

## BOARD OF SELECTPEOPLE - TOWN OF MACHIAS

MAY 27, 2020

A meeting of the Machias Board of Selectpeople was called to order (via Zoom platform) at 6:14 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, Robert Atwood, Bob Berta, William MacDonald (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 May 13, 2020 Board meeting with the following correction (underlined):

Page 2, Item #6 - Local Businesses - Impact of COVID-19 should read:

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 cannot 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.

## **2. WARRANTS - REVIEW AND ACTION**

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

To approve municipal warrant #96 in the amount of \$18,787.62 and to approve municipal warrant #97 in the amount of \$63,133.37 .

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

To approve school warrant #47 in the amount of \$182,508.06 .

## **3. CARES FUNDING FOR AMBULANCE**

Ms. Therrien informed the Board that the Town of Machias received a payment of \$13,642.73 for ambulance expenses associated with COVID-19. Mr. Whalen asked how the funds were expended and Ms. Therrien explained that there were expenses for the purchase of items such as personal protection equipment (PPE), medical supplies, and cleaning products. Mr. Kitchen noted that the payment was automatically sent to the municipality from the federal government. Ms. Therrien explained that the funds were placed in the ambulance account. Mr. Whalen questioned why the fire department did not receive any funds; he asked that the Town apply for the money if possible for costs associated with the fire department. Ms. Therrien noted that this was a question for the federal government and how they determined where funds would be distributed.

## **4. CUTLER NAVAL BASE CLEAN-UP/SITE #4**

Ms. Therrien advised the Board of a proposal for the clean-up work to be done at the Cutler Naval Base. She noted that this information was provided to the public and she briefly highlighted the contents of the plan.

## **5. RFP SIDEWALK BID OPENING**

Ms. Therrien noted that she had received permission from the Board to open the bid received on repairs to the town's sidewalks. She explained that only one bid was received and that was from Hanscom Construction Company. Ms. Therrien reviewed the bids provided by the company for repairs to the individual street sidewalks. Ms. Therrien suggested that the Board allow her to review the bids, look at the priorities for the sidewalk repairs, and look at the amount of funds in the budget in order to make some recommendations on how best to address the repairs based on the funds available.

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

To table the sidewalk bid at the present time.

Mr. Whalen noted concern over the need to repair the Kennebec Crossroad and he suggested re-purposing funds to address this road repair. The members of the Board discussed the problems with the Kennebec Crossroad and the sidewalks; they agreed to task the Town Manager with examining the budget for funding necessary repairs.

#### **6. WATER RATE INCREASE REQUEST - PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION CASE UPDATE**

Ms. Therrien advised the Board that there has been no further information regarding the PUC case and, specifically, no word from the water company on intent to negotiate with the Town of Machias. Ms. Therrien noted that there is a scheduled meeting on June 3rd at 10:00 AM.

#### **7. SOLID WASTE/TRANSFER STATION**

Ms. Therrien reviewed estimated equipment costs (trucks, cans) she has gathered if the Town were to operate its own curbside garbage pick-up program. Mr. Whalen said that he believes that the Town needs to look at a comprehensive waste disposal program. Ms. Johnson-Rolfe questioned if this was the year to go into the municipal trash business with all that has happened this year; she added that the Town needs ideas to operate departments more efficiently. Mr. Rolfe commented that Mr. Whalen's and Ms. Johnson-Rolfe's comments are all part of the discussion the Town should have; he suggested scheduling a future discussion to look at a comprehensive plan. He added that he was not sure this would be the year to invest in trash collection with all the uncertainty going on. Mr. Rolfe suggested saving this discussion until after annual town meeting.

#### **8. OTHER BUSINESS**

A. Mr. Jackson asked when the Board would return to having face-to-face meetings instead of conducting Board meetings through ZOOM. Ms. Johnson-Rolfe said that she believes there is much more participation occurring with the ZOOM meetings which is something the members of the Board wanted to see when they were researching costs to televise the meetings. Mr. Rolfe, Mr. Kitchen, and Ms. Johnson-Rolfe commented on the increased participation being seen with the ZOOM meetings. Mr. Jackson said that he was not comfortable with meetings on the ZOOM platform and that he would like to re-consider the format of Board meetings sometime in the future. Mr. Rolfe commented that there have been some challenges but at the present time the majority of the Board is comfortable with the increase in public participation and the comfort level of holding the meetings on the ZOOM platform.

B. Ms. Therrien advised the Board that Machias has received a \$200,000. community development block grant for sewer work. She noted that along with the \$1.5 million USDA grant and the \$200,000. remaining from the Elm Street project the Town has the funds to complete the siphon chamber sewer project (\$1.9 million). Mr. Rolfe thanked the Town Manager for all her efforts to obtain one hundred percent of the project funding. Ms. Therrien advised the Board that the town's consultant will be moving forward with the design work phase of the project.

C. Mr. Kitchen told the Board that skateboarders are thankful to the Town for the trash cans, picnic tables, port-a-potty placement, and trash service being provided at the recreation area. He told the Board that the skateboarder group is looking at plans to re-surface the skateboard area and want to confer with the Town Manager to discuss future plans. Mr. Whalen suggested submitting a new grant application for funding improvements to the recreation area since the grant has been denied twice. The Board discussed how to proceed. Mr. Kitchen said that there is the opportunity to do something for the recreation area.

On a motion by Paula Johnson-Rolfe, seconded by James Jackson, the Board voted to adjourn the meeting at 7:21 PM.