

**Minutes
Town of Skowhegan
Regular Selectmen's Meeting
5:30 P.M.
Tuesday, February 8, 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
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

The Mechanic Street Schoolhouse Bid and the Flooring Bid for the Clerk's Office close on February 15th at 1:00 pm. For more information visit our website or contact Jeff Hewett.

The Town offices will be closed on February 21st in observation of Presidents Day.

Somerset SnowFest is February 19th – 27th. For more information, contact Main Street Skowhegan, Lake George or see the Somerset SnowFest Facebook page.

3. Items by the Public

There were no Items by the Public.

4. Selectmen's Items

Harold Bigelow asked if there were anymore violations against him, other than the one written violation. He heard there was another violation going to be released.

Christine Almand said she didn't know what he was talking about.

Harold Bigelow said it was supposed to be global warming and climate change being blamed. A lot has gone on in the last month...three months. To him it is a 150% diversion of what's actually going on. We've got a whole new board here...all except for Paul. He really thinks that there was a reason for putting a brand-new board here. We've got a lot on our plate right now...the river park, police and fire hall, the bridge that is going to go through. We've got a lot going on. We've got traffic and a brand-new school...who knows what is going to go there. All of a sudden, things started happening and there was questions brought up. There was a lot of questions brought up by the board and head Selectmen. We was seeing things that wasn't quite right. On December 7th it kind of come to a head. It was pretty graphic in the paper. It was brought up about deception...hostile environment by our manager. Things were just rolling. During that meeting, he just set there. Whoa this is what's going. We talked about it. He didn't think it would go that high. It did...it got really heated. There was finger pointing and everybody saw the tapes...especially the media. It was really kind of funny...it was so much everywhere...front page...and then one week later, 18% raise. Contract goes right through. Increase in benefits. 18% raise? We were questioning everything about her, and the all of a sudden, she gets a clean bill of health...4/1 vote. He was the only one that abstained out. He said whoa. Once this happened, it hit the fan.

Everybody...something was going on...he was being scrutinized. All of a sudden there was charges being brought up against him. It was coming down hard on him. He is the only one that didn't have a business. It reflected that, he feels. This whole...going one way and then it shifts and is going another way. Then complaints are bought up...what he has done and said. That all stemmed back to the entitlements or the covert money...how it was going to be divided up. He said that Gail had said she hoped it all got divided up equally...it makes her job a whole lot better...a lot easier. The first responders never got cut. They were working right around the clock. If somebody called them, they were right there. Vacations were cancelled, everything. Everybody else had two weeks off. They were separating. Not them. When the alarm hits they are on the road. Hey dear I won't be back for a while. It's covert. They had not only their regular job, but they also had covert to deal with. He thought that they should have been compensated.

What did slow down, was the offices. The roads got plowed. Everything happened the same way with our first responders. He wanted them recognized. Everybody should get compensated, but he really felt that the first responders ought to get more...get recognized for their sacrifice. He said her is not reading this. This is from the heart. When Gail said that, everybody started falling in line. Everybody gets the same...whatever it was...like \$2,000.00. He's thinking whoa, everybody gets the same...a part time guy at the Rec. Center or whatever get the same as a fireman or a policeman. Whooo, hey babe, I'm called out, we got a fire part time. He gets the same as somebody mowing the lawn or sweeping the floor somewhere.

The Fire Chief came up and said that he thinks that we are all important and everybody should get the same. He was following right behind what Gail said. That's what usually happens. It's one big ripple right down. He thinks that is why we've got a new board. He didn't feel that that was right. Even Shawn said that he disagreed with him. Harold Bigelow said that we all do...we all have our own opinion. The next morning...that bothered him at night. He felt that first responders...and he didn't know what was being projected. So he made a point to go down at 11:20, when all of the firefighters were having lunch. He used to bring, and still bring

them lunch...bring them, that's when they eat. The he went in and explained to them...no matter what he is for compensation for the first responders. He is for it 100%. Everybody get the same...but then the responders should get it. Shawn was there. Harold Bigelow said he can't remember what he said, but there was a lot of things of what they said that he said. Yeah, they said a lot too. Just like global warming here coming up. What aggravated him the most was he said he really feels bad...he thinks he said threw you under the bus. He has been listening to the paper and what you guys have done to him.

