

# BOARD OF SELECTPEOPLE - TOWN OF MACHIAS

JUNE 24, 2020

A meeting of the Machias Board of Selectpeople was called to order (via Zoom platform) at 6:00 PM by Chairman Josh Rolfe. In attendance were Board members Bill Kitchen, Paula Johnson-Rolfe, James Whalen, and James Jackson; Town Manager Christina Therrien; Secretary Cathy Lord; Town Clerk Sandra Clifton; Ed Pellon, Leslie Haynes, Mitchell Look, Bruce Smith, Sarah Craighead Dedman, Mary Angarola, Bob Berta, William MaDonald (Zoom host).

## **1. MINUTES - REVIEW AND ACTION**

On a motion by Paula Johnson-Rolfe, seconded by Bill Kitchen, the Board voted to approve the minutes of the June 10, 2020 Board meeting.

## **2. WARRANTS - REVIEW AND ACTION**

On a motion by Paula Johnson-Rolfe, seconded by Bill Kitchen, the Board VOTED:

To approve municipal warrant #104 in the amount of \$17,077.61; to approve municipal warrant #105 in the amount of \$345,391.62; to approve municipal warrant #106 in the amount of \$16,918.83; and, to approve municipal warrant #107 .

On a motion by Paula Johnson-Rolfe, seconded by Bill Kitchen, the Board VOTED:

To approve school warrant #51 in the amount of \$303,278.73 .

## **3. APPRECIATION TO MR. LESLIE HAYNES**

Ms. Therrien informed the Board that Mr. Leslie Haynes is retiring from the Machias Ambulance Service after many years of service. She presented Mr. Haynes with a certificate of appreciation and a gift certification for his favorite camping site. Members of the Board expressed their thanks and appreciation to Mr. Haynes.

## **4. SOLAR ENERGY PROPOSAL/POTENTIAL ENERGY COST SAVINGS**

Ms. Therrien told the Board that she recently met with a representative of Revision Energy regarding a repurchasing of solar energy which would provide some profit to the Town. She noted that the company looked at using the landfill site but found the site to be inappropriate. Ms. Therrien explained that the company is currently working up a proposal to present to the Town on the cost-saving program. Mr. Kitchen asked if the airport could be a potential site but Ms. Therrien noted that this is not a good site considering the slopes which would need to be considered.

Ms. Therrien also advised the Board that she was contacted by Mr. Peter Whitney (CoastEnergy.com) who explained that municipalities are eligible to participate in a ten percent cost savings on a group project to meet green energy credits from the State of Maine. Ms. Therrien noted that Mr. Whitney is willing to meet with the Board to discuss the project. Mr. Rolfe noted that the Board would be interested in participating in a ten percent savings plan if there are no hidden costs or requirements. Mr. Whalen and Mr.

Jackson agreed that it would be best to be presented with additional information and a detailed description of the project.

#### **5. CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER - LETTER OF RESIGNATION**

The Board reviewed a letter of resignation from the town's code enforcement officer. On a motion by Paula Johnson-Rolfe, seconded by Bill Kitchen, the Board VOTED:

To accept a letter of resignation from Betsy Fitzgerald effective June 30, 2020 noting the Town's appreciation to Ms. Fitzgerald for her many years of service as CEO.

Mr. Whalen asked what was budgeted for code enforcement in the upcoming budget; Mr. Rolfe noted that this item was budgeted at \$6000. Ms. Therrien advised that Ms. Fitzgerald will continue to serve as municipal plumbing inspector. Ms. Therrien said that she would develop an ad for the position and get it published seeking candidates to fill the position.

#### **6. MAINTENANCE OF TOWN AND SCHOOL FACILITIES**

Mr. Whalen explained that his involvement during the past year in fund-raising activities for the school athletic field and the Southside Field has allowed him to make some observations. Mr. Whalen said that he has looked at the field facilities at Washington Academy and found those facilities far superior to the Machias school fields; he added that the Machias fields are not in good condition and can be called "disgraceful". He noted that the Machias school department employs eight full and part-time custodians as well as a supervisor and based on the amount of custodial help things should be well taken care of at the school facilities. Mr. Whalen noted that there is a junk pile behind the maintenance building. Mr. Whalen commented that with all this custodial help, the school department goes to the municipal public works department seeking assistance with lawn maintenance. Mr. Whalen said that it should be made clear to the school committee that the school department needs to take care of its own facilities and he observed that the school department seems to take a very "casual" attitude with the town's money.

