

**Minutes
Town of Skowhegan
Regular Selectmen's Meeting
5:30 P.M.
Tuesday, January 25, 2022
Municipal Building – Council Room**

****Anyone wishing to view this meeting may also do so from the
Town of Skowhegan Facebook page****

Board of Selectmen:

Todd Smith, Chairman
Charles Robbins, Vice Chairman - Absent
Harold Bigelow
Steven Govoni
Paul York

Town Manager:

Christine Almand

Executive Secretary:

Cara L. Mason

Call Selectmen's Meeting to order.

Todd smith called the meeting to order.

1. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
2. Town Manager's Report

Foreclosure notices were mailed out January 7th on 71 accounts. As of 4:30 pm today, 19 of the accounts had paid off the 2020 taxes. Payments for 2020 taxes must be received by February 7th at 4:30 pm.

Our website now has a page dedicated to the DEP PFAS Investigation. This page includes multiple documents and links to information. This website will be updated as information becomes available.

The FY2023 Heating Oil Quote closes on January 27th at 3:00 pm. For more information visit our website or contact my office.

The Wall Locker Bid closes on February 2nd at 11:00 am. For more information visit our website or contact David Bucknam.

The Mechanic Street Schoolhouse Bid closes on February 15th at 1:00 pm. For more information visit our website or contact Jeff Hewett.

3. Items by the Public

Garret Quinn said that he is here to thank the Town. He received a copy of the letter that was signed by the Selectmen and sent to David Madore, Deputy Commissioner of the DEP. This letter was regarding the PFAS Investigation. He thanked the Selectmen, Christine Almand and Cara Mason for sending this letter and for getting the information up on the Town's website. It is good that we have started a dialog about this and we can get the information out to the people that need to know.

He was contacted by the DEP. They are going to begin testing tomorrow. They have also enlisted his help in identifying some of the neighbors. He wanted to thank everybody for the work, attention and effort put into this. Without it, he thinks we would still be sitting where we were two weeks ago. We seem to be moving forward.

Christine Almand said she has resources to contact folks as well.

Kristina Cannon learned recently that Skowhegan will be the host community for the Build Maine Conference in June. It is exciting for the community. We will be welcoming people from all over the state. It will be held somewhere downtown. They will be looking to reserve rooms at the Towne Hotel. People will come to stay and eat and drink. It will be great for the community.

The Build Maine Conference is a gathering of developers, property owners, town officials, town revitalization folks. They get together to explore opportunities for development and design in downtowns and communities around the state.

Steven Govoni said he would like to have the Build Maine group to his house for a BBQ.

4. Selectmen's Items

Harold Bigelow said he decided against it after having a few discussions with friends of his. In lieu of what is going on...he contacted the Morning Sentinel about a month ago...he figured they ought to know what is going on. It's still moving on. Going to get snow on Saturday. He hopes everybody is ready for it.

Steven Govoni said that the MSS Design Committee met. They are breaking down into subcommittees for the February meeting.

The Sidewalk Committee Meeting was cancelled. He is going to be pushing for a February meeting. He wants to keep the ball moving. The Sidewalk Committee needs members that live and walk on the sidewalks on the south side of town.

The Second Bridge Committee met last week. We pushed a resolution through which you will be hearing tonight.

Letters went out about the downtown sidewalks. There are some sidewalks that have not been touched at all. We have a storm coming.

Harold Bigelow said that walking on the sidewalks is different than driving by. Some of the sidewalks disappear when you get away from the main road.

5. Department and Committee Reports

Chief Bucknam pinned Joshua York and Kaitlyn Nichols as Corporals.

Recording Time: 16:53

Trisha Austin thanked the Town of Skowhegan for closing the building for her mother's funeral. She also thanked all who attended and watched.

Consent Agenda:

1. Accept the resignation of Karen Smith from the MSAD #54 School Board effective February 1, 2022.

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Steven Govoni to approve the Consent Agenda as written.

Vote: 4/0

Regular Agenda:

1. Discussion and decision to move forward with additional study and permitting for options 4 and 5b for a second bridge, with the option to decide to do nothing.

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Steven Govoni to move forward with additional study and permitting for options 4 and 5b for a second bridge, with the option to decide to do nothing.

Steven Govoni said that the Selectmen received a letter from the Second Bridge Committee. They met on January 20th. They went through the Feasibility Study and what the next steps would be. The Second Bridge Committee does recommend that we move forward but also that we move forward with the Village Planning Initiative...a new program issued by DOT. They also want to make sure that the Selectmen and the Citizens have the chance to pull the plug on this if we feel we are no longer being represented through the process. Some of the criteria in this next stage would be if these two options are even viable from the national standpoint-National Environmental Policy Act. They may find that there are too many overwhelming barriers to fund a project like this. This would be similar to the Norridgewock bridge. This did not need to be an arch bridge. That was kind of a concession that was made, that the taxpayers paid for, to have this redundant arch put on the bridge. Those design things happen commonly in bridge...major projects like this. The design of the bridge can be part of the community as well.

Ann Spaulding said we are still at only two designs to take under consideration. When they do the village study, do they not look for another option?