Harold Bigelow said he is still for it regardless to what your Fire Chief is doing. He said he will fight for you guys right to the end. Then he turned around and said that he had his kids out in the car, I've got my black kids out in the truck. And they are...they are black pugs. They go everywhere with me. Ask anyone, they have been I here. They know this place like the back of their hand...and everywhere else...Bangor Savings. They are my family. They are my kids, after they left.

He said a week later he is being accused of...he can't even remember...dressing down. That was a difference of opinion, his and mine. He dressed him down. What he did was went in there in his turf, and violated his turf. He said, he feels he did that and he was going to get me or something was going to happen. He didn't think about it until a week later. Then he got this email or text or something that he was being cited for violation...a written complaint. He's thinking what in the...this is something else. A little deliberate when the same charges were brought up less than two weeks ago against the Town Manager. This bothered him real bad. It was a diversion if he ever saw it.

He said he then called the Sentinel, and said that we got something going on here and it's not right. They come up, and it started right then. They took interviews and he talked to them.

Todd Smith asked Harold Bigelow to wrap it up. He said we all know the story.

Harold Bigelow said what it boiled down to...a lot of the stuff that he gave on the interview never got out. He gave donations in 2016 to the fire department for a new safety boat with a motor. In 2018 he got them the communications...he asked them, what do they need. The first time they needed the safety boat. The second time they needed the communication. So he went to Brookfield just before he retired, and it come just under the wire. He got \$7,500.00 again and they got it. He couldn't understand why they would do this to, but that's ok. Everybody's different. After all of that happened, they were going after him. They were waving the race card at him. They hired a second lawyer.

You want to know what one of the charges were? That he made a woman feel uncomfortable. He said if somebody made his little girl, daughter or his wife feel uncomfortable...he would be sitting on his hood when he got out of work that night. What caused...he never made a woman...that was one of the charges. He said he can tell you one thing...this is what made her feel uncomfortable...

Christine Almand said, are you really going to let this happen?

Todd Smith was trying to get Harold Bigelow's attention.

Harold Bigelow held up a picture of his late wife. He said this is my late wife...I've been thrown under the bus here for the last month and a half. He said he is not backing down.

Todd Smith said he would like for Harold Bigelow to wind it up.

Harold Bigelow said that we have a lot going on in this town and he wants to go. He wants to handle the problems that we have...not be dodging bullets...trying to be a diversion to what's really going on. So, anyway...there was no filter there. We didn't have to go through the media and weed it out.

He held up the picture of his late wife again and said this is what made...that's my wife.

Todd Smith said he is sorry for what happened to him.

Harold Bigelow said that is a nerve. That is a low blow when you make that.

Charles Robbins thanked the highway department for all that they have done lately.

Todd Smith thanked Don Kinney. He said he has received compliments on his crew. He has also got a couple calls on the street lights intown. We are aware that they are not working and/or they are flickering.

Don Kinney said he thinks they burnt out. The electrician has been working on it.

Recording Time: 19:01

5. Department and Committee Reports

Bryan Belliveau said that he received a letter from CMP today regarding solar development. They put together a website and they have asked us to share it; it is cmpconnectsdg.com. They have been getting calls about the process for these solar projects. This website will help answer those questions. It has been posted to the Code Enforcement Facebook page as well as the Town of Skowhegan's Facebook page.

Chief Bucknam thanked Don Kinney and his crew for everything they have been doing out on the roads. Our emergency vehicles couldn't get to the emergencies if it wasn't for him and his team. It's great to have somebody that we can make that phone call and have immediate support.

Chief Bucknam reminded everybody that the roads are icy. When you see emergency vehicles on the side of the road, please slow down and drive through safely to make sure that nobody steps out from between vehicles and then we have another accident. You are required by law to slow down and move as far away from that emergency vehicle as possible before you go around it.

Chief Bucknam thanked Jeff Hewett, his Admin. Assistant, Renee and his Admin Assistant, Nancy. Trisha and Nancy put a lot of time in. He had put in for a grant for PPE reimbursement stuff. He received a check for a little over \$14,000.00, for man hours from the

police department during COVID and PPE and cleaning supplies that Jeff and Renee stayed on top of to make sure that they were readily available. That will be on the next agenda to be accepted.

Consent Agenda:

1. Approve and sign Minutes from the following:

Regular Selectmen's Meeting – January 11, 2022

Regular Selectmen's Meeting – January 25, 2022

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Charles Robbins to approve the Consent Agenda with corrections.

Christine Almand said that a couple of typos had been corrected on the January 25, 2022 Minutes.

