

Select Board Meeting

September 17, 2020

7:00pm

Athens Town Office

Present were Matthew Farkas-Fact TV, James Trimble, David Bemis, Denise Randall, Darlene Wyman, Matt Perry, Janet Perry, Dan Taylor, Donna Currier, April Lyman, Bonnie Hitchcock, Don Capponcelli, Sherry Maher, Tina White, Tom Taylor, and Dennis Mirante.

David called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

Adjustments to the Agenda: There were no adjustments.

Minutes of the prior meeting: David made the motion to accept the minutes of the August 20 meeting. Denise seconded. Put to a vote. The motion carried. Denise made the motion to accept the minutes of the September 3 meeting. Jim seconded. Put to vote. The motion carried.

Public comments: Dan Taylor commented the personnel policy was not being followed. He questioned certain benefits the workers are receiving. The policy states working hours are from 6:00am-2:30pm and this is not being done. He asked why town equipment and employees have been seen on private property. David stated in the past if anyone has an issue with an elected, appointed or an employee of the town is something the selectboard can take up, but asks it be submitted in writing and what the issues are. Dan asked if he would get an answer if it is in writing. David stated the board can answer some things that deal with the personnel policy and other things cannot be answered according to the labor laws. A lot of things cannot be made public in relation to an employee. David stated if Dan can give the board in writing the violations he sees, then the board will look at it and go forward with that. Dan stated he would write it up and give it to Darlene. David stated to give it to Darlene or anyone on the board. Dan asked where we were at on Taylor Hill. David stated hopefully to have it done before the 60 days are up. Sherry asked why Fact TV left and did not return after the executive session. She would like them to stay until the meeting was over. David stated it is not up to the selectboard as to how long Fact TV stays. David stated that if there was going to be more business after the executive session, they would be asked to stay, but if there is not much business they may leave. David stated that any motions that were done after executive session are in the minutes. Sherry asked about the decision for Taylor Hill. David said when the paper work is completed and signed by the board would be when the decision is made. Dennis asked why the 6:00am-2:30pm work day is an issue when it was brought up 5 Or 6 years ago and why it is an issue now. David mentioned the board was contacted by the state with a complaint and they asked the board to come up with a policy. The board then adopted the

personnel policy. Dennis stated after the Taylor Hill hearing there was an unpleasant situation in the parking lot between a resident and a town employee. He stated the town employees are public servants and deserve our respect and our cooperation. Dennis brought up the evaluation of Mark Pickering's handed out at the Taylor Hill hearing. He felt it should be made public to the town for Mark states that Taylor Hill not become a town road because of all the potential liabilities and safety to our employees. Mark also states that \$3,000-\$5,000 a year or the cost to the residents per year is a bargain. Mark recommends getting an engineer which Dennis feel is even more reason for the town not to take over Taylor Hill. Dennis stated he felt right now the town taking over Taylor Hill is not what is the best interest for the town. David stated if anyone is interested there would be copies of Mark's evaluation at the Town Office. Tina White stated she had a response to the price Mark came up with. She stated she did all the pricing for the maintenance of Taylor Hill and his prices are very low. She felt that Mark being a state employee he did his evaluation on what he would do it for. She felt that his prices are about a third of what the residents pay for maintaining the hill. Dennis stated Mark's estimates were based on what the residents pay. Tina stated Mark did not talk to any of the residents and did not notify the residents when he inspected the hill. Tina also stated the residents do a lot of the maintenance for nothing and the reasoning for making it a town road is because the residents are getting older. Bonnie stated that a year ago they were just looking for a little help to maintain the road and they need to keep the residents safe. They are not looking to make it into a highway, but are just asking for help. April commented that the evaluation by Mark were just recommendations and it is solely up to the selectboard. Don Capponcelli asked to remember Mae "Cookie" Hopkins who passed away on Monday. She was a great help to the workers on the Town office by providing lunches. She also hosted a raffle to earn money for the Town office renovations. Sherry stated that Cookie donated a picture she had painted to the Meetinghouse raffle. Darlene stated she has spoken to Russell Brown and he stated the boiler in the school needed work done. It will probably get us through this year, but recommended something be done next year.

