

___Bob
___Joanne
___Keith
___Betsy

Draft _____
Accepted _____
Accepted as Amended RB, JR, KC

TOWN OF EPSOM
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MINUTES

MARCH 31, 2008

Present: Bob Blodgett, Chairman; Joanne Randall, Vice-Chairman; Keith Cota

Other Attendees: George Carlson; Herb Bartlett; Lee Bartlett; David Fiorentino; Joni Kitson; Joel Robinson; Penny Graham; Bruce Graham; Carole Brown; Barbara Clark; Nancy Wheeler; Stewart Yeaton; Ralph Weeks, Joseph Lister

Bob opened the meeting at 6:15 P.M., having the Pledge of Allegiance said.

George Carlson

George met with the Board to review two proposals for completing work for the Meetinghouse through the LCHIP Grant. The first was for the architect, Sheerr McCrystal Palson, with the second being for Milestone Engineering & Construction for construction management.

Keith made a motion to enter into a contract with Sheerr McCrystal Palson Architects, Inc., for an amount not to exceed \$12,000.00, for architectural work for the Epsom Meetinghouse with Joanne seconding the motion.

Bob asked if there was any discussion on the motion. There being no discussion on the motion, Bob called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Keith made a motion to enter into a contract with Milestone Engineering & Construction for construction management not to exceed \$12,000.00 from the LCHIP grant with Joanne seconding the motion.

Bob asked if there was any discussion on the motion. There being no discussion on the motion, Bob called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Keith made a motion to enter into a contract work not to exceed \$150,000.00 from the LCHIP grant for the Epsom Meetinghouse with Joanne seconding the motion.

Bob asked if there was any discussion on the motion. There being no discussion on the motion, Bob called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Copies of the contracts were executed.

FOR SIGNATURE

Joanne said the appointment for the Budget Committee to the BCEP is still in the folder. She has spoken with Harvey Harkness and the first meeting of the Budget Committee is scheduled in April. The Committee will discuss the appointment then so this item will remain in the file until then.

1. Accounts Payable

2. 1 Manifest

3. Pole License

Keith said the Selectmen have per the RSA the responsibility for pole licensing and have the authority to delegate. The Board has delegated the review authority to the Road Agent. The RSA also requires poles to be twenty feet from the edge of pavement unless there is good cause to waive this by the Select Board. Bob said the Road Agent indicates the pole locations are okay. Keith asked if they were waiving the 20 feet with Bob saying yes. Keith said they need to be sure the dimensions are on the license so the poles are not set too close to the pavement. He feels 7 feet maybe too close and would like to see a minimum of 8 feet in the future.

Joanne made a motion to accept pole license Plan #9AA6FL with the first pole to be set back seven feet, the second pole to be set back eleven feet and the third pole to be set back twenty two feet from the edge of the road with Keith seconding the motion.

Bob asked if there was any discussion on the motion. There being no discussion on the motion, Bob called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

The Board signed the licenses.

Joni said regarding the BCEP appointment, it is the Selectmen's responsibility and they do not have to wait for the Budget Committee to decide.

Joni discussed with the Board her check for the Select Board stipend. She is requesting it be based upon a stipend of \$1,922.00 as in past years, not the \$2,000.00. Joni discussed this with Nancy Wheeler after she had received her check. Nancy advised her to obtain Board approval for this. Joni does not feel the Selectmen should have an increase. The Board concurred with Joni's request. She turned her unprocessed check to Nancy to be reissued a new check based upon the lesser amount.

Office Position

Joanne said last week they discussed the duties for the third position. It was agreed each Board member and the current office staff would prioritize the duties. Barbara Clark had forwarded her list to Joanne with Joanne's being the same as Barbara's. Barbara said Keith's was similar.

Keith discussed he wrote a brief description of the attributes the person should have. Keith said he called the position an administrative assistant; the Board should discuss how they want to classify the position.

Nancy Wheeler said there are no titles associated with the office positions, each was general. Keith said Nancy's duties at this time were with Administrative Financial. Keith noted the positions in the office are administrative assistants to the Board.

Joni said one thing never attached was to do filing for the Planning Board, thinking Faith did that on Wednesdays.

Joanne said most of them had the same list with Keith's being slightly different. The Board reviewed Keith's description and priority list of duties.