Vote: 4/0

Regular Agenda:

1. Discussion and decision to appoint one Selectman to each of the four unions:

Police

Fire

AFSCME

General Government

A motion was made by Charles Robbins and seconded by Paul York to appoint as follows:

Police – Paul York

Fire – Paul York

AFSCME – Harold Bigelow

General Government – Charles Robbins

Vote: 4/0

2. Discussion and decision to approve the construction overlimit permit agreement for Route 150 paving (DOT project # 2572900).

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Charles Robins to approve the construction overlimit permit agreement for Route 150 paving (DOT project # 2572900).

Don Kinney said he doesn't need an overlimit on 150. That would be if it was on some side roads. It's in case they do damage to the roads, on roads that's over the limit. We don't really need it.

Christine Almand said that it is described from the State...we could require the contractors to have a bond. That bond would then cover us if there were any damage to the road. They also said it is not typical that a municipality would. She discussed it with Don. They are doing the paving on North Avenue, just about where the Animal Medical Clinic is. Most of the paving is outside of town.

Don Kinney said there is a little bit in Skowhegan, but it's 150. They will be rebuilding it. There is nothing to really need the overlimit for.

Vote: 4/0

3. Discussion and decision to expend an amount not to exceed \$93.00 from the Planning Reserve Account, Conservation Commission Designation to purchase water testing supplies for water quality testing of Whitten Brook.

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Charles Robbins to expend an amount not to exceed \$93.00 from the Planning Reserve Account, Conservation Commission Designation to purchase water testing supplies for water quality testing of Whitten Brook.

Vote: 4/0

Recording Time: 27:43

4. Discussion and decision to allow Christine Almand to accept tax payments in full, prior to the award of foreclosure sale bids, in order to sell any foreclosed property back to the previous owner.

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Charles Robbins to allow Christine Almand to accept tax payments in full, prior to the award of foreclosure sale bids, in order to sell any foreclosed property back to the previous owner.

Christine Almand said it is now down to two. One of them is coming in first thing tomorrow morning to pay off.

Vote: 4/0

5. Discussion and decision to allow Christine Almand to put foreclosed properties out for sale bids.

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Charles Robbins to allow Christine Almand to put foreclosed properties out for sale bids.

This is the second year that we have put in the notice that, "if you currently own property in Skowhegan, you must be current on your property taxes in order to be eligible to bid".

Vote: 4/0

6. Discussion and decision regarding the Spirit of America recipient and the Dedication of the Town Report.

Todd Smith read the recent recipients of the Spirit of America award.

- 2013 Betty Austin
- 2014 Shirley Whittemore
- 2015 Robert Washburn
- 2016 Amy and Gene Rouse
- 2017 June Nickerson Hovey
- 2018 Georgiana Wright
- 2019 Lynda Quinn
- 2020 Main Street Skowhegan
- 2021 Hight Family of Dealerships

Christine Almand said that the idea is that it is awarded to people who volunteer to make the community better.

A motion was made by Charles Robbins and seconded by Paul York to award the Spirit of America to David Bucknam.

Vote: 4/0

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Charles Robbins to dedicate the Town Report to Darla Pickett.

Vote: 4/0

7. Discussion and decision to approve the letter of support for KVCOG's application for the Service Provider Grant.

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Charles Robbins to approve the letter of support for KVCOG's application for the Service Provider Grant.

Vote: 4/0

Recording Time: 34:29

8. Treasurer's Warrants to be approved:

#63	\$	52,814.05 (Payroll #4)
#64	\$	55,517.61 (Payroll #5)
#65	\$	4,234.00 (State Payables)
#9	\$	1,070.00 (FY 2022 PSB Accounts Payable)
#66	\$	233,812.71 (FY 2022 Accounts Payable)
Total	\$	347,448.37

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

Vote: 4/0

9. 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

DEP has started testing wells in Skowhegan. They are not really sending us and communications regarding this.

Todd Smith asked if there had been any response to the letter that we sent to them.

Christine Almand said no.

10. Other Business

There was no Other Business discussed.

11. Sign Documents

The Selectmen signed documents.

Executive Session:

1. Executive Session in accordance with M.R.S.A. Title 1 § 405 (6)(A) to discuss union negotiations.

A motion was made by Charles Robbins and seconded by Paul York to enter Executive Session in accordance with M.R.S.A. Title 1 § 405 (6)(A) at 6:06 p.m. to discuss union negotiations.

Vote: 4/0