Boards and Officials: Sherry stated the Meetinghouse committee has been working on bids for the roof trusses and is in a position to move forward on the project. She stated that several months ago the board had approved going ahead with the project. They have received some bids for manufacturing, labor, hardware and lumber. The committee is expecting to move ahead with the project with a cost of no more than \$17,000.00. Don stated they had several bids on labor, 2 bids on manufacturing and 1 bid on hardware and lumber. After some discussion on labor and manufacturing costs, David made the motion to go ahead with the fabrication of the steel for the trusses and to bring in the bids for the work to the next meeting. Denise seconded. Put to vote. The motion carried. David stated once the trusses are made, a possibility of having a special meeting to award the bids for the installation may be scheduled. Sherry stated the committee is applying for a grant from the VT Division of Historical Preservation and are researching other grants to help with window restoration, painting windows and clapboards and repairing the stairs. There is \$7,500 set aside for matching funds

for the grants. The estimated cost for this project is \$40,000.00. The grant from the VT Division of Historical Preservation is good for a year, but may possibly be extended for another year. David made the motion the board support the grant application from the VT Division of Historical Preservation and any other grants for stage two of the restoration project and Sherry or David sign any paperwork needed for the grant. Denise seconded. Put to a vote. The motion carried. Sherry stated the committee had also received a gift of \$5,000.00 to put towards this project. Sherry thanked Matt and stated they are ready to move forward on the corner project. The new historical sign has been ordered.

The mail was reviewed. David mentioned anyone is still able to complete the Census information on line. David handed a draft from the Agency of Administration that the town may receive some money for any expenses incurred by Covid 19. He asked the budget committee to look this over. There was also correspondence concerning digitalizing the land records. The budget committee was asked to look into this. A discussion on getting new locks for the elementary school was held. David made the motion Matt contact a locksmith for new locks and 6 keys be made for the elementary school. Denise seconded. Put to a vote. The motion carried.

The warrant was reviewed and Denise asked how the Freightliner was running. Matt stated it is running well. The warrant was then signed.

Roads: Matt stated everything is holding up well. They are working on fall maintenance for all the vehicles, getting ready for winter. Two trees on Route 35 need cutting. A culvert on Brookline Road needs replacing. The upper end of Walker Road needs the ditches cleaned and brush removed. Denise asked about the problem on Route 35 where the gravel washes up on the new tar. Matt said they had put stone there and hopes that has fixed the problem. Matt stated he would stay with Bazin Brothers for gravel, using what is in the gravel fund and put the gravel up for bid next year. A discussion followed about putting the gravel out to bid. Wade Masure from VLCT spoke with Matt about bring the town garage up to standards and codes. VLCT has a matching grant for this. There was a discussion about the oil tank at the garage. Wade recommended there be a separate sand pile for townspeople to use. A discussion to purchase cement blocks for this project ensued. David made the motion to purchase three cement blocks for the public sand pile. Denise seconded. Put to a vote. The motion carried.

Executive Session: At 8:05pm David made the motion to move into executive session to discuss a legal and personnel matter where premature general public knowledge would clearly place the town of Athens at a substantial disadvantage. Matt was asked to stay for part of the executive session. Denise seconded. Put to a vote. The motion carried. At 8:45pm David made the motion to move out of executive session. Denise seconded. Put to a vote. The motion carried. No decisions were made in executive session. No motions were made.

Jim asked about where the \$17,000.00 for the Meetinghouse project was coming from. The funds are already in the Meetinghouse account. Tina asked why Matt needed the permission of

the landowner to cut trees in the town's right of way. David stated the tree still belongs to the person who owns the property. It is common courtesy. The owner can say no, then the tree warden could be called in. It's been the policy to ask.

There being no further business, David made the motion to adjourn. Jim seconded. The motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Darlene Wyman, Town Clerk