Steven Govoni said that the first Feasibility Study has pretty much eliminated all of the other options. These two are the only two that solve the original conditions of the assessment. At this point no other options would be brought back to the table. The Village Planning Initiative is a completely different program. We have DOT projects going on all over town...the intersection at Madison and Elm, the Jewell Street project, the new school, a proposed ten-story building, Bigelow Brewing...all of these projects are being handled separately on the DOT side...and then we have the bridge study. These all affect our traffic, not just now, but in the future. Can we put it all together, so we can see what it looks like? This year the DOT came up with this new Village Planning Initiative. We hope to hop on board with that, so we are starting to look at the whole picture, with or without a new bridge. We need a bigger, broader view of what we are doing.

Ann Spaulding asked if they were going to put it all together and then say...here is your bridge.

Steven Govoni said that we are going to be involved in this probably for the next three to five years. That's what this planning stage looks like.

Ann Spaulding asked if the option of doing nothing was still going to be open.

Steven Govoni said that may be the conclusion of the NEPA studies.

Ann Spaulding said that this is also costing money...besides time. Why are we going into the permitting process...does that not cost money?

Steven Govoni said that we are not entering the permitting stage...we are still in the study stage.

Christine Almand said that the next level of study is for study and permitting.

Ann Spaulding asked if it was state money or town money.

Steven Govoni said that it is state money at this point. For the second bridge the town has already paid the \$35,000.00 three years ago. The continued study isn't going to cost the taxpayers in the town anymore money. The village plan would be on the taxpayers.

Ann Spaulding wanted to know if they are going to make a graph of traffic flows...and then the state will say this is the logical place for a second bridge. Is that where we are headed?

Steven Govoni said that might be the end result. They may also say that we don't need it. From the standpoint of redundancy and resiliency...if you build a hospital to survive a catastrophic event, but you can't get to that hospital because the road didn't survive the event... we are trying to design for resiliency. We are prepared for those events. Right now there is one bridge that goes over this river. When something happens on that bridge the outlets are Norridgewock or Hinckley. The idea is that we do not have redundancy or resiliency in this town for a catastrophic event. We saw that in 1987 with the flood. The goal is to avoid that scenario.

Recording Time: 29:44

Ann Spaulding said it isn't going to be pretty if the Veterans' Memorial site is chosen. Does the Selectmen and the townspeople have the right, if the state were to choose that location, to come back and say no?

Steven Govoni said that he believes that is the correct answer.

Todd Smith said he does not believe that is accurate.

Christine Almand said that up until this date, the discussions have been that if we enter into the next level of study, we would be committing to one of the two options. When the Bridge Committee met last week...we did have representatives from DOT here...the bridge committee made a recommendation to the Selectmen that we move forward with those two options while retaining the ability to say no...while also looking at the Village Partnership Initiative. If the Selectmen vote to move forward, as the bridge committee has recommended, we will draft a letter to DOT requesting that. She cannot answer how the Commissioner will respond, if the town wants to retain the right to say no at the next level of study. There may be some back-and-forth dialogue about that.

Ann Spaulding said that the state can override anything. They can come back and say that this is the site and they are doing it.

Steven Govoni said that if the Commissioner says no, it would come back to the Selectmen to make a final decision on whether or not to move forward. If we don't have skin in the game to make that decision, he cannot make that recommendation to move forward. He believes that what we have here is good. He needs what is happening right here to happen all the way through this step...so that he better understands what is best for the town. He is not going to make any decision up here that is going to be negatively viewed by the township. He has more respect for the veterans and nature than you know. Both of these options present problems for him. If we are watching this town grow, he doesn't want to pass this buck along anymore.

Ann Spaulding said this happens every few years. People say they want to abridge, but when you talk to them out there, they say no.

Steven Govoni said that he spent 28 years in Boston...Skowhegan does not have a traffic problem. He does understand redundancy and resiliency.

Ann Spaulding said she wants to make sure that we have the right to come back and say no, it's not going there. They are going to narrow it down to one...we are going to make the option to do nothing. She wants to make sure that the wording is correct, to give us the option to say no.

Recording Time: 35:59

Todd Smith asked if there is a possibility that a new river crossing would be suggested, once all of this information was brought together...or are we stuck with the two that have been brought forward?

Marty Rooney said he has been managing the Second Bridge Feasibility Study on behalf of the MDOT for the last three years. Steven Govoni did an excellent job of explaining some of the process that we need to follow for state and federal funds for new capacity projects. If a second bridge goes forward it will be one of the largest new pieces of transportation infrastructure in the state. He knows this has been talked about since the 60s...if not before. Some people say it is needed tomorrow...some people say it is not needed. If or how we move forward is significant. We should take our time. Anything we do, we should do right.

When we go through these processes to pick locations...we start off by working with the public, the bridge committee...kind of the purpose and need for the project. It wasn't a bypass...that was made very clear to MDOT when we started this effort. It was resiliency and redundancy. It was to provide another option for emergency vehicles, and to allow different ways for trucks to move through. There is a whole list in the report. Based on that purpose and need, we evaluated different locations. We took a map of Skowhegan and looked at all points to get across the river. These two locations showing the highest benefit/cost. In the study team's professional opinion...the study team, the consultant for DOT...these two would be the locations to move forward. During the NEPA study, or any point during the process where there is new substantive or reasonable information, we can reconsider. Not liking a location is not substantive information. New schools, Run of River...we want you to reevaluate after X, Y and Z...we could do that. That reevaluation is not guaranteed to say that a new location is viable. We are not married to these two locations until the end of time, but in order to reconsider it needs to be data driven...based on something that has changed.

