

Town of Alexander Selectmen's Meeting

5 December 2024

Attendance:

Skip Colson
David Davis (slightly late)
Foster Carlow Jr.
Carl Oakes
David Sanford

Kristy Crawford
Joe Manza
Jane Manza (came in later from the office)
Joe Hansen

Meeting called to order at 6:01 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance recited.

Additions/Deletions

Joe Hansen said he would like to give something like a \$20 gift card to each of the members of the Alexander Volunteer Fire Department, for being ready and willing to come out and help. Those present were not sure exactly how many members there are, but guessed between 12 and 14.

Joe Hansen also wanted to talk about the possible survey of the line between the towns of Alexander (where his home is) and Princeton.

Approve Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of 7 November 2024—as amended—by Foster and 2nd by Carl.

Voting: 4 in favor, David D. absent

Downeast Broadband Project

Skip said that he tried to get Ted Carter to come to the meeting tonight, but couldn't get a hold of him. He and Kristy have not moved forward with writing the letter to the Downeast Broadband Utility (as per last meeting) until they have gotten a hold of Ted first.

Cemetery

Joe Manza said that they took the American flags down and put the wreathes up on the graves of those who served in the armed forces.

Kristy said that Jane has looked into getting a fancy sign for the cemetery with gold letters.

The Financial Report

Kristy said that some of the numbers are estimates until she gets official numbers from the auditor.

\$212,283 in taxes have come in, including \$160,000 last month. That's good.

The school revenue that has come in is \$192,027. Four towns send tuition students to Alexander Elementary:

1 from Wesley: \$1,982

2 from Charlotte: \$3,964

Not sure how many from Crawford: \$9,600

Not sure how many from Cooper: \$8,919

Homestead exemption money is \$47,375.29

Tree Growth is \$39,163.73

The Revenue Sharing is \$48,727.31 and Veterans is \$423.00.

This is a total of \$135,689.33 from state.

The town has \$53,335.77 in automobile excise tax: well into where the town needs to be.

Checking interest is \$5,402.51

Broadband grant money of \$73,500 goes right out to Downeast Broadband.

Maxine Dinkins gives the town \$100 for the cemetery. Rhonda Oakes "earns" that money.

The School warrant is at \$513,063.06

Lost Checks

Kristy said that several checks from the town have been lost lately; one check to each of these: Baileyville Solid Waste, David Lee, Kevin Dean, and Ace Hardware. They all went in the mail and they were being delivered within the area.

It was recommended to call the bank and ask if others are having problems like this. David Lee has said that other contractors have also not received checks lately.

One question was whether the local mail stays with the Baileyville post office or whether all mail is sent to the Hampden, Maine central processing center and then sent back.

Kristy said that she has sent out stop payments on the lost checks.

From the Administration Account,

the TRIO upgrade, \$10,378.51, is paid.

The town insurance, \$20,407.80, is paid.

The election cost a lot more money than previously. There were a lot more election people to count votes, so there were more people to be paid.

On the road account, the total revenue is \$307,824.82. The town has spent about half so far, leaving \$156,304.52.

The Davis Road maintenance cost about \$13,000 more than it had last year. Last year, it had been about \$114,000, and this year it cost \$128,846.16. The differences were that David Lee was paid \$11,000 more and County Concrete was paid \$2,000 more (Larry was wondering why the increase.)

The FEMA events have been reimbursed 90%. The remaining 10% was charged to the road account: \$995.37. The town has spent almost \$10,000 on FEMA work. Kristy was paid by FEMA for her time for the first storm, but not the second one. She hadn't thought about which account that money will go into. Skip and others thought it should go into the Administration Account. She earned it.

The Cemetery Account breakdown includes the Cemetery Fund and the Cemetery Restoration Fund. \$13,772.64 is now the balance in the Cemetery Account. A little less than \$3,910.14 is left in the Cemetery Restoration Account. The Cemetery Restoration account covers road work. There is \$845 left in ARPA money for the cemetery, which needs to be spent soon.

Kristy said she wants the Cemetery Restoration Fund down to zero. But Skip thought cemetery restoration should be ongoing, especially through donations. Everything naturally deteriorates or there could be vandalism.

Kristy said that the building cleaning has been working out well after changing to hourly pay. The generator has had its maintenance done. The sand salt shed was repaired by Carl.

The Solid Waste Account has been charged only through September; billing from Baileyville is several months behind, as usual.

Bank interest income is rather high: \$5402.51. First National Bank called asking if the town would move its sweep account there from Machias Savings.

