

**Minutes  
Town of Skowhegan  
Regular Selectmen's Meeting  
5:30 P.M.  
Tuesday, February 23, 2021**

**\*\*Public wishing to see this meeting may do so from the  
Town of Skowhegan Facebook page\*\***

**Board of Selectmen:**

Paul York, Chairman  
Betty Austin, Vice Chairman  
Charles Robbins  
Todd Smith  
Roger Staples

**Town Manager:**

Christine Almand

**Executive Secretary:**

Cara L. Mason

Call Selectmen's Meeting to order.

Paul York called the meeting to order.

1. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
2. Town Manager's Report and Department & Committee Reports

The Foreclosure Sale Bids close on March 3<sup>rd</sup> at 11:00 am. For more information, visit our website or contact the Town Manager's Office.

Department Reports:

Gail Pelotte:

- Nomination Papers will be available on Friday, February 26<sup>th</sup> and will be due back on Friday, April 9<sup>th</sup> by 4:30 PM.

**Nomination papers for 2021:**

Two Selectmen (three-year terms)  
One Assessor (three-year term)  
One Road Commissioner (three-year term)  
One Town Clerk (three-year term)  
One Town Treasurer (three-year term)  
One Overseer of the Poor (three-year term)  
Two Park Commissioners (five-year terms)  
Four Directors of SAD#54 (three-year terms)

Bryan Belliveau:

### **Solid Waste & Recycling**

- I recently completed our biennial municipal recycling progress report. We are currently at a 25.24% recycling rate. This number is up 1.4% from 2019.
- Our annual transfer station report and compost report are also completed and submitted.
- A reminder to local contractors: You are only permitted to use our facility if you have a temporary transfer station pass and the materials are coming from a project within the town of Skowhegan. A separate pass is required for each separate project. We have reason to believe we are getting material from projects outside of Skowhegan.

### **Code Enforcement & Planning**

- Development has started picking up and the Planning staff is working on scheduling meetings to get these projects reviewed. We have 5 substantial projects under review at this time.
- We received our Community Rating System recertification for 2021. I am working on areas that we can improve our rating and increase savings on insurance premiums over the next several months. Some of these items we are already doing, and I am currently doing training to learn about how we can get credit for these items.

Greg Dore

- We have been very busy with snow removal the last few weeks. It's frustrating with the small amount of snow that each storm brings because it takes the same effort and cost to clean up a couple inches of snow as it does 5 or 6 inches. We have experienced a few breakdowns in the last few storms. The snowblower for the sidewalk machine's gear box has failed, and we are having a difficult time getting a new gear box. We found out today that the part is being shipped and have no idea when it will arrive. The 2012 Volvo wheeler is having mechanical issues, and we towed it to Bangor last Thursday for repairs. The dealer hasn't been able to trouble shoot the problem yet. Friday morning while we were picking up snow, the snowblower picked up part of a cement block causing damage to the auger. We were able to do this repair in house.
- The contractor that is doing the repairs to the building is coming along great. The wall between the mechanic's bay and tool room is in. They are working on the wall between the hallway and the tool room and should be completed today. The stairs have been rebuilt and the painters will be in next week to finish the project.
- We are still having some issues with the new fuel dispensers. The diesel pump pressure relief valve is not working properly and is being replaced. The pulsars and the computer are not communicating properly, making the reconciliation report not balance. The company that installed the equipment is working diligently to correct the problem.

### 3. Selectmen's Items

Todd Smith mentioned that a 7-year-old girl died in a fire north of us. He stressed the importance of working smoke detectors in your home.

Charles Robbins reminded everyone about the Somerset SnowFest events this weekend.

He also reminded everyone to shop local. Lots of snowmobiles come through Skowhegan and support our local gas stations. There is an ATV club trying to come to Skowhegan, which would also bring people into Skowhegan year-round.

Roger Staples said there are a lot of ways to recreate here. Contact Main Street Skowhegan.

Betty Austin said that Ameri-Corp sent people here and they have a lot of projects. No matter your age, you can get out there and do things.

Paul York asked if we have an answer about the heat issue at the Pollution Control plant.

Christine Almand said that she did receive a response. Some of the air-handling for intake into the building was adjusted early on. There have been some modifications since. We are waiting to see how that turns out.

Jeff Hewett said that in the basement of that facility there are sensors that switch to 100% vent when the building is occupied. The sensors were so sensitive that they were picking up the vibration of the pumps and switching to 100% vent when the building was not occupied. We do not have a firm figure on how much the overage was at this point.

Christine Almand said that we are just now getting the information on what caused it and working on fixing it.