Todd Smith asked if we got a letter back from the Commissioner saying that we cannot have that right to say no...he isn't sure why we would need to add that in there. If we are going to move forward with nothing, why would we even put these forward at all? If the Commissioner says o, are we going to say no then?

Steven Govoni said that the way it ended up in this agenda, was trying to mimic the motion that came out of the Second Bridge Committee meeting. It seems redundant that we have it in the agenda item. The motion was that we were recommending that we move forward with starting that letter to the Commissioner, knowing also that we were going to be starting the Initiative...the meetings with Matt Drost, because he is the regional planner that would be our point man for the Village Planning Initiative. All of that was happening on the meeting on January 20th. It was imperative from the Committee's standpoint that if we are going to lose power of this, that we can step away and say no. At this level we are either making the decision to move forward or not. It's got nothing to do with decide to do nothing. We can always decide to do nothing.

Harold Bigelow said that he is on the bridge committee. It wasn't unanimous. There were two who voted against moving on. He wants a bridge, but there is something that nobody has brought up. He retired after 35 years at hydro. He knows that they are ravenous about taking these dams out. He worked with a river manager from Millinocket. He told Harold that in less than one day they went bankrupt. Let's just say that they took out the dam, they take out Sappi. If they take out Sappi, there goes our tax base. If they take out Sappi, how much of that truck traffic is going to be gone? He wants a bridge. If this vote floats, he wants a bridge. We have so much going...he was in favor of kicking the can or if we can put the brakes to this if

something happens to Sappi. They want that out and they want Weston out just as bad. He seen them take out Edwards and Fort Halifax. We didn't think they could do it. That is the only reason...the only doubt. He does think that we need a bridge, but he is very skeptical.

Recording Time: 45:23

Warren Shay said that it sounds like leaving that option on the table to say no...Marty Rooney did not say that we couldn't say no. They are going to consider everything. Their focus is on solving a traffic problem and solving a safety problem. If there is a village-wide study, that committee comes up with a third option or to say no...they are not saying no to that now. He expects that if the Selectmen go forward with this motion as the Committee intended...to move forward, and with the village plan...but they wanted to retain the option to say no...he expects that the Commissioner will say that he will continue to work with us and leave us with that option. That is the reason to go forward with this motion. They might also say no. At that point it comes back to you, and you can make your final decision. He thinks that the state will continue to work with you. Marty Rooney has been very clear about that. That is why the motion is the way it is.

Todd Smith said that in the December 14, 2021 Minutes it was asked. Marty Rooney did say that ultimately it would be a state decision.

Warren Shay said that they would find out when they get the answer to the letter to the Commissioner.

Marty Rooney said that it is in the State of Maine Constitution...the power and duties of the Commissioner...safety and mobility of the transportation network. Route 2, Route 201, Route 150 and others are vital for Skowhegan, Somerset County, the State of Maine and the international economy. When we started this study, one of the reasons that the State was interested was...if you look at a map of the United States and Canada, and look at 201 and various border crossings, the 201 detour is quite significant, and the potential bottle neck in Skowhegan. As part of those responsibilities and duties, our Commissioner has certain obligations to maintain that. We started this study when we were invited here by Skowhegan. The only commitment was to do the Feasibility Study. That was completed in November. He has committed to come back and answer any questions as long as they add value. It is now up to the Town to ask if and how we should proceed. We respond and negotiate roles and responsibilities. There are and there have been cases where we knew, vital to the state's economy, Mdawaska bridge needed to be replaced. When we went in there to replace that bridge, doing nothing was not an option. It was a vital piece of the state and international economy. It became posted to heavy vehicles. A build was the only option. We have not taken that stance in this project. When he is asked that question...the Commissioner has certain powers underlined in the Maine State Constitution.

Don Skillings said he doesn't understand why we continually get back to the point of making a decision, or trying to pass a motion, that we don't know the ramifications of. The man could not have more clearly stated, the Commissioner has the ultimate say. They have the power. With us asking them to look at these two options, one of them will go. If you are listening to what he is saying, if you pull forward...the Commissioner is not going to go spend X number

of dollars for the next five years studying this, for you to have the right to say no, we don't like that one. That's not going to happen. We are making these votes hastily. If you want to send the letter, send the letter without doing this motion. You can negotiate it before you make a decision. It's a lot like the other intersections. We don't need to keep...we do need to do the Comprehensive Plan and the study on how the town flows. We don't need to keep making decisions that you can't turn back from. That's where we are going astray.

The other part of this that goes back to their initial plan, when you looked at those options...the one downtown...the existing bridges, you measured that based on no infrastructure change. Using the existing bridges, maybe straightening. He hears a lot in town...what if you build two bridges, four lanes of traffic...two on one, two on the other. You have redundancy right in town. It's going to take some commercial property. Probably that block where the Candlelight was, and the old fire station through. If something happens to one, possibly the other one will be there. That wasn't really evaluated. That's where he has a problem with this process. It's a lot like other votes. If you have four options, you are going to vote for one of them. Reworking the bridges wasn't evaluated. Rework that whole interchange. Don't allow traffic spilling out from Commercial Street. If you come across the bridges go up to Cumberland Farms...you either go right or left. You have two-way traffic downtown...it all works. That was never evaluated, because that was never part of that plan.

