

**Minutes
Town of Skowhegan
Regular Selectmen's Meeting
5:30 P.M.
Tuesday, February 22, 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

At the conclusion of the last bridge discussion, the Board voted to table the item until the February 22nd meeting, and we sent a letter to the Commissioner. Last week I was told by Matt Drost from Maine DOT that we could expect a response to the letter this week. Once we receive their response, we will place an item for discussion on the Selectmen's Agenda.

The Foreclosure Sale Bids close on March 2nd at 11:00 am. For more information, visit our website or contact the Town Manager's Office.

Somerset SnowFest is now through February 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

Steven Govoni thanked Nancy Weis for her service to the police department. She is stepping down to return to military service.

Condolences to the families of Shirley Whittemore and Warren Shay. Two outstanding Skowhegan residents and very active in the town.

Todd Smith gave his condolences as well. He thanked Nancy Weis for her service to the Town.

5. Department and Committee Reports

Trisha Austin said that the PD Administrative Assistant position has been posted. She has already received four or five applications. It closes on March 2nd.

The recreation department position has been filled.

Denise LeBlanc said that starting Monday, they will have a full crew.

Chief Bucknam said that the teenage girl that was missing from Cornville, returned home on Sunday.

Chief Howard offered condolences to the family of Warren Shay. He was a supporter of the fire department. Chief Howard said he has gotten to know him personally as an active member of the Public Safety Building Committee. He was well respected. He was calming, fair and understanding. He had a lot of the history of Skowhegan. He spoke as the voice for many people in the community.

Brent Dickey said that the PFAS situation has been a wild ride. Things are changing all the time. Currently LD 1911 is being discussed, which is a ban on all land application of sludge. It is in committee. It doesn't look likely that there will be any turning back from banning sludge land application, including the compost that we make. This is poor timing for this to come about. We've got all of last fall and this winter's compost that has already been made. It is stored on site. We will not be able to land apply that as we expected. This will have an impact on the budget. It's not really clear how this will all go. Our only option is landfilling at this point. All of our sludge will likely go to Waste Management. That is statewide. That is for sludge with any appreciable amount of PFAS. That is about 90+% of all of the sludge in Maine. We spent around \$94,225.00 for sludge disposal. His best estimate for 2023 is \$132,500.00. That does not include the disposal of the compost that has already on site. We will have to see what our options are and how that shakes out. We have already put the money into the making of the compost. We spent money making a class A product that is now of no use to anyone.

Harold Bigelow asked if that is the compost that they have at the highway department?

Brent Dickey said that is completely different. That is leaf and yard waste. There is no sludge component in that at all.

Charles Robbins asked if there were no intentions to spread the sludge compost that is currently there.

Brent Dickey said that it is in committee. The last update to this bill was an outright ban.

Christine Almand said that it has been moved as an emergency measure. Anticipating it being passed as an emergency measure, Brent is working to find the best way to get rid of the compost that we have, as well as pricing for landfilling our future sludge.

Recording Time: 16:00

Presentation:

1. Jon Moody will give a presentation regarding plans for the new school.

Jon Moody said that the plans that were handed out to the Selectmen will be on their website.

They received unanimous approval from the Construction Committee in June. They followed up with the State Board of Education. They have the support of the Commissioner and full support of the State Board in July.

They did the educational specs and sent surveys to families, last spring. All of that information was collated into a 130-page document that was submitted to the DOE in November.

In August they moved onto concept design. What you see is a concept design plan drawn by the landscape architect and one of the engineers. Andy Johnston and Doug Greer are her tonight. Doug is the lead architect on this project. Lynda Quinn and Amy Rouse from the school board are also here tonight.

This is 95% paid by the State and 5% covered by the school district. We have been meeting with the State almost weekly since November. Some parking spaces were removed to extend the parent drop off and pick up. We wanted to maximize the spaces for events. Parking has been an issue at some of our current sites.

This will combine North Elementary, Bloomfield, Margaret Chase Smith and grades 3, 4,5 and 6 from Canaan Elementary. This new school will have roughly 800 students. It will include birth through age 3 as well...in partnership with KVCAP...expanded from two classrooms to four classrooms at the new school. This building will be for birth through grade 5. 6th grade will be at the Middle School.

Jon Moody then went over the plans that were handed out at the meeting, and are attached to these Minutes.