Joanne asked if the duties should be posted when the position was posted. Barbara explained no that the description Keith did plus the EEO, etc. items would be posted. Discussion ensued as to what newspapers to post in and how long the posting should be kept open. It was decided to close for applications on April 25, 2008.

Barbara asked if they wanted it posted in both the Concord Monitor and Union Leader. Joanne felt just the Monitor, Hooksett Banner and Suncook Sun. Keith suggested the Sunday Union Leader to open it to a bigger audience. Barbara said it would be put on the TV and posted at the Post Office.

Nancy suggested they think about a salary range in the next couple of weeks. Barbara will draft the ad and e-mail it to Joanne for review.

Nancy asked how the Board wanted to handle the screening of the applications. Joanne said the last time Barbara and Nancy had screened the applications. Barbara explained the last time they put what they felt were the best candidates at the top and the reasons why they felt the others were not as qualified. The office has three applications on file. She will send these people a notice to see if they are still interested and/or if they want to update their resumes.

Stewart Yeaton came in to have a Purchase order signed. Joanne signed it.

FOR DISCUSSION

A. Meetinghouse Contracts from George Carlson

This item was completed earlier.

E. Key List for Review

Joanne reviewed the information from Barbara as to who had keys to the office. Nancy said if it was okay to initial. If there were any names they want to add to do so and Barbara would deal with it. The Board initialed the list.

C. Properties for Tax Deeding from Tax Collector

Joanne said there were some properties that were not desirable for the town to have with others for the town to review. The board reviewed the information. Further discussion ensued below.

D. Cobblestone Conservation Easement from Town Counsel

Joanne said Attorney Soltani sent a letter to Joe Wichert regarding the easement with a number of concerns. Attorney Soltani was letting the Board know the items to be cleared up before the sign the easement.

MINUTES FOR REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

Final Minutes of March 10, 2008

Joanne made a motion to accept the final minutes of March 10, 2008 with Keith seconding the motion.

Bob asked if there was any discussion on the motion. There being no discussion on the motion, Bob called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Final Minutes of March 17, 2008

Joanne made a motion to accept the final minutes of March 17, 2008 with Keith seconding the motion.

Bob asked if there was any discussion on the motion. There being no discussion on the motion, Bob called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

7. Report of Town Officers

Keith asked about this item. Nancy thought it was the list Dawn sent to the State. Keith said it has Dan McGuire as the Selectmen's Representative to the Planning Board which is incorrect. Nancy will point that out to Dawn.

Draft – Non-Public Minutes of March 10, 2008

Joanne said these minutes were already signed and okay to file.

Final Minutes of March 24, 2008 Non-Public Session #1

Joanne made a motion to accept the final minutes of Non-Public Session #1 of March 24, 2008, sealed, with Keith seconding the motion.

Bob asked if there was any discussion on the motion. There being no discussion on the motion, Bob called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Final Minutes of March 24, 2008 Non-Public Session #2

Joanne made a motion to accept the final minutes of Non-Public Session #2 of March 24, 2008, not sealed, with Keith seconding the motion.

Bob asked if there was any discussion on the motion. There being no discussion on the motion, Bob called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Exit Interview

Joanne made a motion to go into non-public session per RSA 91-A:3 II(c) for reputation with Keith seconding the motion.

Bob asked if there was any discussion on the motion. There being no discussion on the motion, Bob called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Officer Lister waived his right to a non-public exit interview. The exit interview was done in public session. See attached question list with responses.

Keith thanked Officer Lister for his input and doing the exit interview in public session.

Joni requested it be in the minutes the salaries listed in the town report include money earned on Special Details so the salaries are deceiving.

Officer Lister said he made \$52,000.00 last year. He worked an average of 72 hours a week for 8 months to earn this amount and had limited time with his wife and two young children.

Bruce Graham took the opportunity to thank Officer Lister for his patience and noted some towns people support the Department.

Officer Lister thanked Bruce saying he came to Epsom trained. It takes a year and \$20,000.00 to put an officer on the road.

Bob congratulated Officer Lister on his new job saying he would be missed. Keith thought Officer Lister's points were valid and Joni's point also. Joni said Nancy corrected her as this year the money earned from Special Details was not included in wages in the town report.