Beverly Fitzsimmons said ever since she was 15, about every ten years they have done a bridge study. She agrees that we need another bridge, but not right now. Don Skillings spoke about what hasn't been done. Her suggestion is...a lot of people in town call her...stop right now with the bridge construction idea.

Harold Bigelow said that the Lockwood Dam goes right under the Waterville/Winslow bridge. That is two bridges. When you drive across, you don't see it. They needed a bridge. What they did...he is not advocating this, but it is a fact...he has walked under there before in awe. He could not believe, you've got technology from turn of the century with rivets...right next to it you have the newest...they are all incorporated.

Steven Govoni said, before we get into being traffic engineers, he did hear what Don said, and he is trying to picture that in his head. He saw about six buildings being taken down. Why don't we just take down the downtown. That has been on the table before too. Those owners should all be here speaking as well. Let's not jump up and down about somebody's proposal if we haven't understood the whole part of it.

Recording Time: 56:54

Don Skillings said that the limited evaluation of options that are placed before this town, so as to get a derived result. He can do statistics too. They want an outcome and they engineer that...that outcome comes.

Steven Govoni said that Don Skillings just did the same thing.

Todd Smith said that at last view 385 people watched the Second Bridge Committee meeting. Mary Rooney said take your time...and he said it again tonight. We don't need to rush this through. He doesn't know that he feels we are being rushed, since it has been since 1966. It does come up every few years. It is before us...don't take the decision too lightly. He also took from that meeting...the Village Planning Partnership. He would be in favor of that, to see how this works with our community. If we vote on this right now, he is a no vote. If we were to go forward with the Village Planning Partnership...and he doesn't like kicking it down the road, to leave it to another board...that is a cop out...in light of this Village Planning Partnership, he would be curious to know what that reveals. He wants to know how long that process takes and what it entails and how can we become a part of it.

Paul York said that everybody is going to agree and disagree...one group that thinks we should or shouldn't...if everybody was aboard with the location then everybody would be all for it. Everybody keeps saying that we are rushing it. He wouldn't say that we are rushing it, because it's been going on for a while. We've got many years ahead of us before we see whatever it is we are going to see...whatever location. It seems that we are having a rough time moving forward with anything. He doesn't disagree that any decision should be thought out before we do something. Sitting up here we have to accept progress. People don't like change. People are having a real hard time with change. He is a strong believer that we are either going to go forward with this or not. If we are not, then let's just say we are not. Why waste everybody's time? The term is used a lot...we kick it down the road...which is what we are doing. At the end of the day, some group is going to go away mad. Everybody is quick to say...we can't all be engineers and say that is not a good location. Nobody puts their foot forward to say what is a good location. There is a lot more to it than where we think it should be. He doesn't believe that we have a traffic problem now. Are we going to have one later...it's possible. If everything goes forward with what could be happening, we could find ourselves with a traffic issue. Do you wait? It's going to cost more money. Do you move forward? The you hate where you put it. It doesn't solve what you thought you were going to solve, or creates a bigger problem. He doesn't have the answer to those questions. That is why we lean on the people that are supposed to be experts in this field. If we approve this, we are not locking ourselves into anything. We are going to send a letter to the Commissioner.

Sam Hight said that the only reason he proposed the motion to move forward wasn't necessarily that we needed a bridge in one of these two spots. He wanted to move forward looking at traffic as part of the Comprehensive Plan and part of the Village Study with DOT. We are dealing with a lot of projects right now. We've got a lot of great momentum. The Second Bridge Committee is the only committee we have to look at what is going on with traffic in Skowhegan. The reason he added the "poison pill" to say no to his motion, he wanted to be able to say no. He wanted us to look at the Village Study and the Comprehensive Plan as a whole. He would rather change this committee to the traffic committee instead of the Second Bridge Committee. He thinks if we look at traffic as a whole...projects downtown, school, Skowhegan River Park...so many things happening over the course of the next two years. These studies are three to four years out. We might come up with another option. Don Skillings suggested buying his building, and the whole block to donate it to the Town...so he wants that on the record. Looking at the town as a whole is what is most important here. Furthering this study will get us there.

Don Skillings said he agrees with everything Sam Hight said. That is not what this item says.

Jason Gayne said he voted against this. He is against the two locations that the State has narrowed down for us. There are alternatives that should be explored even more.

Warren Shay said that the motion is to move forward, but to reserve the right to say no.

Motion rescinded.

A motion was made by Steven Govoni and seconded by Paul York to table this item until February 22, 2022, and have the Town Manager initiate the Village Planning Initiative and draft a letter to the Commissioner on our ability to do nothing.

Cara Mason said you basically want her to draft a letter to the Commissioner asking if we still have the option to say no.

Steven Govoni said he wants us to be in control of this. It's going to get to the point someday when we are not going to be in control of it.