Recording Time: 26:55

Harold Bigelow said that only 5% would affect Skowhegan taxpayers.

Jon Moody said that it could be 4% or 6%. That is a ballpark, and we are hoping to not go over that. We are one of three projects that were approved in 2019. We are on a timeline to open in the fall of 2025.

We had five public meeting in the fall, not counting the referendum vote. We have open committee meetings monthly. The Town has been willing to follow up and help us whenever we have questions. We are on a first name basis with the State at this point. We are meeting almost biweekly.

Todd Smith asked if he could touch on the other schools that will be closes. Specifically, North Elementary and the relocation of the bus garage.

Bloomfield will not be closed. Bloomfield will likely be used for some other purpose. Maybe the Marti Stevens school moves into that site. We now have to provide special education services to kids until they are 23 years old. These are kids that are going to need to learn to live on their own...or at least come close. Something like that may be at Bloomfield. It won't be anything like it is, so that will alleviate the parking issues at the Middle School. North Elementary will become the bus garage. This will likely happen in 2023. We will be building this building while Margaret Chase Smith is in session. The bus garage will have to go, so that the construction equipment is there.

The playgrounds are not set on that plan. The Margaret Chase Smith site will be in service until the beginning of the summer of 2025. It will be torn down that summer, with the parking a grading happening.

The Canaan Elementary site...the recommendation was that it would not qualify for a state funded project. It would cost \$9.5 to \$12 million to bring that school up to specs for continued use. We would remove the portable classrooms and make that school a pre-K trough 2. This project will give us more space at Millstream and more space in Canaan to expand pre-K. That is a revenue source and it helps us long-term. It tends to decrease special ed numbers.

Charles Robbins said kudos to the architect. Separating buss drop-off and parent drop-off is huge. It is a cluster at the Middle School right now.

He asked if traffic studies had been done.

Andy Johnston said that they are formulating the design. There are some elements that are still being developed. One of the things that they are starting to look at now in detail, is the traffic. The traffic engineer will come up with a map of the bus routes with Dave Leavitt. Looking at where the traffic comes now, and where the buses go to and from now. One of the advantages of this site from a traffic perspective it is certainly going to draw more passenger car traffic by being a bigger school. By taking the bus garage out and moving it somewhere else it alleviates all of those outboard trips in the morning and return trips during the day. The inbound and outbound trips all go through that neighborhood now. It will reduce the bus traffic and increase the passenger car traffic.

The process we go through to sort out that increased traffic, on the roads adjacent to the school and also further away, we put in an application to Maine DOT. We have already spoken to them. We have an idea about what level of off-site improvements they might require on North Avenue and Cardinal Avenue and other intervening streets.

Recording Time: 33:08

Andy Johnston said that they put in an application to them. That sets up a scoping meeting.

Steven Govoni said that we are going to need to be part of that. We are going to need to be a major part of that. We are basically moving all of the traffic onto East Street. We are going to have buses trying to move in and out of Heselton Street and vehicles trying to move in and out of East Street. He sees North Avenue being a disaster. The Town needs to be present at any meetings with the DOT from here in. He said he hopes he is making that clear.

Andy Johnston said that when that scoping meeting is set up, as a matter of course the Town is invited.

Steven Govoni said not invited. We are a part of the discussion! Voting members!

Andy Johnston said that DOT sends that out when they get the application. They send notices to all abutters. Notice to the Town. Every scoping meeting has included one or more representatives from the Town. Who that is, is up to you. He would imagine the Road Commissioner...maybe Joel from Planning. It is important. That scoping meeting defines the area that is going to be studied. It sets the limits, but other things come up. The DOT is pretty up front about what their expectations are for improvements that go along with this school project. They determine who pays for what, and who is responsible for what. It ends up being a team process. It is important that the Town is represented at these meetings.

It involves everything from what will need to happen to alleviate traffic; what happens to pedestrian crossings; what happens to sidewalk improvements, potentially on Cardinal Avenue; potential improvements to Cardinal, because there will be buses coming in through there; Heselton Street and all of those sidewalks on Heselton, East and East Maple Streets. That study area could spread a little bit as well.

Steven Govoni said that he fears that they are dealing with one group at DOT. What we know, factually, from DOT is that they assign whomever is going to be at that scoping meeting. That individual doesn't know what else is happening in this town. We've found that they are working with you. All of a sudden all of these approvals are happening, but they don't have any idea that right down the road we have another issue...or a bridge or a traffic light. They have no idea.