Kristy would never do that anyway. Machias Savings Bank called the next day to explain that the Federal Reserve had dropped the interest rate. She told them that First National had just offered an interest rate of 3.8% on the sweep account. Machias Savings called back and offered 3.5% on all accounts. Great! As taxes come in, that sweep account will be about \$1 million.

Health premiums are going up 9% starting January 1. It was about \$2788 per month and it will go up to \$3039. That increase also affects the school.

Concerns About The County Tax

The County tax will be going up 21.9% next year, which will total around \$149,000 for this town. That will be a difficult tax burden for town residents. County commissioners kept "kicking the can down the road" until now. Skip said that outgoing County commissioner Chris Gardner said in the Calais Advertiser, "I'm leaving. Now it's time to pay the fiddler." He really said that! With everybody's permission, Skip said that he and Kristy are therefore going to look up the county tax for the last 10 years. If it has increased every year, they will then write a letter to the editor of the Calais Advertiser stating that the town doesn't get enough services from the County for the increasing taxes levied. The town doesn't have county roads, and hardly uses a sheriff.

David D. pointed out that the Baileyville police have covered Alexander. The County Sheriffs are frequently spread very thin. Hopefully the incoming County commissioners will decrease the budget.

Kristy pointed out that the town has been very good at budgeting, saying, "You should be really proud of yourselves. The decisions that you put in the town warrants add up to about \$992,000 in property taxes. Of that, the county tax and then the amount for the school add up to about \$962,000. Therefore the town itself is using only about \$30,000 from property taxes this year. The rest is funded by other sources and not a burden on the townspeople. That's a really big deal."

Maine Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) Requirements

Kristy Crawford:

A new plan is coming from the state called the Family Medical Leave Act. There is a federal version already in place that gives 12 weeks of unpaid leave. The state will run its own program. It will start being used in May 2026. It provides safeguards. It protects a person's job. The fund is self-sustaining. Employees have to deduct .5% of their paycheck into it. The payments run the account. Employers also have to pay a matching amount to FMLA, *but only if there are over 15 employees.*

Does this apply to the Town of Alexander? Who counts as an employee? Not totally sure yet. Kristy does know that paid volunteers, who serve with one specific purpose, are not considered

employees for for purposes of FMLA. The school and the Fire Department are considered separate from the town.

Kristy is the only person that works in town that gets enough hours to get FMLA pay. If Kristy took FMLA, then Lesliann would step in. Lesliann wouldn't qualify for the pay, but she could take the leave and her position must stay open for her until the leave is over. A business can deny FMLA if it would be an undue hardship.

FEMA Update

The town has fully submitted for the January 10, 2024 storm, working with Eric. In January 2025, Kristy will button up the rest of the paperwork. Kristy said the town needs to get it before January 20.

David D. said that FEMA is "way in the hole". Skip said that he heard that FEMA has to give out \$98 billion in disaster relief (due to hurricane damage in the South).

Kristy said that her office will have to change to Quickbooks Online. She needs to look at when exactly it's time to renew. It's 75% off if you move to the online version before February 2025, but 75% of what? She needs to find out. Quickbooks now costs the town about \$500 per year. TRIO would be \$5000 for tax assessing and running the town office, which would be way more money than this municipality wants to spend.

Cemetery, part 2:

Jane Manza:

Sixty-two wreaths were laid on veteran graves recently. Some school children came including David S.'s kids and Connor Cooper.

Jane and Joe M. stopped in last week at Hermon where there is a sign company called DaVinci Signs. They are working on a quote. It will cost up to \$2000, depending on how big and fancy. It is composite, not wood. You can see such signs by the post office and in the Calais historic district. It comes with a post and the metals. It will be 24 to 30 inches tall by 6 feet wide.

David D. said that another company is Caron Signs in Bangor.

Kristy suggested a solar light to light the sign Jane said there should also be a solar light to light the flag.

Skip still wants to look at the trees that need to be cut down there.

Assessing

Jane Manza:

Paying More to Amy Dunn

Last meeting Jane had spoken to the Board about Amy and the work that she put in for the town. Here is what she billed the town from April to October. (See "A")

Is there a way that the town can find some money for her? Out of that \$12,000, she got paid for 40.5 hours (and not for 204.5 hours) Amy has not mentioned wanting more pay. And thankfully, the town doesn't have a lot of blowback on it.

Kristy pointed out that Sarah was not only Amy's employee, but also Amy's wife. Didn't Amy think of both of them doing this work? How would she have only quoted \$12,000 if she was going to pay Sarah around \$10,000 of that?

