

TOWN OF NEWPORT, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Board of Selectmen - Minutes for Meeting of January 18, 2021 6:30 pm

Regular Business Meeting

Municipal Building, 15 Sunapee Street, Newport, NH 03773

Remote Access: Zoom.com - Meeting ID: 846 4498 2372 Passcode: 693167

+1 (253) 215-8782 US (audio only, long-distance fees may apply)

SELECTMEN PRESENT: *BOS Room:* Jeffrey Kessler, Chairman; Barry Connell, Herbert Tellor, Jr.
Via Zoom: John Hooper, II; *Via Phone:* Todd Fratzel, Vice Chairman

SELECTMAN ABSENT: none

STAFF PRESENT: *BOS Room:* Hunter Rieseberg, Town Manager

COMMUNITY MEMBERS PRESENT: *BOS Room:* Bert Spaulding, Sr.; *Via Zoom:* Brenda Burns, Executive Director, Sullivan County Nutrition Services; Malory Tetreault

NCTV: John Lunn

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Kessler called the meeting of the BOS to order at 6:30 p.m. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Because there were Selectmen attending via zoom and telephone, all votes were by roll call.

AGENDA REVIEW: accepted as presented.

PUBLIC HEARING: The Board of Selectmen of the Town of Newport, New Hampshire will hold two public hearings on Monday, January 4, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. and Monday, January 18, 2021 at the Newport Town Offices at 15 Sunapee Street, Newport, New Hampshire to hear public comment on acceptance, by the Town, from Lake Sunapee Group, Inc., C/O Bar Harbor Bank and Trust of property at 19 Depot Street known as Map 114 Lot 167.

Chairman Kessler read the full Public Hearing Notice into the record, noted where the notice had been posted and asked Town Manager Rieseberg if the Town had received any comments or questions. He was told no. Chairman Kessler then asked Town Manager Rieseberg to review the proposal.

Town Manager Rieseberg addressed the Board and explained that the Town had been approached by Bar Harbor Bank in Newport. The bank would like to donate the Depot (railroad) building and the lot it was on to the Town. Town Manager Rieseberg said that as part of an acquisition of land, the law (NH RSA 41:14-a) requires the proposal to go to the Planning Board and the Conservation Commission for comments. Town Manager Rieseberg stated this proposal has been brought before the Conservation Commission and the Planning Board and has received positive comments and recommendations from them. The Selectboard has to have two Public Hearings on the proposal. The first was on January 4, 2021 and the second is being held on January 18, 2021. It is an opportunity for the public to come forth with comments and questions. Written transcripts of the comments and recommendations from the Planning Board and the Conservation Commission were included in the BOS packets along with the property card and statute for the BOS members' review.

Town Manager Rieseberg explained:

➤ The bank has offered to gift the Depot building with enough land for approximately nine parking spaces.

- Bar Harbor Bank has gone through the planning and subdivision process for the purpose of donating it to the Town of Newport at no expense to the taxpayers.
- A Phase One analysis will be completed soon to ensure there are no contaminants on the Depot property.
- A civil engineer has done a structural study of the building to ensure its structural integrity.
- Selling, renting or using the Depot building for Town purposes would be options for the Selectboard to decide.
- The January 18, 2021 public hearing is the second of two public hearings necessary before it can be accepted by the Town. The BOS is required to wait fourteen days (two weeks) after the second public hearing before it can vote to accept or decline the gift from Bar Harbor Bank and Trust.

There was a general discussion on accepting the gift, maintenance expenses and potential uses of the building if the Town acquires it. Both the Selectmen and Town Manager Rieseberg stated the building was an historical fixture in Newport. There was no public comment or additional discussion by the Board.

Chairman Kessler closed the public hearing. The decision of accepting the gift needed to be voted on within seven to fourteen days. It will be an agenda item for the February 1, 2021 BOS meeting.

MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING(S): January 4, 2021 - On a motion by Selectman Connell, seconded by Selectman Fratzel; *the Board voted to approve the minutes of the January 4, 2021 BOS meeting as presented. The motion passed 5-0-0.*

CONSENT AGENDA: On a motion by Selectman Connell, seconded by Selectman Tellow; *the Board voted by roll call to approve the Consent Agenda of the January 18, 2021 BOS meeting as presented. The motion passed 4-0-0(Selectman Hooper experienced technical difficulties and did not vote).*

OPEN FORUM: Mr. Spaulding, Sr. addressed the BOS and expressed his displeasure on the current school tax impact and the school board's change of the method of school Deliberative Session and voting on the school budget and warrant articles. Voters would not be able to speak or deliberate at a session as in years past. He said that inclusion in the process would be by Newport registered voters only.

Deliberative Session:

❖ The school board would submit their information and voters would have three days to respond for or against items. House Bill 1129 allowed the process, but the House Bill also gave the option of a longer time period for voter comment

❖ Participation would be through electronic means (email) or via postal mail only.

Voting:

❖ Mr. Spaulding, Sr. explained the process of (drive-up) voting to the BOS.

Board members and Mr. Spaulding, Sr. discussed the revised process and past financial information. Selectman Connell asked if a school board member or the Superintendent could address the BOS and explain it. During discussion, the Board was informed that the school has kept their expenses the same as the last fiscal year. It is the loss of revenue from the state and Goshen tuition students that has created a deficit in their budget. Selectman Tellow asked if the new Deliberative Session and voting process had oversight; did the school board oversee it. He was told there was no public oversight, an attorney was appointed to explain the process to the school board. Chairman Kessler informed people of a mailing that will be sent out explaining the process to registered voters. Mr. Spaulding, Sr. and Chairman Kessler stated that sign-ups for open positions on the school board were January 20, 2021-January 29, 2021 at the SAU office. On Friday, January 29, 2021 the SAU is open until 5 pm for applications (it is a statutory requirement).