Vote: 4/0

Recording Time: 01:11:55

2. Discussion regarding a letter received about the proposed traffic light at the intersection of Madison Avenue, Elm Street and Commercial Street.

Todd Smith said we received a letter regarding another DOT project, which includes installing a traffic light at the intersections just mentioned.

Steven Govoni said he first saw this in June. He was taken aback by the design on this. He thinks the design is weak and is a temporary fix. He thanked Sam Hight, Don Skillings and Travis Works for bringing this to light. This feels to him like an isolated solution, that he feels is going to create more problems in every direction of it. He thinks this is the wrong way to do business. We need to know what a light at this intersection is going to do to a light on Heselton Street. We need to start looking at the whole town. We can't let projects like this...the DOT officers that were at the Second Bridge meeting didn't even know that this was in the works. The DOT wasn't working within the DOT. That's what bringing Matt Drost in is supposed to do. To give us a point man for all of these projects, so we have one person that can say, wait a minute...what about this project. He thinks we should hold this back as long as we can and hope that the Commissioner doesn't override us.

Todd Smith said this letter was drafted prior to the Second Bridge Committee meeting. The letter talks about the big picture and looking at these things from every angle. If he understands it correctly, that is what this Village Planning Partnership would do. Take a look at the larger more comprehensive plan...how traffic is flowing and is going to flow in the future. According to State data there is a crash there and average of once every three months. He is not sure that, that warrants making significant changes to our infrastructure. He would support putting a halt to this project until we see how that Village Planning Partnership comes together.

Christine Almand said this was a project where the State actually came to the Town based on the data as a high crash location. She was involved in the meeting on January 11th. She believes that the DOT representatives at that meeting, don't really have the ability to affect change. We are working on a meeting with another DOT representative that may be able to effect some change and respond to the business owners. She feels that the Village Partnership Initiative would be a good step towards answering some of those questions.

Recording Time: 01:17:43

Steven Govoni said we keep talking about traffic. He wants to stress that the Main Street Design Committee is looking at the pedestrian traffic and the bike traffic. We are talking about the movement of people and the movement of freight. It's not just cars and trucks. We are trying to make this town more welcoming. Harold Bigelow mentioned losing Sappi. He hopes that never happens. Redundancy and resiliency...if we can make this town very tourist friendly, there is another way that taxes can be generated through a thriving downtown and thriving businesses. We should be preparing for that kind of future. That is all at our doorstep with the Skowhegan River Park and some of the other stuff that is going on. Here is a design that doesn't consider any of that because they don't know our town. The Village Planning Initiative is about having a DOT representative get to know us, so that they are now directing traffic...thinking that isn't going to work because they are thinking about doing this. He thinks it will take time, but we should be doing it right.

Todd Smith asked if we would be assigned a DOT representative as opposed to a rep for each of these separate projects. Would this project have one that would tie all of that stuff together?

Christine Almand said that the Village Partnership Initiative is a brand-new program through the State. This was just put out in their new work plan. She has had multiple conversations with Matt Drost as well as conversation with Marty Rooney. We still have to have some meetings, but she would expect that we would have one DOT official that is leading that. There will be multiple DOT officials brought into that conversation. Especially since we have numerous projects. She would expect that one person would be in charge of that coordination. Her conversations with Matt and Marty have been very positive. The Main Street Design Committee will be heavily involved in that conversation. She will request a meeting and bring in some stakeholders. This is something new for us and the State.

Paul York said that initially he wasn't for this. So much has changed since this was brought to us by the State. He still isn't convinced that this is a great idea. Maybe, once all of these other things happen, it might be. He doesn't necessarily agree with everything that Sam Hight said. We need to look at this as a whole with all of the changes that could be coming. It didn't make any sense to him, but he is not going to give himself engineer status. To him it was a traffic nightmare. Moving forward with anything that we do he thinks the Village Plan and the Comprehensive Plan are vital...as a whole, not individual projects.

Recording Time: 01:24:42

Sam Hight said he agrees with Paul York, and what everyone has said. He said he is not asking for a vote. He just wanted it to be on the Selectmen's Agenda to understand...he is on the Second Bridge Committee...he was made aware of this traffic light in September of 2021...about five years after it was proposed. He wants all of these studies to be looked at together. There are three privately owned corners of that traffic light. The fourth was purchased by those same private companies and given back to the Town. Two corners are owned by his family...one of them owned for 111 years. One is owned by his family and rented to RFGH for Somerset Public Health. The third is Skowhegan Savings Bank. He thinks it is imperative that the Town ask businesses and large employers for input on these studies. It sounds like we will be telling the State that we are not willing to move forward with any of these projects until we see them all as a whole. Don Skillings, Travis Works and David Cyr were also in the meeting. He appreciates the Selectmen paying attention to this. He wrote this as education, and appreciates your willingness to work with the town.

Steven Govoni said that it is his understanding that Steve Landry will be the representative. He is good to work with because he does see the big picture.

Sam Hight said they had asked to meet with him and the representative from the traffic study. Sam Hight said he did his own traffic studies.

Paul York asked how long we have before the State steps in and says they are putting it there.

Todd Smith said this one might be out of our hands, if they are the ones that brought this forward.

Paul York said if we decide we don't want it there, but the State says they are putting it there.

