

**Town of Auburn
Board of Selectmen
Town Hall
Stritch Meeting Room
March 18, 2024
Approved Minutes
7:00 PM**

Selectmen Present: Keith Leclair, Michael Rolfe and Tom Carroll

Others Present: Police Chief Ray Pelton, Tax Collector Susan Jenkins, Finance & Budget Administrator Mimi Friolet, Town Administrator Chris Sterndale, and Nancy Hoijer, Recording Secretary and other persons unknown to the minute taker

I. Call to Order

Mr. Leclair called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Public Comments

Mr. Leclair asked if there were any comments from the public at 7:00 PM.

III. Consent Agenda

Mr. Leclair read out loud and offered for inspection the Consent Agenda dated March 18, 2024 which consisted of a payroll manifest dated 2/28 in the amount of \$76,877.43, two accounts payable manifests dated 3/6 in the amount of \$1,099,754.09 and dated 3/11 in the amount of \$49,022.93, a raffle permit for Friends of the Griffin Free Public Library, donation of an ice sled from Auburn Fire Association, 3.1% COLA adjustment for eligible employees, call firefighter rate increase, step increase for library assistant, barn preservation easement renewal, designation of Fire Chief Williams as contact for EMD NH Notification System and appointment of Duck Race Committee members.

Mr. Rolfe motioned to approve the Consent Agenda dated March 18, 2024. Mr. Carroll seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 3-0-0.

IV. Manifest

A. Highway \$16,525 dated 3/6/24

Mr. Carroll motioned to approve the Highway Manifest dated 3/6/24 in the amount of \$16,525. Mr. Leclair seconded the motion. A vote was taken, Mr. Rolfe abstained, the motion passed 2-0-1.

V. Appointments with the Board

A. Police Chief Pelton – Salary Grade Changes

Chief Pelton provided a salary analysis of department positions, current and proposed grades prepared by Municipal Resources, Inc. (MRI). He noted the wage study and proposed adjustment is for non-union personnel. He noted two of the positions are post Grade 20 which receive bonus rather than grade or step increase. He noted with his own anniversary in December a savings would be implemented. He estimated the Town would save \$8,237 in year one and the cost would be \$5,969 in 2026.

Mr. Leclair asked for more detail for the comparison of other towns that was provided as well as detail on the range versus actual numbers.

B. Police Chief Pelton – Request for Public Safety Complex Lot Striping

Chief Pelton provided the Board with copies of three quotes he received for lot striping at the Safety Complex for \$800, \$880 and \$1,100. He noted the Department would like to select Pinpoint Striping of Manchester as they were the most professional. He indicated striping was not done since 2000.

Mr. Rolfe motioned that the Board of Selectmen authorizes the expenditure of \$900 from the Town Building Maintenance Fund for parking lot striping. Mr. Carroll seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 3-0-0.

VI. New Business

A. Election of Officers and Ex-officio Assignments

B. Rules of Procedure

C. Tax Abatement Case with PSNH from tax year 2019.

Town Administrator Sterndale provided the Board with a Memorandum dated March 8, 2024 concerning the tax abatement case with PSNH. He indicated mediation will begin in May and that the attorneys requested a technical expert who could testify. A large percentage of the towns in the legal group are using Sansoucy Associates as part of a shared services group. Mr. Sterndale provided a letter from Sansoucy with their proposed contract and costs, noting additional towns participating.

Mr. Rolfe motioned to join the other towns to enter the Agreement with Sansoucy. Mr. Carroll seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 3-0-0.

The Selectmen signed the Agreement.

D. MOU with Auburn Little League

Town Administrator Sterndale provided a MOU between the Little League and the town outlining arrangements for field use with Parks & Recreation similar to the agreement approved with Auburn Soccer Club. Mr. Sterndale noted the MOU was reviewed by the Little League and Parks & Recreation.

Mr. Rolfe motioned the Board of Selectmen authorize the Town Administrator to enter into an MOU with the Auburn Little League regarding use of Wayne Eddows Memorial Fields. Mr. Carroll seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 3-0-0.

