

Town of Alexander Selectmen's Meeting

2 May 2024

Attendance:

All 5 selectmen:

Skip Colson
David Davis
Foster Carlow
David Sanford
Carl Oakes
Rhonda Oakes, cemetery, Grange,
Carlos Oakes Jr.
Kristy Crawford, Town Clerk, Tax collector, Treasurer
Ted Carter, DBU rep. and School Board member.
Jane Manza, Tax Assessor
Joe Manza
Larry Hill, Road Supervisor

Pledge of allegiance recited at 6:01 PM.

Motion to approve minutes of 4 April 2024 by Carl and
2nd by Foster
Voting; Unanimous

Rhonda said that the selectmen can't approve the
minutes of the work session of 16 April 2024, because it
wasn't advertised. So, they are not.

Motion to approve the 2024 town appointments by
Foster and 2nd by David D.
Voting: Unanimous

Baileyville [where the transfer station is] no longer
holds meetings of the solid waste representatives
apparently because there is no recycling anymore.

Downeast Broadband Utility Fiber Optic Installation

Ted Carter:

All the paperwork has been submitted to Maine
Connect authority. Tilson will come out with Tim
McAfee and Bill Barnett. They have to look at
everything. They will decide if any modifications need
to be made as needed. And then we will get other half
of our grant money.

James Gibson Jr.'s technical expertise is greatly missed.

We may have another ISP in the area [optical fiber-
based internet provider]. That will be good for
competition.

Ted will see what is going with on the building lease
agreement [for the little fiber optic building behind the
town office].

David Davis expressed concern about the line that runs
to Crawford. Tim McAfee may get twice as much
money than he should for its construction: from the
town of Alexander and the RDOF grant [Rural Digital
Opportunity Fund grant by the Federal Communication
Commission (FCC)]. He asked Ted to make this does
not happen.

Danny Sullivan is still the DBU chair.

Elery Beale is the new vice chair of the DBU. He is the
manager of information technology at Eastern Maine
Electric Cooperative.

Bill Barnett is systems operator.

School Budget

Ted Carter:

School board members got the Woodland High school
tuition lowered from about \$14,000 per student per year
to the same as Calais: \$11,000. That saved the town
about \$30,000.

Charlotte Elementary School is closing at the end of this
school year. All the schools in AOS 77 (including
Alexander) have submitted bids for tuition for the
Charlotte elementary kids. We do not know yet what
has been decided about where those students will be
going. There were 3 or 4 students from there that
wanted to come here.

Stephen Seavey talked to Cooper school board and
they said they had no problem in transporting the
Charlotte students here. We are working on the details
of that. The Cooper bus driver stops at Stone Road in
Meddybemps now. She could pick up at the foot of
Conant Hill.

Ted: One child from Wesley has a parent that works in
Calais. The parent would like to have had her child
attend in Alexander. Wesley has a superintendent's
agreement to send the students to Elm Street School in
East Machias.

Four school board members went to a training in
Pembroke last week. It was good for new members as
well as Stephen and me. It was an hour and a half well
spent.

Assessing

Jane Manza:

Amy Dunn will meet with assessors

At 9AM Monday (the 6th of May). They will be returning the first 200 cards and will take the next batch of 200. She has entered data. Her partner is Sarah who will add all the entries. The total number of cards for this town is about 700.

The assessors started assessing a few properties on April 1. But they have held off in order to meet with Amy first to make sure that they are getting it right, such as correct camera photo angles. So far, property owners have been very cordial to their visits.

Cemetery

Rhonda Oakes:

We have enough flags for Memorial Day. We like the hemmed flags. We always have a few extra, enough for this year. But, I may purchase some sooner than later. We will invite student council to put on flags. Maybe a few home schoolers too.

Town Clerk / Treasurer's Report

Kristy Crawford:

The new cash management contact from Machias Savings Bank is Ryan Madore (the 3rd one in the last few years). One of the things he offered was to make the forest fire protection fund's earned interest rate match that of the General fund. He will bring 1.5% in sweep account. The Forest Fire Account Kristy believes is up to 2%, but not sure.

Money could be moved into CD's, but not sure if the board of selectmen is authorized to do that (without a town meeting). Kristy will ask MMA what she and the selectmen can do.

Forst fire fund has \$93,000 but could be \$98K or \$102K instead, if the rate were better.

There would be no penalty for the new percentage, since it will not be moved.

FEMA reporting has begun for the cost of rebuilding from the December 18 storm. Greg Patin, emergency management specialist for FEMA, sounds happy with what the town has submitted. He is looking into whether the town could be reimbursed for use of the generators.

Each category is reimbursed in increments of \$3900: 75% from the Federal government, 15% from the state, 10% remains for the town to pay.

Skip and Larry will check out some town roads to see if they can be fixed to prevent future washouts (to prevent possible emergencies that might require FEMA funding).

FEMA representative Greg Patin is meeting weekly with Skip and Kristy virtually from Augusta. But he or other FEMA reps. may come in person soon.

Kristy: The month of April is ARPA (COVID money) reporting. We have spent all but \$9,000 and some change. That will be used by the cemetery. It has to be spent by December 2025 or we have to give it back.

June 11 will be the Primary election. Not the presidential (which already occurred), but for local and statewide candidates.

The annual town government financial audit is around the corner. That will be June 30. Kristy will start ASAP and hopefully be one of the first done. The town office and the school can be done at the same time.

The Financial Report:

It has been almost 1 year for 2023 taxes 8.75% left \$77,000 dollars, 75 accounts to collect 30 day notices next week for liens. In 30 days there will be a lien, Notarized by Dana to be registered.