Sam Hight said what he is asking if for the Town to do what they can to push back on this. Personally, what they are going to be taking away from him means dollars and cents...impact to customers and employees. He is asking the Town to put themselves in a position to say that we are not putting this light in.

Steven Govoni said that when Marty Rooney and the representative from TY Lin got to see that, they were surprised by it. They pretty much said that is not going to work with what we are thinking with the traffic studies. Steve Landry will get to see what all of the departments are doing. He will be easy to work with because he is a big picture guy as opposed to the engineers.

Sam Hight said he hopes that is the case. He had some follow up questions with Aurelle, the DOT engineer assigned to that project. He said that this is looked at as a second project.

Christine Almand said she also had some follow-up conversations with Sam Hight. She recommends that we hold off until after the meeting with Steve Landry. She would like to see if Steve can address some of these questions and concerns and whether or not they can take another look at how they are going to move forward on that design.

Chief Bucknam said he was on the initial walkthrough with DOT, five years ago. He was looking at the accidents with semi-trucks. What they were talking about sort of made sense to him. He was over 50% onboard with it. He had heard nothing else about it until he received a copy of the plan. He was dumbfounded looking at it. Turning a two-lane road into a one-lane road is a major public safety issue. Trying to get through here in the morning, lunch, 2:30 p.m. when schools are letting out, and the 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. when New Balance and Sappi are coming through there...it is very difficult for emergency vehicles to get through that intersection as it is. With a traffic light that traffic will be backed up all the way to the rotary. We are not going that way to get across the bridges. With a single lane coming through on Madison Avenue by Cumberland Farms, again, where do we go? We will be threading the needle which puts his officers' safety in jeopardy. It also puts the public's safety in jeopardy, trying to get out of the way. Ambulances and fire trucks are bigger than he is. He is an absolute no on supporting this project. It will affect our response to help citizens of this town.

Recording Time: 01:34:10

Don Skillings said it was asked in that meeting if the Town supports this. We couldn't answer that in that meeting. Are we going to need that question answered when we meet with Steve Landry?

Christine Almand said that her recollection was that that was a question from the businesses. She would not speak for the Selectmen without a consensus. She thinks it is worth while to speak with Steve Landry to see if something can be done to make it a better design. She is open to input.

???? said if there was a stop sign instead of yield. The people coming off of Commercial Street have the right of way, because it is a yield...but the people coming off of Elm Street are making a right-hand turn at a stop sign...so they think they have the right of way. People coming down Madison Avenue are not doing 25 mph, they are doing 45mph. At least with a stop sign, there wouldn't be confusion about who has the right of way.

Chief Bucknam said that he and Don Kinney should talk about that. A stop sign isn't a bad idea. 99% of the time he is stopping there as it is. It would also help with pedestrian traffic. We could have an answer before the end of the week.

Christine Almand said that she thinks she has heard enough to be able to state in that meeting that the Town has concerns about that design.

Todd Smith said that Sam Hight's letter states that the Town needs a better way to communicate with businesses and stakeholders and property owners about projects going on. He would like to request that moving forward, we do try to do better at notifying stakeholders and property owners of projects that we will be discussing.

Recording Time: 01:40:31

3. Discussion and decision to nominate Steven Govoni to serve on the Somerset County Budget Committee.

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Harold Bigelow to nominate Steven Govoni to serve on the Somerset County Budget Committee.

Vote: 3/0/1 (Steven Govoni abstained)

4. Discussion and decision to approve the Application for Parades and Procession to allow the Skowhegan Regional Chamber of Commerce to hold the Memorial Day Parade on May 30, 2022 at 10:00 a.m., contingent upon receipt of Certificate of Liability Insurance.

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Steven Govoni to approve the Application for Parades and Procession to allow the Skowhegan Regional Chamber of Commerce to hold the Memorial Day Parade on May 30, 2022 at 10:00 a.m., contingent upon receipt of Certificate of Liability Insurance.

Cara Mason said that the Certificate of Liability Insurance has been received.

Vote: 4/0

5. Discussion and decision to approve the Application for a License for Incorporated Civic Organization to allow the Lake George Corporation to serve alcohol at Lake George on February 19, 2022 from 11:00 a.m. until 10:00 p.m. as part of Somerset Snowfest.

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Steven Govoni to approve the Application for a License for Incorporated Civic Organization to allow the Lake George Corporation to serve alcohol at Lake George on February 19, 2022 from 11:00 a.m. until 10:00 p.m. as part of Somerset Snowfest.

Steven Govoni said this is going to be a good time. They have added an ice-hole competition. You fling hockey pucks down the ice trying to get them in a six-inch hole. It was invented by some locals. It is similar to corm-hole but it is on the ice.

Vote: 4/0

6. Discussion and decision to approve the Application for a License for Incorporated Civic Organization to allow Main Street Skowhegan to serve alcohol at the Skowhegan Fairgrounds on February 26, 2022 from 11:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. as part of Skijor Skowhegan.

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Harold Bigelow to approve the Application for a License for Incorporated Civic Organization to allow Main Street Skowhegan to serve alcohol at the Skowhegan Fairgrounds on February 26, 2022 from 11:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. as part of Skijor Skowhegan.