Keith thought there are ways we can improve on the situation and it concerns him as to how the Department will cope between now and next March. He believes the town will weather it out.

FOR DISCUSSION

C. Properties for Tax Deeding from Tax Collector Continued

Keith said properties that have back taxes not paid for three years can have liens filed. He said the amount outstanding was \$157,601.41, almost a dollar per assessment for the properties. He realizes for some people it may be financial, but one person on the list owes over \$85,000.00.

He said the Boards direction is there are properties they would want to file paperwork on. Nancy said previous boards have allowed payments through promissory notes. Keith said one property had with no payments being made for a year. He asked at what point does the town say sorry. He discussed it is a difficult situation hoping arrangements could be made as there is a series of mobile homes. Nancy said per Attorney Soltani the town hasn't taken mobile homes as it is only the home and not the land. Then there is the issue of park rents, insurance, etc. Keith asked at what point do they realize they have to do something. Discussion ensued with Nancy saying this should be discussed with Dawn and if she was not available then Barbara.

Ralph Weeks suggested the legislature might pass a bill where the mortgage company collects the taxes and then writes the check to the town. Keith agreed saying there are other tools to be looked at. He sees some residents having a problem and making an effort. He was concerned with a business owner who was continuously behind.

Ralph Weeks said a lot of companies consider taxes as a low interest loan and only pay what is needed to keep the property out of foreclosure, it is a cash flow for them.

Carole Brown asked if the town has a process. Keith said the owners have only to pay the third year back taxes to prevent the tax lien transfer and are still delinquent the remaining two years.

Keith discussed a property with a conservation easement and no taxes have been paid for years. He felt the State should have purchased this property. Betsy said there were contamination issues with the property and Attorney Soltani recommended they not take title to that property.

Joanne asked if there were any in the file recommended the town should take. Keith said those indicated.

Ralph Weeks said some municipalities publish a list of owners and the amount owed in the newspaper.

B. Default Budget - Approval

Joanne discussed the documents Nancy gave the Board. She said the last column on the budget is the expenses for 2008 to see if it is at 25%. Nancy needs the Board to review the figures. She did not know if what Joni has requested regarding the check would make a difference. Nancy said the budget is up to the Board and they do not have to make adjustments. She was asking for a signoff on the default budget.

Keith asked if once it is put into the system if the expenditures would change every time a budget is run, Nancy said yes.

The default budget was reviewed, with the total being \$2,469,882.00. Keith asked if once they approve it does it go back to the State. Nancy said no, only to the Departments.

Joanne made a motion to accept the 2008 default budget as listed with Keith seconding the motion.

Bob asked if there was any discussion on the motion. There being no discussion on the motion, Bob called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Keith was looking at the Capital Improvement line and an expenditure of \$1,500.00. He said there is \$10.00 in the default budget. Nancy said this was not discussed during the discussion of the default budget. Keith will communicate this to the Planning Board.

Nancy requested direction in writing for Joni's request. Joanne did a note for the file.

MINUTES FOR REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

Draft Minutes of March 24, 2008

The Board reviewed and amended these minutes.

Joanne made a motion to accept the draft minutes of March 24, 2008 as amended with Keith seconding the motion.

Bob asked if there was any discussion on the motion. There being no discussion on the motion, Bob called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

LIAISON REPORTS

Keith reported he talked to the Police Chief about a recent event that required Epsom Police Department calling out the Special Operations Team. The situation worked out well.

Keith said the river study meeting was well attended last week with 75 to 100 people present. He said the town's message to the State was we don't want to take the responsibility of the decision of its cost. Keith said it is expected VHB will return in 3 to 4 weeks with a final report.

Bob said the Highway Facilities Committee will be meeting in the next couple of weeks as Andrew has heard from Mrs. Huckins.

Joanne discussed the meeting with the Suncook Valley Regional Association scheduled for Thursday night. She is unable to attend, asking if others wanted to attend if they wanted. Keith asked the towns involved with Joanne listing them. The meeting is Thursday at the Barnstead Town Hall. Keith agreed to attend on her behalf.

Joanne met with Crystal Gosselin regarding the Website Committee. There are some people interested in becoming members.

Joanne said last week the Board had a letter from Mr. Frambach regarding Center Hill Road. A letter was sent to him in response.