**Consent Agenda:**

1. Approve the Minutes from the following:

Regular Selectmen's Meeting – February 9, 2021

2. Sign a Quit Claim Deed for the following:

Glen Rose – 66 South Factory Street – Map 21, Lot 14-3ON (taxes paid)

3. Sign Taxi-Driver Permits for the following:

Michael S. Marston  
484 River Road  
Madison, ME

Karen A. Lancaster  
44 Austin Road  
Athens, ME

**A motion was made by Betty Austin and seconded by Roger Staples to approve the Consent Agenda as written.**

**Vote: 5/0**

Recording Time: 10:11

**Regular Agenda:**

1. Discussion and decision to appoint one Selectman to participate in the police department union negotiations.

**A motion was made by Roger Staples and seconded by Todd Smith to appoint Paul York to participate in the police department union negotiations.**

**Vote: 4/0/1 (Paul York abstained)**

2. Discussion and decision to approve the 10-year Sidewalk Plan.

**A motion was made by Roger Staples and seconded by Betty Austin to approve the 10-year Sidewalk Plan.**

Todd Smith asked, in the priorities list, 1 or 5 is the highest priority.

Greg Dore said that 5 is then high priority, since it is a main thoroughfare. 1 would be a dead-end street.

Betty Austin said that, along with priority, they also look at conditions.

Roger Staples said that the committee met three times in the last three months. Some of the priorities changed from the original list, to a higher priority.

Betty Austin said that the new construction, like Norridgewock Avenue, part of that will be done by the State. When we look at new construction, we always look at how many people are walking in those areas, are they older people or younger people going to school...those things are looked at.

Roger Staples said that Cardinal Street doesn't even have a sidewalk...right next to a school.

Todd Smith asked about the street listings...some of them have a 2 next to them.

Betty Austin and Roger Staples said that that indicated that it is broken up into two sections.

**Vote: 5/0**

3. Discussion and decision to approve the Cemetery Sexton Contract through June 30, 2022.

**A motion was made by Roger Staples and seconded by Charles Robbins to approve the Cemetery Sexton Contract through June 30, 2022.**

**Vote: 5/0**

4. Discussion and decision to award the Highway Garage Heat Pumps Bid. The following bids were received:

Maine Heat Pumps and Services LLC	\$11,745.00
Coastal Intermediary LLC	\$25,070.00
Mechanical Services, Inc.	\$29,985.00

Greg Dore recommends awarding the Highway Garage Heat Pumps Bid to Maine Heat Pumps & Services, LLC with a total bid amount of \$11,745.00 and expending that amount from the Highway Department Reserve Account, Building Repairs Designation.

**A motion was made by Betty Austin and seconded by Todd Smith to award the Highway Garage Heat Pumps Bid to Maine Heat Pumps & Services, LLC with a total bid amount of \$11,745.00 and expend that amount from the Highway Department Reserve Account, Building Repairs Designation.**

Paul York asked why there was such a range in bid prices.

Greg Dore said he called Mechanical Services and they have not gotten back to him.

Paul York asked if they were bidding on the same thing.

Greg Dore said that he is not familiar with the different company names on the bid sheet. He said maybe Mechanical Services is offering the Cadillac of heat pumps, while Maine Heat Pumps is comparable to Chevrolet. He said he put heat pumps in his house, which are similar to the ones for the garage. After rebate it cost him \$3,200.00.

Charles Robbins said there was no local interest in this bid.

Greg Dore said that we had talked to Kris Laney when we first decided to go out to bid. Nobody in town put a bid in.

Todd Smith asked if the Maine Heat Pumps price included rebates.

Greg Dore said that the price is after rebates.

Christine Almand said that they have to be approved.

Greg Dore said that they are sending him their certification.

Christine Almand said that she had Dena Rich check with Efficiency Maine to see if there was anything else. There is not. They do have a program for municipalities with less than 4,000 residents. We don't qualify for that.

Roger Staples asked where the company is located.

Charles Robbins asked if this was a necessary expense.

The garage doesn't have any air conditioning. It gets quite warm in the summertime. We are hoping that these will heat more efficiently. It takes a lot to heat the garage.

Cara Mason said that nowhere on their paperwork does it say where they are located, but they are a member of the Skowhegan Area Chamber of Commerce.

Charles Robbins said he thinks they are located in Smithfield or Norridgewock.

Charles Robbins said he is concerned about the scatter in the bids.

Paul York said that we get that a lot.

Betty Austin said that sometimes it's because they don't really want to do it.

Christine Almand said that we see this all the time.

Todd Smith said they don't even come up on Google.

**Vote: 5/0**

Recording Time: 23:01

5. Discussion and decision to continue to allow the Community Refrigerator to be located outside of the Chamber building.

**A motion was made by Betty Austin and seconded by Roger Staples to allow the Community Refrigerator to be located outside of the Chamber building.**

Todd Smith thanked Jason Gayne for his update.

