

MINUTES
TOWN OF TOPSHAM
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING
NOVEMBER 16, 2017 - 7:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: David Douglass
Marie Brilliant
Ruth Lyons
William Thompson
Roland Tufts

MEMBER(S) ABSENT: All present

STAFF PRESENT: Richard Roedner, Town Manager

A meeting of the Topsham Board of Selectmen was held on Thursday, November 16, 2017 in the Donald A. Russell Meeting Room, at the Municipal Building, 100 Main Street, Topsham, Maine.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Douglass called the regular meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/ROLL CALL

All present were invited to stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. The recording secretary took the roll call and noted that all Selectmen were present.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Reminder to all residents that Town Offices are closed next Thursday and Friday for Thanksgiving. The exceptions are Police and Fire. The Transfer Station will be open on Saturday as normal.

The Comprehensive Plan event that was held October 19-23 -over 250 residents signed in at one or more of the events that weekend, and were able to provide input into the issues surrounding Topsham, as well as thoughts about our future. This was a wonderful turnout, and the information gathered was crafted into renderings of a potential future Topsham that Monday evening. Those renderings, as well as other information on the event, are available to view at the Topsham Library, and will be posted on the Town's web site in the near future. Finally, we are still taking comments, so don't be shy.

I would like to thank the residents of Topsham for their support and patience following the wind storm on October 30. This storm dealt a blow to the community, with some neighborhoods being particularly hard hit. I believe the last properties received power on Monday, the 6th. We continue to work with the utilities to clean up their downed equipment. We have been cleaning the roadside of storm debris that residents have brought to the curb line. The warming centers that were set up in Topsham, the Library, Mt. Ararat High School, and the police lobby, serviced over 400 residents who came in to get warm, get water, recharge phones and computers, or who utilized available WiFi. I would like to extend my thanks to SAD 75 and the Topsham Library

for helping out when they were needed. And as noted in my letter to the editor of the Times Record, I am very thankful for our town employees who worked to keep the streets of Topsham clean and safe following the storm, and who were available to assist residents as best we could.

The Public Works Department will continue to pick up trees and branches on the side of the road in order for the roads to be cleared prior to snowfall.

BOARDS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES

AWARD PRESENTATION – The Northern New England Chapter of the American Planning Association Citizen Planner of the Year award was presented to Donald Russell by Carol Eyerman, Maine State Director. Mr. Russell humbly accepted the award.

UPDATE FROM THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMITTEE – Larry Fitch, Chairman of the Comprehensive Plan Committee reviewed the very successful 5-day planning event recently held at the former fire station. He thanked the Board for its support of the event which presented an opportunity for citizens to stop by and express their concerns about Topsham's future, as well as present suggestions and ideas for consideration. This was done by attendance at three evening workshops as well as simply stopping in for chats.

The group meets on the second Monday of the month at the Topsham Library and meetings are open to members of the public. Meetings are posted on the Topsham Website. Future events are being considered for presentation in the spring.

Chairman Douglass thanked Mr. Fitch for his presentation and asked him if he could create an e-mail list of the individuals who attended the 5-day event so they could be notified of all future events. Mr. Fitch said he will do so. Chairman Douglass said there was hesitation when the event was first put before the Board. However, after attending the events he said he was pleasantly surprised at how good it was and that the Comprehensive Plan Committee should be commended for taking the risk of the very successful program. Everyone on the Board agreed that the program was a great success and said even the weather totally cooperated.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Uprooted Trees: Selectman Lyons noted that there still are trees that are uprooted, particularly on Jesse Road and on the Foreside Road which could easily be blown into the roadways with a strong wind. The Town Manager responded that if the trees are on private property, the owners of the property need to take care of them. However, if the trees are in the town right of way, public works will be notified.

Sidewalk Request on Maple Street: Yvette Meunier, 35 Prospect Street, presented a letter to the Board which was signed by 57 residents, representing 43 households in Topsham regarding safety concerns on Maple Street. The letter read as follows:

“November 16, 2017

Dear Topsham Board of Selectmen:

We appreciate and recognize all the hard work you do to keep the residents of Topsham safe and improve our quality of life.

As residents of Topsham, we would like to bring to your attention our concerns about pedestrian safety on Maple Street, from its intersection with Bridge Street to the entrance of the Androscoggin in Brunswick-Topsham river walk off Summer Street. This stretch of road connects pedestrians to the town built amenity, the River Walk, which is an asset to the towns of Topsham and Brunswick.

Maple Street is also a connector to the Lower Village and while in poor condition, it is arguable safer and more convenient to take than the River Walk when returning from the Lower Village at night. However, we take this road at our own risk as cars speed through this hilly road, taking a blind corner at the Mill Street Intersection. With lack of adequate lighting and no shoulder, pedestrians contemplate whether it is safer to walk with or against traffic.

We know that the Town is aware of the safety concerns on this stretch of road, as flashing speeding signs were installed along Maple Street and just below on Summer Street. We would like to see a resolution to this matter before some gets hurt. We hope you will consider these concerns and install a sidewalk to provide better access to the Androscoggin River Walk and to improve pedestrian safety along Maple Street. Thank you for your time and for your service to the residents of Topsham.” (Signed by 57 residents and filed with these minutes.)

Following Ms. Meunier’s presentation, Chairman Douglass said the concerns of those signing the letter had the Board’s attention. He added that Public Works Director Dennis Cox is also aware of the concerns but this must go through the budget process, and the group will be kept in the loop.

Ms. Meunier told the Board that people in the neighborhood have been taking about this for approximately 8 years and very much want to see a sidewalk connecting those already in place. Selectman Tufts wondered if a three way stop sign at the intersection of Mill and Maple would help. Ideas were also put forward of painting a walking area, but only as a temporary fix.

