

BOARD OF SELECTPEOPLE - TOWN OF MACHIAS

MAY 13, 2020

A meeting of the Machias Board of Selectpeople was called to order (via Zoom platform) at 6:00 PM by Chairman Josh Rolfe. In attendance were Board members Bill Kitchen, Paula Johnson-Rolfe, James Whalen, and James Jackson; Town Manager Christina Therrien; Secretary Cathy Lord; Town Clerk Sandra Clifton; Finance Officer Meghan Dennison; Sarah Craighead Dedman, Bruce Smith, Mary Angarola, David Clark, Elsie Larson, Dean McGuire, Bob Berta, Jarod Guillette (Zoom host).

1. MINUTES - REVIEW AND ACTION

On a motion by Paula Johnson-Rolfe, seconded by James Whalen, the Board voted to approve the minutes of the April 22, 2020 Board meeting.

2. WARRANTS - REVIEW AND ACTION

On a motion by Paula Johnson-Rolfe, seconded by James Whalen, the Board VOTED:

To approve municipal warrant #90 in the amount of \$12,751.47; to approve municipal warrant #91 in the amount of \$604,006.36; to approve municipal warrant #92 in the amount of \$16,451.50; to approve municipal warrant #93 in the amount of \$60,757.71; to approve municipal warrant #94 in the amount of \$11,293.05; and, to approve municipal warrant #95 in the amount of \$592,431.99

On a motion by Paula Johnson-Rolfe, seconded by James Whalen, the Board VOTED:

To approve school warrant #43 in the amount of \$298,061.64 .

3. AMERICAN LEGION POST #9 - LIQUOR LICENSE/SPECIAL ENTERTAINMENT PERMIT RENEWAL

On a motion by Bill Kitchen, seconded by Paula Johnson-Rolfe, the Board VOTED:

To approve an application for a liquor license renewal and a special entertainment permit submitted by the American Legion Post #9.

4. APPOINTMENT TO MACHIAS DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE

On a motion by Bill Kitchen, seconded by Paula Johnson-Rolfe, the Board VOTED:

To appoint Denise Cilley to the Machias Downtown Revitalization Committee.

5. MDOT FOUR-WAY STOP SIGN ON COURT AND BROADWAY

Ms. Therrien explained that the Maine Department of Transportation is considering the placement of a four-way stop sign at the intersection of Court Street and Broadway which are state-owned roads. She noted that initially the MDOT was looking at placement of a traffic light at the intersection but after talking to Public Works personnel changed their plan to the four-way stop sign. Mr. Rolfe said that he examined the accident reports provided by the MDOT and observed that the majority of the drivers involved in the accidents were not stopping at the end of Broadway where there is a stop sign and were failing to yield the right-of-way to vehicles on Court Street. Mr. Jackson commented that a four-way stop sign could potentially cause more accidents in that area since most drivers coming down Court Street are not used to having to stop where Court Street meets Broadway. Mr. Rolfe noted that there is a need for better signage cautioning drivers that Court Street traffic has the right-of-way. Mr. Kitchen suggested placement of a flashing yellow light on Court Street and a flashing red light at the end of Broadway. Ms. Therrien noted that a stop sign with neon lights around the outside edges could also alert a driver on Broadway to the presence of a stop sign. Mr. Jackson asked what the increase in cost would be to change the signage. Mr. Rolfe commented that cost wouldn't fix the real issue of driver inattention. He suggested that the Town reach out for clarification on the type of light the MDOT proposed to place in the location. The Board asked that Ms. Therrien send a letter to the MDOT outlining the Board's concerns and suggesting the option of the yellow and red flashing lights.

6. LOCAL BUSINESSES - IMPACT OF COVID-19

Mr. Rolfe and Mr. Kitchen expressed concern regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on local businesses and asked if there was a way to help or at least to assist businesses. Mr. Whalen suggested that town employees voluntarily delay a two percent salary increase until the crisis is over; he commented that this would show businesses that the Town is sensitive to the problem. Ms. Johnson-Rolfe commented that the Board needs to look very hard at the town budget for cuts; she added that the best way would be to cut or not increase property taxes. Mr. Rolfe suggested that this is something the Board can examine during the next budget meeting. Mr. Whalen suggested sending a letter of concern to the governor and express the need to accelerate businesses re-opening in Washington County. Mr. Rolfe noted that a municipality can supersede a governor's order but, unfortunately, it is the State which controls and issues licenses such as liquor licenses. Ms. Therrien pointed out that there needs to be caution if people end up getting sick from dining in a restaurant which should not have been re-opened. Mr. Rolfe said that he did not think the Town can violate the governor's order. Ms. Johnson-Rolfe agreed the the Town should not be open to violating the governor's order.