Roger Staples said that he spoke with Jason Gayne and the ladies that are taking care of the refrigerator. Everything seems to be going quite well. They are there every day.

Betty Austin said that it has really been helping people. Somebody spoke to her about the refrigerator...she had gone to get some food from the refrigerator for a lady that didn't have a vehicle. People have put whole rotisserie chickens in there. One of the ladies that takes care of the refrigerator made soup and put it in there for people.

Roger Staples said they got a \$100 donation and went to Caswell's to spend it. Caswell's kicked in another \$50.

Todd Smith said he looked in it today. It's pretty full.

Christine Almand said that the TV and newspaper did stories on it. The feedback has been pretty positive.

Betty Austin said that Channel 7 and Channel 2 did stories.

Paul York said he would like to see it in a different spot. He has been assured that it would be moved back once the snow is gone.

Todd Smith said he had looked at that too. It can't be moved right now. There is a snow-bank there and a bush.

Charles Robbins asked if this was going to be a permanent fixture.

Paul York said that we could bring it up anytime that we choose. The Chamber could also decide that they don't want it there. If it becomes a problem, we could say that it needs to go.

**Vote: 5/0**

Recording Time: 26:41

6. Discussion and decision to change Hanover Street and York Street to right-turn-only onto Madison Avenue.

**A motion was made by Betty Austin and seconded by Roger Staples to change Hanover Street and York Street to right-turn-only onto Madison Avenue.**

Paul York said he understands the request. There was a tragic accident there. He does not believe that changing those streets to right-turn-only onto Madison Avenue is going to solve anything. People will start cutting across parking lots or they will turn left anyway. We will have people wanting streets all the way down the avenue changed to right-turn-only and it will be a big mess.

Charles Robbins said turning left onto Madison Avenue from anywhere can be a challenge.

Betty Austin said especially right there because it is so close to the lights.

Paul York said if that is the case then Beech Street would be the one that should be changed. That is the closest to the lights.

Greg Dore said that doing away with left hand turns is not the answer. What we need to do is to look at some of the things from the letter. The people at American Glass are parking on the sidewalk, so you can't see up Madison Avenue. If we do that for this street, where does it stop? Any one of those intersection is equally dangerous...you are going across three lanes of traffic to turn left. It just isn't feasible.

Roger Staples said he sat there on two different days. Traffic was moving smoothly. There isn't a lot of traffic coming off of Hanover Street. On the first occasion there was a van parked at American Glass (not on the sidewalk). He was able to see up Madison Avenue clearly from Hanover Street. He could see that if someone was parked on the sidewalk it would be an issue. There was hardly any traffic on York Street. The ones he did see, turned right. If you wait long enough there will be an opening. He didn't see any major problems there.

**Vote: 1/4 (Charles Robbins, Todd Smith, Roger Staples and Paul York opposed) (motion failed)**

7. Discussion and decision to modify the Streets and Sidewalks Ordinance to make the Town responsible for snow removal on the downtown sidewalks.

**A motion was made by Betty Austin and seconded by Charles Robbins to modify the Streets and Sidewalks Ordinance to make the Town responsible for snow removal on the downtown sidewalks.**

Paul York said this would cause a lot of issues. There are some things that should be addressed. We are not enforcing the sidewalk maintenance. We are having a hard time getting our sidewalks done now. It is time consuming. We would have to hire more people and have another machine in order to maintain the downtown sidewalks. Then we would have complaints that the town isn't there when they feel that we should be. Sidewalks are not the top priority, roads are.

Charles Robbins asked why we are not enforcing the \$100 fine for these businesses that are in violation.

Christine Almand said that we have done some enforcement. Typically, Greg Dore will contact the police department.

Greg Dore said that he last did this at the beginning of winter. In the last month or so, it has gotten worse again. It needs to be done again.

Christine Almand said that at the beginning of the season, the police department takes copies of the ordinance to the property owners downtown and educates them about their responsibility for snow removal.

Paul York said we would like voluntary compliance with this. We are not looking to put additional expenses on the business owners. We don't want to fine them. We have the ordinance, and they all know...maybe we do need to start doing that. The ones that are cleaning up the snow...or are paying someone to do it...they then see the town go through and clean up for the ones who aren't doing it.

Greg Dore said that when we go down at night to do snow cleanup, we end up cleaning up the sidewalks as well. The only way we could do the sidewalks downtown during the day would be to hire guys to go down there with shovels. You can't put the equipment on the sidewalks during the day while businesses are open. It would be a nightmare...an accident waiting to happen. We should not even consider taking care of those sidewalks.

Roger Staples said that they stated that a town employee was snow blowing a section of sidewalk downtown...from the post office to Napa.