Skip said he's not comfortable with paying more money when Amy gave an estimate of the total cost of the work and the town paid her as estimated.

And it's not as if Amy is inexperienced at this. He said that when he gives a quote, he holds himself to it. For example, if he is fixing jeeps, and accidentally breaks something, that's on him, he does not ask his customer for more money.

David D. asked if there was anything hidden that Amy might not have anticipated that she had to spend a lot of extra time on. Jane did not think so.

Kristy said that the town still uses Amy as a consultant for Municipal Valuation Return (MVR). She is also available to do needed TRIO training for the town assessors. But if she is not paid well enough, she might not want to come back. Skip asked other board members what they thought:

Carl said she should be held to her bid.

David S. thought that something extra should be done, not sure what.

Foster said it ought to be by written bid, not verbal estimate.

But Jane said that Amy *did* provide that estimate in writing.

\$9202.50 worth of work is what she didn't get paid.

Skip said he did not have a problem paying for Amy's unreimbursed mileage for going from Orland to Alexander.

Motion made by Skip and 2nd by David D. to reimburse Amy Dunn \$243.88 for mileage.

However, Foster proposed to table it like last month.

Jane said it was too [insultingly] little to pay and might as well do nothing.

Skip and David D. withdrew the motion.

New Business

Survey of the Line Between Alexander and Princeton

Skip addressed Joe Hansen: "You had a question about a land survey between Alexander and Princeton. Kristy talked to Princeton, according to this law from 2003 [30-A MRS §2851] that we didn't know about, the only reason that a town line survey would be required is if one of the two towns has a dispute over where the boundary line is. There is no disagreement with them and us, so the survey has been cancelled."

Joe H. asked where the established line is.

Skip recommended that if Joe H. personally has a problem, that he is free to get a survey of his property to find out where the boundaries are.

Joe H. said, "I was with John Dudley when we looked at the town lines. I showed him where all the pins are. We went 2 lots north and south 5 lots, where they say the town lines are. There isn't an established line. There are the pins for the property for Typhoon and Wagner [forestry companies]. The difference is 1000 yards.

The land owners that are on the Princeton side, the Hagenars, their property all has a common line. I now come to the town asking you to establish a line. The town is required to perambulate the lines every 10 years. One line is saying that I am paying for 60 acres and another says I am paying for 70 acres."

Kristy clarified that Joe H. is taxed for two plots of 28 acres and 38 acres [total of 66 acres].

Skip said at his own house lot (of 7 acres) he made sure that it was surveyed. He knows exactly where his property is. He again recommended that Joe H. pay to have his property surveyed.

Joe H. said that there are not really any markings. It's a rock wall on one side.

Kristy said that a property line and a town line may not necessarily be the same thing anyway.

In the end, Skip flat out said that it looked like Joe H. was hoping to get a free survey of his property line, complements of the town, but the town will not pay for a survey.

Kristy explained that Princeton started the process to do a survey, by Andy Pottle. They voted and did some research. After she spoke with the people in Princeton, she contacted MMA to find out what the law was. She got the response. Princeton decided to call off the survey.

[Joe H. then used a map on his phone to show some of the people present a map of where the boundaries of his land are.]

MMA Hazard Survey

Mr. Johnson, from MMA Risk Management Services [Insurance], came by and looked at the town office

and fire station to do a safety survey [or inspection]. Almost all the improvements needed are under the Fire Department, plus Kristy has two Department of Labor things that need to be taken care of. They are not hard things.

-Any fire extinguishers need to have a sign.

-Fire extinguishers need to be inspected monthly and written on the tag the date of inspection.

-An upright ladder has to be secured from falling over (not just leaning against something)

-Eye wash stations and emergency showers have to be tested every week and kept sanitary.

-The town office needs documentation that employees have taken the Bureau of Labor safety classes from at least the last year.

-The Fire Department needs to have training rosters on site. Traffic Control and Emergency Action Plan training Safety training has to be documented on site from at least the past year.

There were some questions about which of the trainings were required and how often. Kristy would look into that.

Holiday Hours

Kristy asked for certain days off during Christmastime.

The office will be closed on December 24, 25 and 26. It will be open on the 31st, closed on the 1st of January and open on the 2nd.

Private Property on Town Land

Skip Colson:

Skip talked to Andy Snowman about the Alexander Pocomoonshine Lake landing where the next-door Greg & Willow Owen family has illegally put their dock for the winter. Having that there is also a Shoreland Zoning violation. Andy would contact DEP before the town went ahead and did anything. The email from MMA legal outlines what the town can do: Send a letter and, if that doesn't work, then take legal action. If the town moves the parts of the dock and end up damaging them, then the town would be responsible. Skip would like to talk with Andy first.