We are taking advantage of the Village Initiative program, which is a new DOT program, so that we can get one DOT player in charge of all of the other DOT players. We have one sit-down that gets this all done. This school is a major part of that. We are changing traffic patterns in the town because of this. He doesn't want to see that we are dealing with one person at the DOT that has no idea that we have other traffic lights going in and other...we definitely need to be at the table for this.

Recording Time: 37:18

Andy Johnston said this is the time to do it. If there are other improvements going on in the town, we want to incorporate those into this plan. To make sure that everything works with each other. There is no point putting a traffic light in somewhere else if it is going to trip up the traffic on another project.

We do a lot of work in southern Maine, where the traffic issues are significantly different. We are always tripping over this. We have to get everybody involved at the start. Nobody gets blindsided. Everybody knows what is coming up. That will be happening in the next couple weeks.

Steven Govoni invited him to the March 10th meeting.

Christine Almand said that is an initial meeting in regards to the Village Planning Initiative. That meeting will be held at Main Street. It is a small group.

Steven Govoni said that the DOT submittal should be sitting at the table with them on the 10th, so that Matt Drost is aware of it.

Christine Almand said that he is aware that we have a school project. We can talk about that at that time. If there is something to share that would be great.

Andy Johnston said he believes that the Town gets a copy of that application.

Todd Smith said that one of the reasons he mentioned the North Elementary site, is that we have had some engineered drawings of that Jewett Street intersection. He doesn't know if when that was done it was anticipated that there is going to be 53' buses there on a daily basis. If we move forward with it as designed if we will then have to change it to meet their future needs. There are a lot of things happening. We are taking the steps to have that one head person that oversees these projects. This is a big one. He really appreciates the explanation.

Andy Johnston said that the relocation of the bus garage will be part of that DOT application. It is part of the traffic changes. It is a bit of a shell game to add and subtract from each of the streets.

Recording Time: 41:19

Consent Agenda:

1. Approve and sign Minutes from the following:

Regular Selectmen's Meeting – February 8, 2022

2. Approve and sign a Quit Claim Deed for:

Christopher D. White, Pers Rep – Map 6, Lot 60

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

Vote: 5/0

Regular Agenda:

1. Discussion and decision to approve the Application for renewal of an On-Premises License for:

Barticus Inc. d/b/a SouthSide Tavern
1 Waterville Road

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Charles Robbins to approve the Application for renewal of an On-Premises License for Barticus Inc. d/b/a SouthSide Tavern.

Vote: 5/0

2. Discussion and decision to approve the application for renewal of a Farmer's Market Authorization to sell malt liquor or wine for:

Skowhegan Farmer's Market
42 Court Street

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Charles Robbins to approve the application for renewal of a Farmer's Market Authorization to sell malt liquor or wine for Skowhegan Farmer's Market.

Vote: 5/0

3. Discussion and decision to expend an amount not to exceed \$5,000.00 from the Legal Fees Reserve Account to cover legal services through the end of the fiscal year.

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Charles Robbins to expend an amount not to exceed \$5,000.00 from the Legal Fees Reserve Account to cover legal services through the end of the fiscal year.

Vote: 5/0

4. Discussion and decision to approve Amendment #1 to the Lease Option Agreement with BNRG Maine, LLC and authorize Christine Almand to sign the agreement.

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Charles Robbins to approve Amendment #1 to the Lease Option Agreement with BNRG Maine, LLC and authorize Christine Almand to sign the agreement.

Christine Almand said that red-lined copies were provided. There was some back and forth between BNRG and our attorney. The attorney is all set with the most recent copy.

Vote: 5/0

5. Discussion and decision to approve the Planning Services Contract with KVCOG through June 30, 2023 and authorize Christine Almand to sign the contract.

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Charles Robbins to approve the Planning Services Contract with KVCOG through June 30, 2023 and authorize Christine Almand to sign the contract.

Christine Almand said that there was a considerable increase in the hourly rate. You will see that in the budget.

Charles Robbins asked if there were any negotiations.

Christine Almand said that we had conversations. We cut it down to a third. They will expect some additional movement.

Todd Smith said he thought that it looked fair considering the services that they offer.

Christine Almand said she is trying to get it as low as possible.