Vote: 4/0

7. Discussion and decision to expend an amount not to exceed \$12,800.00 from the Economic and Community Development Reserve Account, Aerial Photography Designation for updated Orthoimagery and authorize Christine Almand to sign the Memorandum of Agreement with the Maine Library of Geographic Information.

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Steven Govoni to expend an amount not to exceed \$12,800.00 from the Economic and Community Development Reserve Account, Aerial Photography Designation for updated Orthoimagery and authorize Christine Almand to sign the Memorandum of Agreement with the Maine Library of Geographic Information.

Todd Smith thanked Jeff Hewett for listing his reserve account balance on his memo.

Vote: 4/0

8. Discussion and decision to approve the Mortgage Deed, Promissory Note and payment schedule for the \$8,864.85 owed to the Town of Skowhegan from Ronald and Melony Hull.

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Steven Govoni to approve the Mortgage Deed, Promissory Note and payment schedule for the \$8,864.85 owed to the Town of Skowhegan from Ronald and Melony Hull.

Steven Govoni thanked Bryan Belliveau for getting this done.

Vote: 4/0

9. Discussion and decision to award the Truck Sale Bid. The following bids were received:

Peter Rebar	\$1,250.00
William George	\$501.50

Brent Dickey recommends awarding the Truck Sale Bid to Peter Rebar with a total bid price of \$1,250.00.

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Steven Govoni to award the Truck Sale Bid to Peter Rebar with a total bid price of \$1,250.00.

Vote: 4/0

Recording Time: 01:45:56

10. Discussion and decision to award the Infield Groomer Bid. The following bids were received:

MTE Equipment Solutions, Inc.	\$39,638.55
Ventrac	\$38,233.27

Denise LeBlanc recommends awarding the Infield Groomer Bid to Ventrac with a total bid price of \$38,233.27 and expending that amount from the Recreation Department Reserve Account, Grounds Equipment Designation.

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Steven Govoni to award the Infield Groomer Bid to Ventrac with a total bid price of \$38,233.27 and expend that amount from the Recreation Department Reserve Account, Grounds Equipment Designation.

Vote: 4/0

11. Discussion and decision to award the Fiber Optic Bid. The following bid was received:

Kennebec Communication Consulting	\$26,369.00 (November 24, 2021 bid)
	\$24,000.00 (December 6, 2021 bid)

Chief Bucknam recommends awarding the Fiber Optic Bid to Kennebec Communication Consulting with a total bid price of \$24,000.00 and expending that amount from the Public Safety Building Bond.

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Steven Govoni to award the Fiber Optic Bid to Kennebec Communication Consulting with a total bid price of \$24,000.00 and expend that amount from the Public Safety Building Bond.

Vote: 4/0

12. Discussion and decision to write-off 2020 property taxes in the amount of \$252.81 for Ricky and Margaret Stewart - Map 33, Lot 118-1.

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Steven Govoni to write-off 2020 property taxes in the amount of \$252.81 for Ricky and Margaret Stewart - Map 33, Lot 118-1.

Vote: 4/0

13. Discussion and decision to allow Jeff Hewett to go out to bid for flooring in the Clerk's Office.

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Steven Govoni to allow Jeff Hewett to go out to bid for flooring in the Clerk's Office.

Vote: 4/0

14. Discussion and decision to schedule Town Meeting for either June 11, 2022 at 10:00 a.m. or June 13, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Steven Govoni to schedule Town Meeting for June 13, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.

Paul York said that we have tried both ways. It really didn't seem to make any difference. We have heard that holding it on a Saturday, more people would be able to attend. We didn't have a bigger turnout holding it on Saturday.

Vote: 4/0

15. Discussion and decision to move forward with the amended Street Naming and House Numbering Ordinance.

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Steven Govoni to move forward with the amended Street Naming and House Numbering Ordinance.

Steven Govoni said that he has an issue with formatting. We have two ordinances with two different formats. We should be producing a product that looks the same. Capitalization, bold, different fonts, center aligned, left aligned, different spacing...they look like they are from two different towns. In the long run, there needs to be a level of standard that is better than this.

Todd Smith said he never really paid attention to it, until you see them side by side.

Bryan Belliveau said that Joel Greenwood types these.

Todd Smith asked that Joel address this going forward.

Steven Govoni said he likes the formatting in the Animals & Fowl Ordinance, but the heading from the Street Naming and House Numbering Ordinance. We are going to be going through all of our ordinances. Every single one of these comes from some other source, but that is what it looks like in our book. Ours should be a finished product.

Vote: 4/0

16. Discussion and decision to move forward with the amended Animals & Fowl Ordinance.

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Steven Govoni to move forward with the amended Animals & Fowl Ordinance.

Todd Smith thanked the Planning Board and Cara Mason.

Vote: 4/0

17. Discussion and decision to approve the Pole Location Permit to allow CMP and Consolidated Communications to place one pole on Bigelow Hill Road, 3,441 feet from the intersection of Bigelow Hill Road and Larone Road.

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Harold Bigelow to approve the Pole Location Permit to allow CMP and Consolidated Communications to place one pole on Bigelow Hill Road, 3,441 feet from the intersection of Bigelow Hill Road and Larone Road.