There is a letter in the Miscellaneous Items from Chief Preve requesting permission to pickup the new cruiser, cost being \$22,684.00. The 2004 cruiser has been stripped and is ready to be sold. The dispatch fee will be \$42,685.69 for 2008 with \$7,314.31 remaining in the line. Chief Preve will use \$2,500.00 toward paying for the Special Operations Team with \$4,814.31 remaining.

Joanne said last week Chief Preve asked about working additional shifts if needed. He is looking for a response. Keith said he would like to see how the Department could provide coverage with the current staff before authorizing this request. He noted his concern with burning out the Chief.

Bruce asked about the letter from Mr. Frambach. Joanne read the letter and the response regarding the work to be completed to fill the pot holes.

Bruce asked about minutes that are no longer on the Website. Joanne said some of the older items were taken off due to limited memory. Nancy discussed the work and adjustments completed to help with the Website and what Scott Temple might have to do in the future.

David Fiorentino talked to Mr. Rand who discussed his Website and the expanded space he was able to get for very little cost.

Nancy asked Keith if the office could get a copy of the executive summary from the river study. Keith gave her a copy.

Nancy said the new cruiser would have \$400.00 to \$500.00 in set up costs also.

Bruce asked if the money the Police Department was not paying an officer's salary would be available for the Department to use. Keith said it could be used for overtime to cover the shifts.

Joni asked what #2 under Miscellaneous Items was. Joanne read the letter discussing arrangements for a junkyard inspection. It was an informational letter to the Board. Keith said the letter was from the town's attorney to another attorney regarding the pending inspection. Bob read the letter for the audience.

Joni asked if keys were issued to Betsy with Bob saying no. Betsy said she did not want keys to the office. Joni said she heard what Betsy said, but asked why as last week they said they were going to be. Bob said they figured the recording Secretary did not need them. She asked how Betsy would get non-public minutes into the office. Bob said through the mail slot.

Joni wanted to remind people here last year shortly after Joanne became Selectman she had an issue with one Selectman picking up a packet for another Selectman and bringing it to that person. That has nothing to do with confidentiality compared to non-public minutes being dropped through the mail slot. Anyone who has access into this building can get their hands on them. There are other meetings in this building and people coming in to meet the Welfare Officer, those minutes will just be hanging out and you do not see an issue with that. Bob did not see an issue. Joanne said they did not have an issue this week. Keith said he did but there is another method that can be done. Betsy said she gave them to Bob. Keith asked if they could coordinate that. Bob said he could, it was just a matter of Betsy and he getting together.

Joni said Betsy has had a key for almost eight years and it has never been an issue. Bob said she was on the Planning Board. She had a key long before she was the Planning Board Chairman. There was never an issue in the five years I was a Selectman. Has something occurred since then? Joanne said the board has made its decision. Joni said there has to be a reason why the Board made this decision. Joanne said the other recording secretaries do not have a key. Joni said maybe they have not wanted one in the past; maybe they do not have non-public minutes.

Joni said Joanne was the one who had the issue in the past with Joanne saying it was a completely separate issue. Joni said it was not as Joanne was talking about things being confidential and getting from one person to another in that packet. This is definitely confidential information you want dropped in the mail slot.

Keith said it was his understanding that Betsy and the Chairman will make arrangements for Betsy to get the minutes directly to the Chairman who will take action to put them in the proper spot. Regarding the Planning Board and Zoning Board it was the function of the Chairman to get items to the proper spot. He asked what she needed to do in the office for this function.

Joni said Betsy would bring in the regular minutes after hours and make copies for the Board and leave them on the table to be picked up. Keith said she could do them and e-mail them to the office for Barb or Nancy to make copies of the minutes. Joni said by law she does not have to have them done until Monday so she could drop them off on Sunday morning and they are not in the office. If you came in on Sunday afternoon to pick up your packet the minutes were available.

Keith asked if there were other ways of doing business that could be utilized.

David thanked the Board for the wisdom of not staying in the ruts of doing things as in the past. Nancy said usually someone was in the office until 5:00.

Nancy said the other thing she wanted to mention was the 911 update in the Miscellaneous Items. The State is in Epsom doing the 911 update if people asked why they were in town.