Greg Dore said that what they were doing was opening up the crosswalks. Instead of loading the snow blower back into the truck to go to the next crosswalk, he just walked it down the

sidewalk to the next crosswalk. This isn't something that is done every time. It just made the most sense in this instance.

Jason Gayne said that the Chamber feels that this needs to be worked on. It is not fair to businesses that pay taxes the same as homeowners, who get their sidewalks plowed by the town.

Facebook Comment:

They were today downtown...each man had a single pole.

Christine Almand said she sees a difference in downtown businesses and homeowners. The sidewalks that go by someone's home are to be utilized by people traveling along that roadway. The downtown businesses sidewalks are utilized by people utilizing their business. Other businesses that are not in the downtown have their own snow removal costs. She does understand that the sidewalks are owned by the Town, but a sidewalk in front of a downtown business is very different from a sidewalk in front of a home.

Todd Smith said he wishes that we could do it, because then we could control it. The one thing that we can control is the ordinance. What is being done to rectify it and why are the same standards not being used for everyone. At 4:15 p.m. today from the bridge to the Municipal Building he saw three sections of sidewalk in front of downtown properties that the sidewalks were not cleared. According to the ordinance they are supposed to be done four hours after the end of snowfall. He doesn't want to take money from businesses anymore than we have to...but he is not sure that the education piece is working. He is guessing that the three businesses that didn't clear their sidewalks are businesses that we have approached before. He feels that we own this, because we are not following our own rules. If we can't do that then maybe we need to look at taking this job on ourselves.

Charles Robbins said that the police department does everything in their power to not have vehicles towed during snow storms. As the season progresses...we can only tell you so many times. He said it is time that the police department enforces the ordinances and starts writing tickets. As a business owner, if you gave him one fine...he would make sure he was in compliance.

Betty Austin said this is not the first time this has come to the Selectmen. There is an inconsistency in how well the sidewalks are cleaned off. A pedestrian can be walking along and it's fine and then it isn't because different salt was used. It would be something to look at in the future...if there were some other way to take care of the sidewalks. Even if this gets voted down tonight, it will come up again.

Paul York said you aren't going to get people lining up to shovel...hiring people would be the biggest issue. We do have an ordinance. These businesses are supposed to take care of those sidewalks. We need to hold their feet to the fire and make them comply. You fine them once, they are probably going to take care of it.

Charles Robbins said that the whole ordinance should be reviewed. For now, we should direct the police department to issue tickets...no more warnings. He's not trying to sound anti-

business...but this is no different than speeding down Madison Avenue. A violation is a violation.

Christine Almand said that it is also being fair to the businesses that are doing it.

Roger Staples said he can see both sides. If we did take it on, it would be a one-time sweep...and it continues to snow. If he had a business, he would be shoveling anyway.

Charles Robbins said that the businesses that are not downtown...they are constantly responsible for maintaining, shoveling, sanding their entryways and parking lots throughout the storms. As a business owner, you know that that is an expense. He understands the stress for the people that are doing it right, and then there are people who are not and are getting away with it. Write tickets.

**Vote: 0/5 (all opposed) (motion failed)**

Recording Time: 48:33

8. Treasurer's Warrants to be approved:

#63	\$	49,584.93 (Payroll #6)
#64	\$	46,578.52 (Payroll #7)
#65	\$	9,260.23 (State Payables)
#66	\$	936,078.86 (FY 2021 Accounts Payables)
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>1,041,502.54</b>

**A motion was made by Betty Austin and seconded by Todd Smith to approve the Treasurer's Warrants as written.**

**Vote: 5/0**

9. Other Business

There was no Other Business.

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 - Roger Staples aid he saw that CMP backtracked on their solar

fee.

Christine Almand said that they are reviewing it. We still don't have any solid information on exactly what they expect the project to cost. The Governor stated that the PUC needed to get involved. We are still waiting to hear back specifically on our project.

Charles Robbins asked if there had been any usage on the electric vehicle charging stations.

Christine Almand said that the last time we talked there hadn't been. She has not looked at the progress report. She said she would ask Jeff Hewett for an update.

Roger Staples asked if there was a website.

Christine Almand said that Charge Point has an app for their charging stations. Some of the stations, you can see the exact make and model of the vehicle that last used it.

Betty Austin said that a friend of hers has an electric vehicle, she can see where there is a charger that is not in use.

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 police department union negotiations.

**A motion was made by Betty Austin and seconded by Todd Smith to enter into Executive Session in accordance with M.R.S.A Title 1 § 405(6)(A) at 6:35 p.m. to discuss police department union negotiations.**

**Vote: 5/0**

**A motion was made by Betty Austin and seconded by Todd Smith to exit Executive Session at 7:43 p.m.**

**Vote: 5/0**

Nothing to report.

**Adjourn Selectmen's Meeting.**

Approved and signed on March 9, 2021.

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