Chairman Douglass noted 5 letters received from citizens who could not be present at the meeting all in support of a sidewalk. He read the letters aloud under “Correspondence”. Letters were from Jeff Deletetsky, Patricia Maloney, Amanda Hughes, Eric Evans and Jenn Pidgeon. Several members of the public wished to speak and were recognized, including:

Hunter Gilpatrick, Corner of Maple Street – Said he has lived at that residence for 38 years and it has become a thoroughfare. Said he is afraid to come out of his driveway. Puts and retrieves an 8-year old grandson on the bus every morning. Has noticed an increase in traffic. Suggested a sidewalk would be best served on the south side of the street and could easily connect with the other sidewalks in place. Would be a worthwhile investment for the town.

Kathy Lyon, Prospect Street – Has lived at that residence for 34 years. Spoke in favor of a sidewalk. Would not be satisfied with painting.

Anne Macin, 84 Bridge Street – Worried about safety concerns. Area not safe. Only a 10th of a mile, but cars cannot see you coming up the hill. Would prefer sidewalk on the south side.

Debbie Colt, 9 Maple Street Ext. – Didn’t get to sign the letter because was not at home when it came by her residence. Said people in this neighborhood are worth it and spoke in favor of the addition of a sidewalk.

Eric Evans, 20 Prospect Street – Does the River Walk. Street is too dangerous. Need physical raised barrier of a sidewalk. Pleaded with the Board to find the dollars necessary to build sidewalk.

Public Thank You - Selectman Lyons thanked everyone, staff, public works and everyone involved with the election. She said it was wonderful to see so many get out on an off year election. Not a primary, not election. A lot of people helped put it together. Thank you to all.

Mike Labbe – Forgotten Thank You - Mike Labbe said Chairman Douglass was very brave and courageous to make the decision to push the Halloween celebration to the next night. Both Bath and Brunswick followed his lead. Selectman Thompson echoed Mr. Labbe's comments.

CORRESPONDENCE – Chairman Douglass read letters into the record favoring a sidewalk on Maple Street, noted above.

Letter was received from Jennah Godo, dated November 16, 2017 and filed with these minutes. Ms. Godo apologized for not being able to attend the meeting but expressed her support for the marijuana moratorium, both medical and retail.

ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA – Request was made to declare the animal cage which came out of the Crown Victoria as surplus. It does not fit the new cruiser and an interest to purchase same has come forward. The Board was in unanimous agreement to have the town Manager deal with the surplus in the best interest of the Town.

CONSENT CALENDAR

1. Approval of the minutes of the Regular Selectmen's Meeting of 11/2/17.

Motion was made by Selectman Tufts, seconded by Selectman Lyons, and it was unanimously

VOTED

To approve the minutes of the Regular Selectmen's Meeting of November 2, 2017, as written.

PUBLIC HEARING

17-96 CONSIDERATION AND APPROPRIATE ACTION ON THE SPECIAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT FOR DECEMBER 6, 2017

Chairman Douglass read aloud each item on the Warrant for the December 6, 2017 Special Town Meeting.

The Public Hearing was declared open. Chairman Douglass made a public comment on Article 4, as a citizen. He said, following article 4, if we reach the 180 days (6 months), on this again, he would actively no longer seek moratoriums and simply place a ban until the State knows what its doing.

With no further comments to be heard, the Public Hearing was declared closed.

Motion was made by Selectman Tufts, seconded by Selectman Lyons, and it was unanimously **VOTED**

To approve the Warrant for the Special Town Meeting scheduled for December 6, 2017 to be held at the Library.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – None noted.

OLD BUSINESS – None noted.

NEW BUSINESS

17-97 CONSIDERATION AND ANY APPROPRIATE ACTION ON TEMPORARY CHANGES AT MAIN/WINTER/ELM STREET

It was noted that approximately two and a half months ago a test was started to try to alleviate traffic backups and any issues down there. Phone calls and e-mails were received on the test and a workshop held with everyone in attendance agreeing with the proposed changes. The Town Manager noted that someone from staff wondered if the changes should not be made until after the first snowstorm. Response from the Board was that they did not think snow would be a problem and, if so, they could easily be reverted. Following discussion between the Board, Motion was made by Selectman Tufts, seconded by Selectman Lyons and it was unanimously

VOTED

To approve the modifications of traffic on Winter, Main and Elm Streets and make them permanent.

17-98 CONSIDERATION AND ANY APPROPRIATE ACTION ON THE ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Selectman Thompson nominated David Douglass to be elected as Chairman of the Board of Selectman. There being no further nominations, nominations ceased. Vote was called and David Douglass was unanimously voted to serve as Chairman of the Board of Selectman for the ensuing year.

17-99 CONSIDERATION AND ANY APPROPRIATE ACTION ON ELECTION OF A VICE CHAIRMAN FOR THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Selectman Tufts nominated William Thompson to be elected as Vice Chairman of the Board of Selectman. There being no further nominations, nominations ceased.

Selectman Lyons commented that in the next year, and the year after, it would be good to nominate some other people so there is a rotation of different people. She said she was very happy the way things are going now, but other people might want the experience. They might not have the training but they should have an opportunity. Chairman Douglass responded that he believed that everyone had that opportunity today as we speak. Selectman Lyons responded that we do. Chairman Douglass added that Ms. Lyons said to him that we need a woman as Vice Chairman. He said he would never vote based on that. We always have the opportunity. Selectman Lyons said she was happy for him as Chair and Bill as Vice Chair but the opportunity for a woman should be considered.

Vote was called and William Thompson was unanimously voted to serve as Vice Chairman of the Board of Selectman for the ensuing year.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Selectman Tufts, seconded by Selectman Lyons, and it was unanimously **VOTED**

To adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patty Williams, Recording Secretary