Bruce asked why the keys were an issue. Joanne said they changed the locks and went through the list of who had a key. Keith said all department Heads who need a key have access to the office. Betsy asked the issue be dropped. It was discussed who had keys. Bruce said it looked like an issue of trust with Keith saying it was an issue of risk and exposure.

Joanne made a motion to close the meeting with Keith seconding the motion.

Bob asked if there was any discussion on the motion. There being no discussion on the motion, Bob called for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

Bob B. adjourned the meeting at 8:43 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Betsy Bosiak
Recording Secretary

**TOWN OF EPSOM
Exit Interview Form**

Joseph Lister
Employee Interviewed

March 31, 2008
Date

Board of Selectmen
Conducted By

1. For what reasons(s) are you leaving?
Officer Lister has been here 3 years full time and 1 year part time previous to that. The people are great. The main reason he is leaving is financial. Within 30 miles of Epsom it is the lowest paid town. He said other towns offset low pay with benefits and Epsom does not have them either.
2. What is your understanding of the events that have led to your separation from employment with the Town of Epsom?
The budget and pay raises that kept failing. Keith asked if Officer Lister would have stayed if the Warrant Article had passed, with Officer Lister saying yes.
3. What is your opinion of the supervision you received?
Excellent – Officer Lister said prior to working in Epsom he worked for Allenstown for 2 years and also the Department of corrections and other departments part time. He said Epsom has one of the best administrative staffs.
4. What did you most like and dislike about the Town and its policies?
There were none he disliked, feeling they were fair.
5. What do you recommend that the Town change, if anything?
Find a better way to communicate to the townspeople how to keep the safety staff. He has stayed as he liked the town, but he has a family and needs to consider it.
6. What is your opinion of the working conditions at the Town of Epsom?
Officer Lister had no issue with the working conditions. Keith asked him about the vehicles. Officer Lister said the Department was lucky as they still got a new vehicle with the default budget which is a necessity. Bob said it was mentioned at the deliberative session it is a tool that is needed to do the job.
7. How do you feel about the pay? Benefits?
Keith asked for the number of years experience he had what would Officer Lister say is a comparable salary. Officer Lister said in Epsom a patrolman with no experience starts at \$29,000.00. He mentioned Allenstown has less mileage but slightly more people with a starting salary of \$39,000.00. He discussed other towns starting salaries. Discussion ensued regarding towns that are not unionized, but have better wage packages and how the towns implement them.

8. What is your opinion about the training you received?
Officer Lister has received training he asked for. He said officers need to be trained and have continuous training. The State only requires 8 hours of training a year, but if an officer does not have continuous training they will lose things.
9. Do you believe that appropriate opportunities for advancement were available to you?
Yes & No – there are more opportunities in a larger town. A small town can't go much further. If the Department could send officers to training it would be a benefit, if they can't give a rank, they can't give the pay. Keith felt the Police Department staffing should consider a staff scale. Most towns have one and also give credit for experience which Epsom does not.
10. Did you experience or witness discrimination, harassment, or other illegal conduct during your tenure with the Town of Epsom?
Absolutely not.
11. Have you obtained a new job? Yes XX No If yes, please tell us:

Employer's name: Northwood Police Department
Address: Northwood, NH
Position title: Corporal Starting salary: \$7,500.00 more/year
Officer Lister said a starting patrolman would earn \$4,500.00 more a year with a better benefit package.
12. What do you see as most attractive about your new job?
Keith asked what other benefits other than medical and dental he would be receiving. Officer Lister discussed the equipment he would receive; the town gets a new cruiser each year. The officers also have rifles as well as a pistol and shotguns; he said all agencies except Epsom have rifles now. He said the computer system is in the laptops so they could stay in the cruiser the complete shift. Officer Lister said Epsom has Car 54 which is a great tool, but they would not have it if it had not been free. He discussed tools Epsom is just getting that other towns have had for 10 to 15 years.
13. Additional Comments:
Officer Lister said they have to get the town to realize if they have an officer who wants to stay, he is going to leave to a town with more benefits. The residents are a problem with the people not understanding what goes on in Epsom. He said when you have a town with a continuous default budget the officers continuously leave then the wrong things happen. Keith said problems are due to default budgets, etc. and they affect morale. Officer Lister concurred. He said new officers look at people they went to the Police Academy with who are making more money than they are in Epsom. He said the Police Department thought the budget was going to pass.