Mr. Kitchen commented that the general appearance of the school grounds is up to the school department. Mr. Whalen added that there should be a memo outlining that the school department is responsible for the maintenance of the school fields and the Southside Field and he noted that the school department should use its personnel more efficiently. Mr. Kitchen asked the Town Manager for her observations. Ms. Therrien said that she has looked at the school grounds and found broken glass, neglect of vehicles and buses, and even observed that there is a tree which should be removed. She commented that the school department has a bigger staff than the Town and should be taking care of on-going maintenance of the school grounds and school equipment.

Mr. Rolfe suggested there should be a way to address the problem other than a memo and try to find common ground with the school department on fixing problems. Mr. Kitchen noted that the Town Manager can authorize Public Works to assist the school department when needs arise. Ms. Therrien noted that the Board had a conversation with the school department two years ago about the cleaning of buses and the maintenance of a sander. She pointed out that there seems to be a serious problem with performing routine outside maintenance. Mr. Rolfe said that the Board should

request that the school committee and superintendent hash out how to fix the problems. Ms. Johnson-Rolfe suggested outlining the problems in written form to the school committee. Mr. Rolfe encouraged anyone to go look at the school grounds. Ms. Therrien said that she would contact the school committee and the superintendent and ask them to attend/participate in the Board's next meeting for a discussion around equipment maintenance, grounds maintenance, and outside maintenance. Mr. Whalen said that he wants to see improvements. Mr. Rolfe added that there needs to be a focus of maintenance activities based on tonight's discussion. Mr. Kitchen noted the need to find out what the problem with maintenance is. Ms. Johnson-Rolfe added that the current maintenance problem needs to be addressed. The consensus of the Board was to have the Town Manager contact the school department to arrange a discussion to resolve the maintenance issues.

## **7. COVID-19 MONIES - MACHIAS SCHOOL DEPARTMENT**

Mr. Whalen noted that the school department will be receiving \$189,000. in COVID-19 funds and there are some questions about the use of these funds. Mr. Mitchel Look, representing the Machias School Department, said that he is developing the application for \$191,045 in CARES monies provided by the federal government to meet unseen needs created by COVID-19. Mr. Look explained that the CARES funds would be used for activities not addressed in the regular school budget and would need to be used for programming needs for the upcoming year caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Look advised the Board that there is no custodian at the high school during the school day. Ms. Therrien informed Mr. Look that there is classroom space available for the school department to rent at the telebusiness center if needed.

## **8. GROVE STREET RECREATION SITE REVIEW/REPAIR & IMPROVEMENT COSTS**

Ms. Therrien reviewed cost estimates for the Grove Street recreation site; she noted there is a \$58,000. warrant article, money in reserve accounts, and the \$11,000. in carry-over monies from contingency for funding of the project. Mr. Whalen asked if the project meets handicapped accessible guidelines? Ms. Therrien said that this would be addressed to make the site inclusive to all children. Mr. Whalen asked if the Town would be responsible for maintenance of the site; Ms. Therrien confirmed the the Town would have maintenance responsibilities. Mr. Kitchen commented that for the past three years the Board has tried to get this project completed. He pointed out that the project was twice turned down for State funding which hampered progress. Mr. Kitchen explained that the Board has been trying to move forward with this project and wants to make it happen as fast as possible.

On a motion by Bill Kitchen, seconded by James Whalen, the Board  
VOTED:

Contingent upon the scheduling of a special town meeting as soon as possible to address the funding aspects of the project, to proceed with the Grove Street Recreation facility project. Budget Committee member Ed Pellon agreed the project needs to be completed with the funding as discussed; he commented that children need a playground. Mr. Kitchen thanked the Town Manager for her diligent work in getting the recreation project on track.

## **9. UPDATE ON MACHIAS WATER DISTRICT RATE REQUEST**

Ms. Therrien advised the Board that the Machias Water Company wants to submit additional comments on their requested rate increase; she noted that she has no further updates but will advise the Board when she has additional information.

## **10. DISCUSSION OF STATUS OF THE SCHOOL BUDGET**

Ms. Therrien told the Board that she has been notified that the school committee proposes to reduce the school budget by \$50,000. Mr. Rolfe asked where these proposed cuts are to be made; Ms. Therrien said that she had no further information other than the amount to be cut. Ms. Johnson-Rolfe commented that the Board still does not know how funds were spent over the prior two years; she added that there is no line-by-line budget format showing the existence of leftover funds. Mr. Rolfe agreed that the school budget does not show expenditures. Mr. Whalen commented on the need to see the history of the expenditures in order to substantiate a \$6.1 million dollar budget. Ms. Therrien noted that there will be a meeting on July 1st at 4:00 PM to review the budget with the school department; she told the Board that she would advise the school superintendent of the meeting and that the Board expects to see the expenses summary for the past two years and where the proposed cuts to the budget will be made.

On a motion by James Whalen, seconded by Bill Kitchen, the Board voted to adjourn the meeting at 7:54 PM.