinction of New Business vs. Unfinished Business Items at their meeting on July 10th, the revised bylaws haven't been approved yet (later in the meeting) but I took the liberty for this meeting to apply the proposed distinction as I understood the intent for this meeting.

New Business Items: This location for agenda items is meant for items that have not previously been put before the Select Board. Ideally, they are placed here as an introduction and for in-depth discussion before a final draft is later presented as an Unfinished Business item at a future meeting. However, if the new item is time sensitive or the Select Board has no issue with the item as presented, the Board may choose to vote on the item.

New Business Item: 6A – Special Town Meeting

Manager's Commentary: With the Lynch Road engineering contract now signed and the May Day storm expenses still sitting on my desk unpaid, I am asking the Select Board to call for a Special Town Meeting on July 7th to move a total of \$200,000 from unassigned fund balance. The total bill for May Day storm expenses is currently just under \$187,000 and would ask that we set aside another \$13,000 for PFA related contamination. The DEP is currently testing drinking water wells near the landfill. State law from 2021 puts the responsibility to mitigate this on the municipality. Fortunately, we're working closely with the state DEP now to ensure our compliance and access to the cost share program (90 state / 10 local), but that still be deplete our contingency (depending on the actual number of properties effected) - so it would be ideal to move additional funds to cover those unknown expenses at that time and keep our contingency intact for other potential unknowns this year.

A possible motion: ***"To establish a Special Town Meeting for August 7th at 7pm in the Community Room of the Fire Station at 86 River Road and send notice to R. Benjamin Frey to inform the inhabitants of the Town of Newcastle of said meeting."***

New Business Item: 6B – Hagar Enterprises Road Maintenance Contract for Fiscal Year 2024

Manager's Commentary: Annually, the Select Board approves a contract with Hagar Enterprises to assist us with our road maintenance and capital improvement needs. Typically, the Select Board also reviews and approves pricing for the upcoming fiscal year and the budget is built assuming these figures. Unfortunately, that approval never took place. Hagar Enterprises is currently providing services to the town without a signed contract or an agreement on time and material but has been honoring these prices and the redlined contract for the better part of a month (both attached). Most of the changes are minor, pronoun use, commas, dates, etc, but the major changes on the contract are around further shifting the day to day responsibilities from the Select Board to your Town Manager. There's still the expectation that if budgets can't be held, staff are coming to Select Board with solutions for your consideration and that all are aware of what major projects are being undertaken in a given year. I would ask that the Select Board discuss this Monday night and either support this contract with the redline changes and the pricing or come back to the Select Board at the first August meeting with a further revised version.

Should this be the case, a possible motion: ***"To authorize the Town Manager to sign the road maintenance contract with Hagar Enterprises for Fiscal Year 2024 and accept the pricing for time and material as presented."***

Unfinished Business Item: **7A – Treasurer and Tax Collector Appointment**

Manager's Commentary: On Wednesday, July 12th, Michelle Cameron accepted my offer to return to employment with Newcastle as our Tax Collector and Treasurer. Michelle has been assisting the town over the last several weeks on her day off to address financial matters and help keep the books in order. Michelle was also instrumental in year-end close out during my first week. Michelle will look to join us full-time starting on July 31st, however I would ask that the Select Board confirm her appointment as of July 24th so that she can administer the tax commitment.

A Possible motion: ***“To confirm the appointment of Michelle Cameron as Newcastle’s Treasurer and Tax Collector effective July 24th, 2023.”***

Unfinished Business Item: **7B – Tax Commitment for Tax Year 2023 / Fiscal Year 2023-2024**

Manager's Commentary: Newcastle's Select Board also serves as Newcastle's Board of Assessors. While the town hires Jim Murphy to manage the information related to assessments and prepare the documentation for the select board's review, it is still the responsibility of the select board to approve the mil rate. I spent some time with Jim this past week reviewing the information and ensuring the budget approved reflects what's needed for a mil rate. We still have work to do to further understand the impact of the Senior Stabilization Program and we will hopefully have more to share at the meeting on Monday.

A Possible motion: ***“To approve the Tax Year 2023 mil rate of \$16 per \$1,000 of assessed value.”***

Unfinished Business Item: **7C – Select Board Bylaws**

Manager's Commentary: At our meeting on the 10th of July, we reviewed a redlined version of the bylaws that contained some of my comments, questions, and suggested edits. The attached redlined version includes additional changes that were discussed, and I hope it reflects the spirit of that conversation. I've also included a clean version of this document for an easier read-through.

A Possible motion: ***“To approve amendments to the Select Board Bylaws as presented July 24, 2023.”***

Unfinished Business Item: **7D – Project Priorities for Newcastle**

Manager's Commentary: Last week, I sent a survey out to the select board and staff to help identify a project priority list based on the conversation around projects and goals from our July 10th meeting. Attached is a report developed based on the survey result. As a Town Manager, I find it very helpful in better understanding how I can help Newcastle move through the list with our staffing size and financial limitations. I really look forward to the discussion and assisting you in achieving them.

A Possible motion: ***“To accept the Town of Newcastle Select Board Project Priorities document dated July 24, 2023 and commit to reviewing this document for progress and potential modification on a quarterly basis.”***