

Town of Newington, NH
Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes
Monday, July 15th, 2019 Town Hall

Present: Chair Ted Connors, Selectman Mike Marconi, Selectman Ken Latchaw, Martha Roy, Town Administrator and Eleanor Boy, Recorder.

T. Connors called the meeting to order at 6:00pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

T. Connors thanked everyone for coming out tonight and apologized to everyone for the way the Portsmouth Pride signs were removed. T. Connors explained that Newington has a strict sign ordinance that doesn't allow "off premise" signs (any signs advertising an event not happening at that location) to be displayed in Town.

T. Connors asked for comments from the public.

Abby Hood, 12 Coleman Drive, asked the Selectmen how the sign ordinance is enforced. It seems like a varied response. As a citizen this action represents her as well, how will this be handled in the future. T. Connors assured A. Hood that the current ordinance would be reviewed and on a future agenda.

Hershey Hirschkop-Owner of the signs thought that the Selectmen's comments were disingenuous.

R. Herga asked if the Town had received the letter from the ACLU.

T. Connors said they received it on Saturday.

Addison Muller expressed concern about how the signs were removed. He thought that they should have been given notification that the signs were going to be removed. A. Mueller asked if the Town could change the policy of how the signs are removed. T. Connors agreed that this can be written into a new ordinance.

Patrick Patterson, 12 Coleman Drive, explained that he sent an email to Martha Roy asking for permission to put up the signs and never heard back. Two days with no response. M. Roy responded that she had spoken to P. Patterson about the issue on Thursday the 20th (the next day) and didn't think a response to the email was necessary after that. P. Patterson thought that many things could have been handled differently.

Kellie Mueller, 5 Coleman Drive, was shocked when she learned that the Town had taken down the signs. The way this whole situation was handled was very bad. Nobody from the Town contacted anyone. T. Connors assured K. Mueller that it will be handled differently in the future.

Ken Ernstoff, 2 Hodgdon Farm Lane, had a question about election signs. T. Connors said that Ken could look at the sign ordinance for election signs.

Lulu Pickering, 339 Little Bay Road, thought the Selectmen screwed up badly. Newington is better than this. L. Pickering believes this became an issue because of the subject matter of the sign. L. Pickering thought that the Town has never enforced this sign ordinance. This is the first time it has ever been enforced.

Edward LaVasseur, a nonresident, but works in Newington, thought this whole incident was very troubling and thought the signs were taken down because of the content of the sign. Newington needs to be inclusive. E. LaVasseur asked how the Town was going to address this issue. The town should learn more about diversity and inclusion.

Patrick Patterson, 12 Coleman Drive, wanted to know which town employee asked to have the signs removed. He wanted it to go on record the name of the person. He believes that it came from Martha Roy.

Val Thompson, 23 Little Bay Road, appreciated the Town's apology, but hopes the Town understands the intensity of the subject. This incident was a "punch in the gut". What can the Town do as a community to correct this? T. Connors apologized again and stated the matter is under review.

T. Connors thanked everyone for coming to the meeting.

Many of the attendees exited the meeting.

Remaining People Present: Chair Ted Connors, Selectman Mike Marconi, Selectman Ken Latchaw, Martha Roy, Town Administrator, Eleanor Boy, Recorder, Police Commissioners; Brenda Blonigan and Jack Hoyt, Police Chief, Mike Bilodeau, Fire Engineer, John Klanchesser, Rick and Doreen Stern, Abby Hood, Emily Savinelli, Samara Robertson and Dana Nowell.

Minutes Approval:

Approval of the July 1, 2019 minutes was postponed until a future meeting.

Manifest Approval: M. Marconi moved to approve the manifests for \$117,280.94 dated 7/2/2019 and \$227,861.85 dated 7/9/19. K. Latchaw seconded the motion with all in favor.

Police Commissioners:

Brenda Blonigan explained that none of the Police Commissioners could make it to the April 22, 2019 Board of Selectmen meeting. However, B. Blonigan was able to watch the live stream of the meeting. B. Blonigan wanted to thank E. Savinelli for streaming the meeting. B. Blonigan was not happy with the discussion about the posting of all positions. She explained that there are some positions that are only offered to internal candidates. The Police Department will not be posting all open positions. K. Latchaw explained that we understand some positions are filled through in house promotions. The Selectmen support that and other positions are posted to the general public. This insures that all interested personnel are aware of the job opportunity and keeps residents informed about promotions and new hires. In the past other departments promoted personnel and hired people without informing the town residents. Posting positions keep the public informed. T. Connors said that the board has no problem with internal postings. At the same meeting the Board of Selectmen requested that all meetings start at 6pm. The Police Commission will not be meeting at 6pm because they would have to pay people overtime. K. Latchaw suggested offering flex time to the person recording the minutes and in turn leave early on a Friday. In the future K. Latchaw would like to see podcasts for all meetings. It's a great way to keep the public informed. The Police Chief was concerned with the cost of it and how it would be paid for.

Road Paving-McIntyre Proposal-Bourassa Construction:

The plan is to put overlay over the crack seal on McIntyre Road. The Town has already received a bid for \$98,000 which is almost double what the Rockingham Planning Commission estimated it would cost. M. Roy and Road Agent, Len Thomas will meet with Bourassa.

DRA Tax Rate Setting Procedures/Revaluation Calendar:

The Selectmen reviewed a schedule of items to be done before tax setting. The new assessing software, Vision, has been installed and is working. K. Latchaw asked what the Town can do to ensure that the schedule will be kept. M. Roy explained that this year is going to be a tough year because of the revaluation. The NH Department of Revenue has to review the data after the revaluation. The goal is to get all the new information to the NHDRA by 10/1/19, but it will be tight. The goal is to have the bills mailed out by 11/1/19 and due by 12/1/19. K. Latchaw would like M. Roy to send a letter to the assessors explaining that it is not acceptable to not meet the deadline.

Property Tax Liens & Tax Deeding:

The Town Clerk is working on liening and deeding several properties in town. She expects to have is done by the end of August.

Tree Replanting Program:

K. Latchaw will contact Northern Nursery and Jane Hislop to ask for their recommendations on the trees to be chosen for the replanting. K. Latchaw thought that the Town should choose several different kinds of maples in case one type gets a disease, then it won't affect all the trees. The plan is to plant two trees at the Town Hall and one at the Cemetery.

Sidewalk-Expanded Shoulders Preliminary Discussion-Awaiting Engineer Reports:

M. Roy explained that the town's engineer is working on a revised financial plan for the sidewalk project and we will hear from him soon.

Liz Durfee-Conservation Commission Resignation:

The Board of Selectmen accept, with regret, the resignation of Liz Durfee from the Conservation Commission.

Kayak Rack at Fox Point:

Several residents have asked about having a kayak rack at Fox Point. K. Latchaw has volunteered to build two racks. The racks will have eyebolts so the kayaks can be locked up.

Updated Prohibition of Smoking Ordinance:

The Selectmen reviewed an updated smoking ordinance that now includes all tobacco products, e cigarettes and vaping. T. Connors thought this update was needed. This updated ordinance will be a temporary ordinance until it will appear as a warrant article at the town meeting in March 2020. T. Connors requested that the ordinance be place on the website for public review and comment for the next month prior to the Board voting on it.

Wayne Woods:

Wayne Woods has submitted an "Intent to Cut" application. The assessor will review this application on Thursday. The Board of Selectmen have asked for a map of the area to ensure that no trees in a wetland are being cut.

Adjournment: M. Marconi moved to adjourn at 6:54pm. K. Latchaw seconded the motion with all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Eleanor Boy, Recorder