The trees there were going to be removed, but instead, they had to replace a tree. Foster and Skip went down to see if they could plant that tree, but they couldn't because the docks were in the way. Kristy thought that if the letter to the Owen family came from Andy, it would be received better.

David D. objected slightly to pursuing this, especially during the winter when nobody really uses that small area.

Planning Board of Appeals

Skip Colson:

Ted Carter, the Planning Board of Appeals chairman, asked about changing that board from having 5 members to 3 members. His thought is that one member never comes and one seat is vacant and can't seem to be filled. It's an appointed board, so this may be able to be done [without a town meeting]. Both Skip and David S., who are members of that board, and also Foster, would like to keep it 5 members.

Kristy said she would put up a sign for people interested in serving on the boards of appeal [the Assessment Board of Appeals also has a vacancy]. She would also ask Cassie Oakes to put it in her column in the newspaper.

Broken Tree off Davis Road

Skip was checking the Davis Road, before the inlet, past the house with dog kennels. There is a tree that is broken. Foster agreed to take care of it.

PAWS Shelter Contract

Kristy said that she called PAWS and left a voicemail. They have not gotten back to her.

Steve Parks Pay

Steve Parks has been paid for 22 hours of work, but how many hours did he actually work?

The construction job was done on Sep 4, 5, 6, and 10. A total of 35 hours were flagged, but Stephen did not work all those hours, as he had to do things off-site.

Skip explained that Larry is not here because he is in a great deal of pain with gout. Skip did not want to discuss this issue without having Larry there.

Either you believe Mr. Parks or Larry.

Consensus of the Board members: Table this for next month until Larry can come.

Animal Complaints

David Townsend said that in order to take care of the dog complaints, he wanted a formal letter written. Skip wrote that (See "B").

Crystal Carlton keeps sending emails with videos on them of the Austin animals. Kristy said that she believes that David has been getting them all. He will handle it.

The New Shoreland Zoning Ordinance

At the last meeting, the Board voted to adopt the Maine 2016 Shoreland Zoning Ordinance. Kristy said that it has various parts that should be decided [or customized] by the town. She doesn't mind going through the ordinance and changing things that should be attended to by the Planning Board.

[Recess from 7:52 to 7:59]

Motion to go into executive session per 1 M.R.S.A § 405 (6)(F) by Skip and 2nd by Carl at 7:59 PM

Voting: Unanimous

Out of executive session at 8:09 PM

Motion to approve 3 concealed weapons permits by Foster and 2nd by David D.

Voting: Unanimous

Motion to adjourn by everybody.

End of meeting at 8:10 PM.

12/5/24



TRIO Update

Amy Dunn

April - October 245 hrs @ \$45/hr \$11,025

- Sarah data input

670 cards @ \$15/card 10,050

- mileage

182 mi @ .67/mi 121.94

(2) 182 mi @ .67/mi 243.88

- misc

5.56

\$21,446.38

Towns pd Amy \$12,000 Total

Amy hrs pd for

40.5 hr \$1822.50

Amy hrs unreimbursed

204.5 hr \$9202.50

B

Animal Control,

On or about August 21, 2024 I was escorting a delegation from FEMA/MEMA inspecting storm damage to our roads. While on the Arm Road two dogs belonging to Mr. and Mrs. Magoon came at us, aggressively, startling members of the delegation. The dogs were not leashed, and the owners were not around. On the same day, while inspecting the boat landing at the end of the Pokey Road, we were again accosted by a large barking dog this one owned by Mr. and Mrs. Owen. The dog was not on a leash and the owners were not around. The town has had several complaints about the dogs at both locations. Please remedy this.

Kenneth "Skip" Colson

To the Town of Alexander selectmen/
Animal Control officers.

① I have had a number of run ins with Mike and Pam Magoon and their 2 Dogs on my property on the Arm Road in Alexander. The Dogs have chased my Real Estate Agent, people looking at the property, Deer and me. I have called the state Police, Sheriff, Game warden, Town Clerk, Selectmen and Animal Control officer many times. They can't control their Dogs and this needs to stop.

② Willow Owens Family on Pokey Road / Fish House Lane also have 2 Dogs that come as they please and as a town selectmen myself have had many complaints on the Dog. I have seen this happen often and have been asked by other selectmen on this problem. 11-20-24

Thank you
Skip Colson

Aug 21, 2024