Vote: 4/0

18. Discussion regarding remote board meetings.

Christine Almand said that the State has made a change to the law that could allow remote board meetings. There are specific requirements that need to be met. Once those requirements are met, whatever remote methods are afforded the voting member of the board would also have to be afforded to the public.

She included the change in the State Statute as well as some MMA guidance and three sample policies. If this is something that the Selectmen want to do, we should talk about how we want to do it. She had a brief conversation with Bryan Belliveau about our capabilities for hybrid meetings.

In the spirit of the law, we should not take this lightly and go remote for just any reason. She wants to make sure that it is because a member could not be here. We would have to adopt a policy. We would have to have a public hearing in order to adopt that policy.

Steven Govoni said that his opinion is that committees that have an oversight, like the Second Bridge Committee, that their decision is then presented to the Selectmen...he doesn't have a problem with it at that level. He does not think we should adopt this at this level. He would say that is true of the Planning Board as well. Those two boards make decisions that impact the Town without general oversight.

Paul York said that he agrees with Steven Govoni. He doesn't really think it should be at any level. Just recently when we were forced to go remote...there was a lot of talk about how well it went with putting it online... a lot more viewers. The we decided when we went back to in person, that we would still broadcast Planning Board and Selectmen's meeting online...and then it started changing. Allowing it here and not here just makes a mess. He doesn't feel that we need that policy. There are a lot of things on there...like if there is a hot item...like we did tonight, we can just table the item. We have avenues to take care of that if somebody can't be here.

Todd Smith said he agrees with both of them. It is permissible, that doesn't mean that we have to do it. He said he wouldn't want to see it at this level or the Planning Board level. He doesn't know the logistics to make it happen. Is there an investment to be made to make it a reality? He doesn't know how much of an issue it is at the point.

Steven Govoni said that the SEDC recently did this. It seemed like it was easy.

Cara Mason said that part of it is easy. If you allow members to Zoom in, you also have to allow the public to Zoom in. That is where we might run into some issue.

Christine Almand said she spoke to Bryan about that today. She isn't sure...we may have to look at the type of subscription that we have. Not that we have had issues, but other communities have. She is more than willing to look into it if the Selectmen want to go in that direction.

Paul York asked about an issue with the Planning Board. There was a glitch in the system and people couldn't chime in. Technically, that meeting should have stopped.

Steven Govoni said if someone's got a bad connection, it is a nightmare. He doesn't see it at this level. The SEDC meeting went well.

Todd Smith said they did it on the school board. You had 23 people on the screen and people were coming in and out all the time. All votes were roll call and half of the people were muted.

Christine Almand said that there are ways to accommodate it, but it doesn't come without its complications or potential technical issues. She is willing to look into it.

Matt Dubois asked about other communities that are allowing remote meetings. He said that it has allowed others to participate when they couldn't physically come to the meeting. It makes them more productive, but he also see the downside of having 1,000 people on Zoom. He just wondered if other communities might have solutions to those types of issues.

Todd Smith said we probably need a policy, otherwise you can't.

Christine Almand said that the policy has already been created, and there was a public hearing. The State allows it, and SEDC has a policy after holding a public hearing.

Some larger communities that are doing remote meeting, have more resources available. If we are going to be looking at broadcasting all of our committee meetings and all of that, she would need another staff member, as well as additional funds for technology upgrades. We do a good job trying to make due with the resources that we have. We have been able to do that with SEDC. If it is going to be a more regular occurrence, we would have to invest more. It would be either Bryan or Jeff right now to run that hybrid stuff. There are other communities that have staff that solely their equipment...a TV channel person or an IT person or whatever.

19. Economic and Community Development Warrant to be approved:

#121 \$ 1,085.00

A motion was made by Steven Govoni and seconded by Paul York to approve the Economic and Community Development Warrants as written.

Vote: 4/0

20. Treasurer's Warrants to be approved:

#55	\$	51,500.18 (Payroll #2)
#56	\$	6,242.50 (State Payables)
#61	\$	47,769.07 (Payroll #3)
#62	\$	997,770.60 (FY 2022 Accounts Payable)
Total	\$	1,103,282.35

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Harold Bigelow to approve the Treasurer's Warrants as written.

Vote: 4/0

21. Unfinished Business

Review Policies and Ordinances
Run of River/Economic Development
Utilizing Outside Services
Marketing/Celebrating Skowhegan
Public Safety Building
Sidewalks and Bike Trails/Lanes
Second Bridge
Solar Power
Current Fire Station
Mechanic Street School
DEP PFAS Investigation

There was no Unfinished Business discussed.

22. Other Business

There was no Other Business discussed.

23. Sign Documents

The Selectmen signed documents.

Executive Session:

1. Executive Session in accordance with M.R.S.A. Title 1 § 405 (6)(C) to discuss a potential purchase of property.

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Steven Govoni to enter into Executive Session in accordance with M.R.S.A. Title 1 § 405 (6)(C) at 7:42 p.m. to discuss a potential purchase of property.

Vote: 4/0

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Todd Smith to exit Executive Session at 8:19 p.m.

Vote: 4/0

Adjourn Selectmen's Meeting.

Approved and signed on February 8, 2022.

A True Copy Attest: _____
Cara L. Mason, Executive Secretary