Steven Govoni said we are asking them to step it up a notch with the fonts.

Vote: 5/0

6. Discussion and decision to award the Mechanic Street Schoolhouse Sale Bid. The following bids were received:

Jason Cooke	\$16,010.00 – Residential Rental
Harvey Austin	\$4,350.99 – Art Gallery
Eric Prevost	\$2,500.00 – Future Occupancy

Jeff Hewett Recommends awarding the Mechanic Street Schoolhouse Bid to Jason Cooke with a total bid amount of \$16,010.00.

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Charles Robbins to award the Mechanic Street Schoolhouse Bid to Jason Cooke with a total bid amount of \$16,010.00.

Paul York asked if we had a timeline on repairs. It needs a lot of work.

Jeff Hewett said that we put a year on for the outside work. We didn't touch on the inside work. The outside work has to be done to Historical Preservation standards. Inside could take a couple years for all we know.

Todd Smith said we weren't expecting historical windows. We are free to allow him to put in double pane insulated windows.

Jeff Hewett said that everybody that looked at the building questioned where we were going on the windows. That would make it a lot easier for a lot of them. Those are big windows.

Christine Almand said that this will also have to go through a Town Meeting process. It was in all of the documents.

Vote: 5/0

7. Discussion and decision to award the Law Enforcement Locker Bid. The following bids were received:

Material Handling Services	\$19,992.00
AAD Office Solutions	\$21,310.00

Chief Bucknam recommends awarding the Law Enforcement Locker Bid to Material Handling Services with a total bid amount of \$19,992.00 and expend that amount as follows:

- \$15,967.00 from the HSGP Grant
- \$4,025.00 from the Police Department Donations Account

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Charles Robbins to award the Law Enforcement Locker Bid to Material Handling Services with a total bid amount of \$19,992.00 and expend that amount as follows:

- \$15,967.00 from the HSGP Grant**
- \$4,025.00 from the Police Department Donations Account**

Charles Robbins asked if this is the total number of lockers that we will need for the Public Safety Building.

Chief Bucknam said this leaves him eight short. He will go through this grant process again.

Harold Bigelow said that the original bid for these was \$11,000.00, six weeks ago.

Chief Bucknam said that this is the same bid from a couple meeting ago. There was an additional bidder that put in a bid of just under \$12,000.00 didn't meet the same specs. That was when he requested to go back out to bid. That company didn't want any part of it. He had an additional company from New Mexico for \$22,000.00.

Vote: 5/0

Recording Time: 51:00

8. Discussion and decision to reject the bid received for the Clerk's Office Flooring bid and put it back out to bid. The following bid was received:

Maine Highlands Contracting \$19,979.00

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Charles Robbins to reject the bid received for the Clerk's Office Flooring bid and put it back out to bid.

Todd Smith asked for an explanation.

Jeff Hewett said that we had some quotes on this project which were close to \$9,000.00. This is not even in the ballpark. He doesn't have that kind of money for this project. We did have a bid that came in late that was not opened. He would expect that that would have been more in line with where it should have been. We couldn't accept it because it was turned in late.

Vote: 5/0

9. Treasurer's Warrants to be approved:

#67	\$	54,478.73 (Payroll #6)
#68	\$	54,721.72 (Payroll #7)
#69	\$	5,774.30 (State Payables)
#111	\$	1,000.00 (FY 2021 Accounts Payable)
#70	\$	992,242.09 (FY 2022 Accounts Payable)
Total	\$	1,108,216.84

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

Vote: 5/0

10. 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

Shawn Howard said that there is a lot going on between the contractor and the architects with the Public Safety Building. They haven't forgotten about us. We had been so involved and then we weren't hearing anything. They assured us that there is a lot of work going on. They plan on meeting with us. We are waiting on finalized drawings...some engineer reports. The engineers work with the pre-fab building company. Part of what we paid for is a report from the architectural firm, to help us with setting budgets...projected heating, cooling, maintenance costs...and projected capital improvements for the long-term. Hoping to get that back soon.

In this year's budget there will be a fire department budget. There will be a separate budget for the Public Safety Building. The plan is that we would be moving into that in March 2023...more than halfway through the fiscal year. We will have electricity and heating costs.

The current plan is still to break ground at the end of March.