E. Abatement applications

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| i. Map 5, Lot 25-2 | iv. Map 11, Lot 18-13 |
| ii. Map 9, Lot 2A & 2B | v. Map 11, Lot 42-10 |
| iii. Map 3, Lot 6 | vi. Map 4, Lot 28 |

Town Administrator Sterndale provided the Board with the abatement applications electronically and the recommendations from Avitar to grant or deny the abatement requests.

Harry Robbins of 70 Fox Lane stated that he did not believe Avitar addressed basic issues and were not close in their assessment. He indicated receiving new information from Avitar which contradicted the way they performed the assessment this time. He requested a work session with the Selectmen to review the documents. Mr. Leclair questioned whether Avitar should be present. Mr. Robbins noted in their assessing the home encumbers the land value and that they have indicated “cleared” land where there is not cleared land. Mr. Robbins noted the property is unique and that there are no comparisons. Mr. Carroll agreed a suitable comparison was not provided.

Meghan of 7A/B Dollard Road indicated they each have an attached condominium unit on 35 acres because of having a variance for only 50’ of frontage requiring the units be attached, and noted both units were assessed for taxation with a unit on 35 acres of land. She asked that the abatement be back dated to 2021. They also challenged the taxation of the solar panels. Tax Collector Jenkins indicated she would check the tax card as “other” could be for more appurtenances than the solar panels which are \$400 each.

Kara asked why Manchester Water Works is not being taxed fairly and commented that the PILOT agreement is infuriating. Mr. Leclair explained that the Water Works property is controlled by state water protection because of the drinking water supply. He provided a history on negotiation of the most recent PILOT agreement and noted the current Board met with former selectmen who signed it. Tax Collector Jenkins noted that when MWW was taxed prior to the PILOT agreement there were multiple lawsuits and noted the cost to the Town. Mr. Leclair noted the agreement is revisited in five years. He provided a history of land swaps and easements that were cleaned up and documented and surveys underway. Mr. Robbins asked why the Selectmen couldn’t try to open lines of communication with Water Works to increase their percentage beforehand.

Town Administrator Sterndale indicated the applicants may need to supplement the information provided in their applications and he would be in touch to see if a work session could be scheduled a half hour before one of the Selectmen's meetings. The Selectmen have until June to render a decision.

VII. Old Business

A. Personnel Policy Revision

Town Administrator Sterndale indicated that he got feedback from the Joint Personnel Board, Police Department and Library Trustees and will get a date to meet with the Joint Personnel Board.

B. Town Administrator Report

- i. Town Administrator Sterndale reported that Chief Williams has requested to move the Smokey the Bear sign to the Safety Complex.
- ii. Town Administrator Sterndale reported that the Town is still trying to hire for the Deputy Tax Collector and Finance Assistant positions and has not had a lot of response.
- ii. Town Administrator Sterndale noted there will be a meeting with the School Board on Thursday at 6 PM in the Gym.

VIII. Committee Reports

Mr. Rolfe reported the Planning Board met on March 6th for an informal meeting with Elizabeth Kidder and Luke Gaudreau for a small hair salon business on 37 Lakeview Ave. The zoning variance had lapsed after two years.

Mr. Carroll reported that Parks & Recreation met to finalize the MOU with the Auburn Little League.

IX. Minutes

A. February 26, 2024

Mr. Rolfe motioned to approve the February 26, 2024 public meeting minutes, Mr. Carroll seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 3-0-0.

B. Consideration of Unsealing Non-Public Meeting Minutes

- i. May 8, 1995
- ii. May 15, 1995
- iii. June 12, 1995
- iv. June 26, 1995

Mr. Rolfe motioned to unseal the non-public meeting minutes as presented. Mr. Carroll seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed 3-0-0.

X. Adjournment

Mr. Rolfe motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 PM. Mr. Carroll seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Hoijer, Recording Secretary