Mr. John Lunn addressed the BOS and stated that an explanation of the process of this year's school deliberative session and voting (2021) were on NCTV for viewing (www.nctv-nh.org School Board hearing on January 14, 2021). Mr. Lunn offered his help to combine NCTV's broadcast with the BOS zoom broadcast systems. It would be an opportunity to change the system, provide a better service for Town meetings. There was a lengthy discussion on the merits and reasons to keep the services separate. Town Manager Rieseberg stated the BOS have a legal obligation to the public to provide public access and participation during public hearings (regardless of the operation of NCTV); thus they had had zoom installed in the BOS room (with Covid money; there was no expense to the taxpayers). After additional discussion between the Board, Town Manager Rieseberg and Mr. Lunn; it was decided to maintain separate services.

INFORMATIONAL: Senior Center Update-Brenda Burns - Chairman Kessler thanked Ms. Burns for attending the meeting. He asked if she could give an update on how Covid is impacting the Senior Center; if the Town is providing resources for them and how the seniors in Newport are doing. Ms. Brenda Burns thanked Chairman Kessler for the invitation to discuss the Senior Center and Covid's impact. She told the BOS that the Newport Senior Center is a private entity, with its own 501(c)3 (non-profit organization status) which provides services to seniors in the community. Due to Covid 19 they are restricted in the services they are giving.

Current services:

- 1) Grab and Go (instead of congregate meals) - People go to the Senior Center and pick up a meal drive-up style. The Senior Center serves approximately 40 people a day.
- 2) Meals on Wheels (MOW) Program - This Sullivan County Nutrition Service (SCNS) program has continued throughout the Covid pandemic. In March the Senior Center sent out quarantine boxes (containing shelf stable items) to all of the MOW recipients so if they did have to quarantine (clients or staff), the MOW clients would have something to eat for fourteen days.

Ms. Burns told the BOS that in Claremont (she stressed not in Newport) there was recently a situation at a housing complex that had a coronavirus outbreak. When the residents were contacted and told to start using their quarantine boxes, many had either given their box away or had eaten the food. The MOW had to reissue new boxes. Golden Cross Ambulance personnel helped by delivering the quarantine boxes for the MOW program. The program is expecting to have the same problem in other places; they are contacting clients to find out who has kept their boxes. The potential boxes they will have to reissue will be more difficult to organize (shelf stable items are difficult to purchase. Many other programs and facilities are first in line to acquire them).

Several clients in Newport have tested Covid positive, some after traveling. The Senior Center is trying to educate all their clients to practice the Covid health guidelines so the MOW drivers do not contract anything. Ms. Burns explained the process and safety guidelines (sanitizing and social distancing) followed for MOW deliveries. Their contract with the State of New Hampshire requires that the driver have visual contact with each client. Chairman Kessler asked Ms. Burns to give an idea of how the seniors in Newport were coping. Ms. Burns said they had recently had done surveys. In warmer weather, they noticed at the Grab and Go drive through there were a lot of depressed looks. They therefore tried skits which included the participation of clients along with volunteers and staff. Two examples are the Mardi Gras Day and a 4th of July car decorating contest. There were smiles with the interactions. With the colder weather the staff is not seeing this as much.

Continuing, Ms. Burns said they have begun to receive calls concerning the vaccine. She has made calls to the state level advocating for clients. Currently their client population is 60/40 (60 against /40 for) comfortable coming back inside the Senior Center building.

Chairman Kessler asked if there was anyway the Town could help the Senior Center with assistance with the seniors in Town. Ms. Burns said she couldn't think of anything; she will keep his offer in mind. Ms. Burns explained that she might need volunteers to pack up more quarantine boxes in future months. Beth Rexford from the Rec Center has called the Senior Center and offered to help pack boxes and do some deliveries if needed. Ms. Burns also informed the BOS that they were doing AARP (American Association of Retired Persons) curbside tax assistance and have had a good response from seniors. It has given the Senior Center staff a reason to talk to and interact with their clients (over the phone). There were no questions from the Board members. Chairman Kessler and Selectman Connell thanked Ms. Burns for her hard work. The other Selectmen and Mr. Spaulding, Sr. echoed their thanks.

COMMUNICATIONS: Selectman Hooper apologized to the Board for his absence at BOS meetings. He was thankful he was able to participate through zoom. Selectman Hooper also stated the Town was fortunate to have the dedicated staff they had.

Selectman Fratzel had nothing to share at this time.

Selectman Teller had nothing to share at this time.

Selectman Connell had nothing to share at this time.

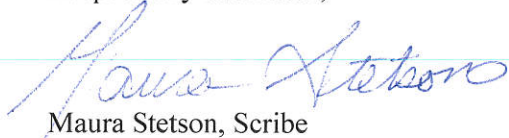
When acknowledged, Mr. Spaulding, Sr. said that Newport was fortunate to have Ruger Firearms (employing local individuals) and all the people from NY and CT who have moved north and are now working remotely. It is good for the housing market and economy. Chairman Kessler admitted Newport is fortunate to have Ruger and the influx of new people to the area; but Newport has to remember our seniors. Some community members are doing well, but there are some among us that are just holding their own. Chairman Kessler stated we have to keep both groups in mind.

Town Manager Rieseberg had nothing to share at this time.

ACTION ITEMS: none

There being no further business before the Board during the BOS public meeting, on a motion by Selectman Connell, seconded by Selectman Teller; *the Board voted unanimously by roll call vote to adjourn at 8:42 p.m.*

Respectfully submitted,



Maura Stetson, Scribe

The next regular meeting of the Board of Selectmen is scheduled for February 1, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.

Approved on: February 1, 2021