Steven Govoni said that the January Sidewalk Committee meeting was cancelled. He feels that we need to have a committee meeting. We had four sidewalks on the plate. Let's get a Sidewalk Committee meeting in plan for the next two weeks.

Harold Bigelow said that Fine Line has been in touch with him. They would like to know the streets.

Steven Govoni said he doesn't want to be dictated by the contract. We need to dictate what we want. They will respond with this is what it will cost.

Recording Time: 57:07

11. Other Business

ARPA Funding

A motion was made by Charles Robbins and seconded by Harold Bigelow to allow Bryan Belliveau to go out to bid for two waste compactors.

Vote: 5/0

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Charles Robbins to allow Chief Bucknam to go out to bid for a cruiser and upfit.

Vote: 5/0

A motion was made by Steven Govoni and seconded by Paul York to expend \$55,000.00 for the police department IT and committing to an additional \$55,000.00.

Vote: 5/0

A motion was made by Steven Govoni and seconded by Charles Robbins to commit \$60,000.00, from the second round of ARPA funding, for the broadband project.

Vote: 5/0

Harold Bigelow mentioned an email he had received about an LD regarding closure of the dam in Shawmut. If that passes that means they won't take out the dam. That means keeping Sappi and 700 employees.

Christine Almand asked him to share the email.

Harold Bigelow said it is from the Kennebec River Alliance. Committee on Environment and Natural Resources. Support LD 1979 to help more than 700 Maine jobs at the Somerset Mill. Special outside interests are trying to shut down the Shawmut Dam which is critical to the survival of Somerset Mill. If they shut down the dam, they will shut down the mill. It's all about this LD 1979. Will this be the end of it...whether it is yanked out or not? They have been talking about this. They have taken out Edwards and Fort Halifax. This is serious.

Christine Almand said that she can certainly share that email with the board. She will have to look at the timing.

Harold Bigelow said this is important. This is the life of 700 people. People say that they will never do that. They did that at Edwards. It was in the 80s. There was like nine generators there...all kinds of jobs. The whole area was dependent upon it. They said that they would never do it.

Steven Govoni said he wants to read this. It seems like the Kennebec River Alliance...something is not right about this email. Establishes river management plans. You never know what the group is trying to sell.

Harold Bigelow said it's got to do with Sappi and 700 jobs at the Somerset Mill. They yank out that dam and she's gone.

Steven Govoni said that it says that supporting LD 1979 will save the jobs. When he reads the rest of it, he is not getting that that is their priority.

Harold Bigelow said it's not just the jobs. It's going to affect the whole area.

Christine Almand said that the Kennebec River Alliance is an advocacy group that includes an employee of Brookfield. There is a public hearing on LD 1979 on February 28th. She said that she will forward this email and a link to the legislative document that is being considered. It was presented by President Jackson. Our local representative, Poirier is a co-sponsor.

If we need further discussion, we may need to set up a special meeting in order to provide testimony. She could also, as Town Manager, provide testimony to this legislative document.

Harold Bigelow said he wrote up two pages on reasons why not to take it out. It has to do with river control and flood control and power generation. He gets a lot from them. This is something that really shook him.

Todd Smith said he just received a text message from Jason Gayne. He will get more information. He is the President of that alliance.

12. 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 complaint investigation results.

A motion was made by Charles Robbins and seconded by Paul York to enter into Executive Session in accordance with M.R.S.A. Title 1 § 405 (6)(A) at 6:49 p.m. to discuss complaint investigation results.

Vote: 5/0

A motion was made by Paul York and seconded by Charles Robbins to exit Executive Session at 7:39 p.m.

Vote: 5/0

Todd Smith read the following statement:

There are some rules in the Town of Skowhegan's Code of Ethics and how we are to represent ourselves. There was an incident recently, which resulted in an investigation. As a result, it was found that there was a violation of the Code of Ethics. Under item 18 of the Code of Ethics, it states in part that Selectmen may censure an elected official. A censure is a formal statement of disapproval by the board against one of its own members. It is not a removal from the position, nor does it give the member any less of a voice than any other member. No rights are taken away, but it is an opportunity for a board to let one of its own know that the other member disapprove of their words or actions.

A motion was made by Steven Govoni and seconded by Paul York to censure Harold Bigelow for the actions taken at the fire station as highlighted in the investigation.

Vote: 5/0

Adjourn Selectmen's Meeting.

Approved and signed on March 8, 2022

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