All the taxes were almost \$900,000 dollars. The school \$487,000. \$145,000 from state. All other fees total \$1??,???. All the rest of money will go to the Undesignated Fund.

The [fiscal year total] school warrant is over a million dollars now.

Everything in administration is paid for the fiscal year, except for Amy's "TRIO" things["TRIO Real Estate Assessing" by Harris Local Government, which hales out of Bangor].

Not much overlay money has been used.

We have \$22,600 in the administrative account.

Motion to approve the April 2024 financial report by Carl and 2nd by Foster.

Voting: Unanimous.

Crawford IFW registrations:

Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IFW) will no longer allow hand-written registrations, but wants everyone to go to the online system.

Susan Wallace, Crawford Town Clerk, does not want to do registrations that way and asked Kristy if she would. Kristy would run the IFW licences only. The boat excise

tax would go to Crawford. Kristy would create a line item that those fees go to Crawford. Alexander would get the agent fees of 5 dollars for every snowmobile and ATV. The agent fee for boats is only a dollar. It is all online, the town office would not have to keep any records.

Motion to allow Kristy to administer the town of Crawford's Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Registrations by Foster and 2nd by Carl.
Voting: Unanimous

The BMV [Maine State Bureau of Motor Vehicles] is issuing new automobile license plates in May 2025 to replace the chickadee plates, which must be removed. The new plate will either have nothing on it or a pine tree and star.

Other plates will still look the same.

But there is more: State officials are pushing town offices to decide to issue license plates. We have to decide one way or the other by May 10. If not, then they will let us do only excise tax, not registration stickers. I don't want a mutiny from people having to do the excise tax here and the stickers in Calais. Kristy would not get agent fees.

If we did give out plates, we are responsible to keep and safeguard them. The biggest hesitation is that state officials have not been clear about whether this office would do the additional work of registering new cars, such as transferring the title of ownership. It *sounds* like it's not this, but not sure.

By consensus, board members told Kristy to do what she was comfortable with and to back out if issuing the license plates will in fact require too much additional work. They also want the state to provide adequate training.

There was also speculation by several people as to the reasons for the immediate change of so many license plates.

Road Supervision

Larry Hill unplugged culverts on the Flat Road and both going into Pleasant Lake. On the Flat Road, it took an hour and a half.

There was discussion about difficulty with beavers plugging up a culvert. It was decided to see if someone in town could build a beaver deceiver.

Kenny Mercier can sweep winter plowing sand off the roads. Larry took him to look at the roads that need it. He does not yet know how much that might cost. Kristy needs to know how Kenny will be paid.

A few selectmen preferred that only road intersections be swept, rather than entire roads. Also the school parking lot could be swept. Sand that has been gathered could be put in back in the sand salt shed or otherwise re-used.

It will be about 3 weeks before work starts on the Davis Road.

Rhonda pointed out that the town Fire Department has been doing a lot of work on many fires lately. She advocated for some sort of recognition or thank you for their work. Also perhaps a junior fire department.

Budget planning:

Skip would like to see some approximate amounts and do a workshop meeting to prepare the town warrant for the June town budget meeting. After some discussion, it was decided to have a budget work session on Tuesday, May 21 at 5:00 PM.

Differences Between Contractor And Employee for the Town

1. Payroll taxes are withheld before paying the employee. Contractors are independent. They ask the town to pay a certain amount and then they are responsible for paying their own taxes.

2. Type of insurance

The town has a very large insurance policy managed by the town clerk: Property, casualty and workman's compensation. It covers all people working as a town employee (including working as volunteers, such as the fire department), even if those people use their own equipment.

We have to provide independent contractors a copy of our form. They don't have to carry workman's comp. because they are an individual. But they must be insured for liability. Otherwise, we would lose our insurance coverage.

Rhonda: Coffee and Conversation starts at the Grange Hall 7 AM-10AM on Monday.

David S. said that the password for the security cameras at the town office does not work. We can't get a hold of JR. and may have to reset everything and potentially lose access to previous camera footage. He wants to make the selectmen aware of this before moving forward.

Skip asks that all town officers, when they come to the town office, that they stick with doing the business that

they need to do and then to leave. Otherwise, they may impede the clerk from doing her work.

Neighbors have called and complained about noise from the recently arrived dogs at the late Blaine McLaughlin place [on Davis Rd. as you almost get to Pleasant Lake]. David Townsend, Animal Control Officer, went to look into it. He found the following:

- All those dogs (Rottweilers) are licensed.
- The dogs did not bark when he was there [although they certainly *do* bark at other times].
- The owner and sole (human) resident, Jake Rancourt, does not yet have a kennel license (he has more than 5 dogs).
- Jake did bring in a building permit request, after the fact, for the recently constructed building.
- Jake said that he and the dogs will be moving in May and the building will be removed too.
- Whether the requirements are met for what constitutes a violation of the state barking ordinance, is yet to be seen.

Willow Owen said she would remove the docks today that are blocking some of the Pocomoonshine Lake public landing. Foster will check to see if they are now gone.

Skip would like to approach Andy Snowman, to find out about clearing the trees and brush in the middle of the boat landing. Not sure if it's allowed.

Joe Manza asked if the Woodland ATV club can work on the Robb Hill Road, since John Bromley passed away a few months ago [he used to block that road and intimidate travelers]. Skip said they can freely work on it. It is a public right of way. If there is a gate blocking it, it should not be there.

Motion to adjourn by
Skip and Carl.