Mr. Rolfe suggested a letter to the governor asking to allow the re-opening of businesses taking safety precautions. Ms. Johnson-Rolfe added that the letter should stress the "economically depressed" area and the need to have businesses open. Mr. Kitchen asked that the Board think about the "real thing" which is "real tax relief" for businesses. Ms. Johnson-Rolfe agreed with Mr. Kitchen and said that this needs to be discussed by looking at every avenue. Ms. Therrien advised the Board that there are limited places in a municipal budget where cuts can be made; she suggested cutting the "wish list" that the Board has. She also suggested that budget cuts take place across the board, from county to school to municipality. Ms. Therrien suggested a campaign to support local businesses and maybe consider municipal long-term borrowing which would take the pressure off tax bills. Mr. Rolfe stressed the need to really examine the budget and look at the fund balance before considering the option of borrowing funds. Ms. Therrien said that the Board could look at reducing tax bills one year and making up the difference on tax bills later. Mr. Kitchen asked if the Board should not include businesses not impacted by closure during the pandemic. Ms. Johnson-Rolfe said that she would not be in favor of this. Mr. Rolfe asked the members of the Board to brainstorm ideas for discussion at the next budget development meeting.

7. REVIEW OF BOARD CONTINGENCY BALANCE

Mr. Rolfe advised the other members of the Board that there is approximately \$12,400. remaining in the contingency account; he noted that this amount could be carried forward to next year if no more is spent which means that the Town would not need to raise funds for next year's contingency.

Mr. Kitchen noted that local skateboarders have raised \$800. for a skateboard park. He asked if the Board could put \$2500 into the skateboard recreational facility. The Board discussed the suggestion. Mr. Whalen suggested that the skateboarders continue their fundraising efforts. Ms. Johnson-Rolfe said that due to the present circumstances maybe the Town should not give \$2500. to this group; she noted that this could be re-considered in the future when things have improved. Mr. Kitchen said he would ask the skateboarders to develop a fundraising plan.

8. COST OF ELECTRIC CHARGING STATION - WATER STREET

Mr. Rolfe noted that he had asked the Town Manager to find out how much the vehicle charging station is costing the Town. Ms. Therrien noted that the most recent bill was for \$44.81 compared to \$32.76 for the same billing period last year; she added that so far there has been very little impact.

9. SECURITY SYSTEM - TELEBUSINESS CENTER

Ms. Therrien explained that the Chief of Police had solicited some prices for security systems for the telebusiness center but that he had no formal specifications for companies to look at. Mr. Rolfe noted that there should be formal specifications developed for what is needed. Ms. Therrien said that she could also discuss the options one company had provided to the Chief and obtain more information. Ms. Johnson-Rolfe asked the Town Manager to also look at potential monthly charges for a security system.

Mr. Jackson said that he was concerned about the number of key fobs (20) needed. He said there should be tight control of accessibility and a detailed tracking of the fobs.

10. PRELIMINARY RUNWAY REPORT

Ms. Therrien noted that the Board has a copy of the preliminary runway report for their review. She asked that the Board provide any comments/suggestions/revisions to the report after they review it.

Mr. Whalen suggested placing the internet address for the location of the report in the town's annual report to allow citizens to review the report. Ms. Therrien said that the report would be placed on the town's website; she noted that the Town needs public input on the plan. Ms. Therrien noted that a public hearing on the report would be scheduled mid-June in order to include it in the town meeting warrant.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Ms. Therrien informed the Board that Machias has been designated as an AARP friendly community.

B. Ms. Therrien advised the Board that a request for proposals for the sidewalk work has been developed and she noted that there will be a walk-around with interested contractors on 5/19 at 1:00 PM with the Public Works Director. She noted that the RFP has been sent to nine companies in Washington/Hancock counties. Ms. Therrien reviewed the list of sidewalks included in the RFP.

C. Ms. Therrien reported that the extractor is running and that this project is complete.

D. Ms. Therrien reported water damage to some areas of the town office; she noted that damage may be covered under the town's insurance.

E. Ms. Therrien reported that a blinking caution light will be placed on Main Street by the MDOT.

F. Ms. Therrien reported on the Public Utilities Commission hearing regarding a request from the Machias Water Company for a rate increase. Ms. Therrien reported that the PUC suggested that the town and the company enter into discussions and she noted that the water company agreed to negotiate with the Town. Ms. Therrien advised the Board that she would let them know of the meeting date. Ms. Therrien noted that steps taken to raise objections to the rate increase were effective. Mr. Whalen commented that now is not the time to ask for a rate increase. It was noted that one of the PUC's concerns was that the water company has no future plan/long-term goals as well as having questions regarding the company's future investment in the water system. Ms. Therrien informed the Board that the Office of Public Advocate is staying involved. Mr. Whalen commented that, in his opinion, "the water company has failed the Town".

G. Ms. Therrien noted that there will be an airport meeting on June 4th.

H. Mr. Dean McGuire encouraged the Town to look into licensing motor vehicles on the state licensing website.

On a motion by Paula Johnson-Rolfe, seconded by Bill Kitchen, the Board voted to adjourn the meeting at 7:53 PM.