

TOWN OF CUSHING
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Minutes of Meeting
August 12, 2019
Cushing Community Center

Selectmen Present: Chair Alton Grover; Selectmen Corey Jones, Laurie Haynes, Martha Marchut, and Dan Staples

Selectmen Absent: none

Staff Present: Town Clerk Lisa Young

Public Present: Loren Andrews, Peter Orne, William Aboud, Mr. & Mrs. Galligani, and Dennis Galligani

1. Call to Order: Chair Alton Grover called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. and a quorum was determined.

2. Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. Approve and sign the Warrant:

ACTION: Selectman Dan Staples made a motion, seconded by Selectwoman Laurie Haynes, to approve 2019 Warrants 31, 32, and 33.

Discussion: none

Motion Carried 5-0-0

4. Review and approve the minutes of the July 22, 2019 meeting

ACTION: Selectwoman Martha Marchut made a motion, seconded by Dan Staples, to approve the minutes of the July 22, 2019 meeting with changes.

Discussion: Laurie Haynes questioned rather it was appropriate, suggesting maybe adding some asterisks or something, about swear words on page 3. Martha agreed. Laurie said if appropriate then fine, but she wasn't sure. Martha suggested maybe writing "expletive" instead and asked where do we draw the line, if someone says something worse will that go in there too? Lisa said Sami wasn't sure and Martha agreed she captured the essence of what went on. Dan Staples added there was a lot more then what went on [the minutes]. Corey felt that if it's on the tape then it should be on the minutes as said. Martha said writing expletive or swear, the exact word doesn't need to be in there, Laurie agreed. Martha said there are some expletives that could be thrown around that they don't want in there. Corey said it's black and white, is what it is and gives the people a feel for what it was, adding there probably aren't any kids reading these. An audience member suggested a dash-dash-dash and Dan Staples agreed saying it gives the people a little more essence of what went on. Martha also added on the last page talking about the situation with Carole Leporati and Scott, the reference Alton made mentioning Mark, Martha felt the last name should be mentioned so it's clear who is being talked about. She added in general, the first time someone is mentioned having the last name is helpful.

Motion Carried 5-0-0

5. Additions and Changes to the Agenda:

5a. State Employment Application

ACTION: none taken

Discussion: Martha said several weeks ago we [the Board] received from the State an employment application form that might want to be used in the future. She forgot to add it to this agenda and mentioned it saying it could be added to the next meeting's agenda for discussion. Alton mentioned doing it right now. Dan suggested waiting so all members have the form in front of them during the discussion.

5b. Good Neighbor Park Mowing

ACTION: none taken

Discussion: Alton asked when, saying he's tried to find someone to do it but no one seems to want to. Corey asked about Bruce Meklin doing it for hay, Alton said no he had asked him and they said no, there isn't enough hay to make it worth it. Corey asked what Richard Olson charged last year. Alton answered \$900. Corey asked if it came out of the field maintenance account, Alton said it's out of the GNP account. Dan said it might be a little more than that because he said he gave them a couple hour break last year not realizing how big the field was. Dan added he had no problem paying him again if he wanted to do it and the money was in the account but reminded that they [clam committee] asked to leave the 4ft buffer around the edge of the field to protect the flats and try to keep Broad Cove being able to open for clamming. Corey asked if you could mow the edges every few years at a certain time of year. Alton suggested mowing the edges with the mower up so it's still a bit higher of a grass buffer. Dan asked if we should ask Richard again or put it out to bid. Alton said it would be under \$1000 so it wouldn't need to go to bid, Laurie added it wouldn't be because Dan had said Richard took a couple hours off last year. Alton said he would talk to Richard and see if he can get him to do it for the same price as last year.

6. Unfinished Business:

6a. Discuss bids for Clerk's office remodel

ACTIONS:

Discussion: Alton said one person didn't send any references, the only other person was PHI and their bid was more than what is in the account. Laurie asked if it could be put out to bid again and Alton suggested that's probably what will have to be done. Corey said he has suggested before and has been shot down pretty quick but is willing to donate his time through the winter doing the floor, then at another time do the window and the door. He said the town could buy the stuff [materials] and Corey could get someone to donate their time helping him and get it done. He added both bids are high, he felt they were crazy and he wouldn't even do it at his own house. He said it's what he does; he does carpentry and he knows what it costs, adding its up to you guys [the Board]. Dan said he has another idea but it will depend on what is discussed during the executive session. Alton asked about waiting to discuss during executive session and Dan said we can discuss after that.

Motion Carried 5-0-0

6b. Salt Pond Road ditching and culvert

ACTION: none taken

Discussion: Laurie said she has been digging it out every single day, and she wishes she had taken a picture before, but the picture she has now shows that there is now posts sticking out and the water is going 3ft to the left of it. She said there is a hole under the road, since the water couldn't get through the culvert, it went under the road and is now a problem. She said it is going to continue to happen until it's fixed. Alton said the real problem is the beaver that had it plugged up. Laurie said she feels it is a priority and Alton said he doesn't know if it is [a priority] because he doesn't know if anyone knows how much the paving and the culvert on Stones Point Rd has cost, and the mowing costs, and how much in the budget is left. Laurie said if it can't be fixed then at least the hole on the side of the road needs to be fixed. Alton said they could throw some gravel in that hole on the side of the road, that's not big deal. Laurie said it will just wash away again if it isn't fixed correctly. She said it should be reviewed what needs to be done to fix the situation. Corey asked if the culvert was broken under the road. Laurie said it is. Alton said it is a little on the edge, not under the road, could be eventually but right now it's not a serious problem. Alton said he doesn't know the budget because they don't have the bills yet. Laurie asked if they could fill the hole in during the meantime. Alton asked who would do that, Laurie responded you have a truck. Alton asked Dan if it was okay to do that, Laurie added she didn't think it needed to go to bid to dump a bunch of rocks off. Dan added anything under \$1000 doesn't need to go out to bid and they could ask anyone to do it, Alton or Meklin or anyone. Alton said it will only take a couple yards of gravel to fill that hole. Laurie said she would pay to have it fixed if it wasn't covered by the budget. Alton said he will dump some dirt in there sometime when he goes by, Laurie said she would spread it. Alton said he thinks they should wait to see the costs of the bills they haven't seen yet before deciding on the culvert. Laurie agreed adding as long as the immediate problem was being fixed, she was fine with that.

6c. Clean up at Burying Point Cemetery and Old Settlers Lane Cemetery

ACTION: none taken

Discussion: Martha asked if Guy Barter was going to do it. Alton said he was going to, but he rode around and checked the ditches and mowing and noticed the cemeteries haven't been done yet so he was going to ask Guy again. Dan said the Historical Society does a lot of Arts in the Barn stuff but he's surprised they don't have anything to do with the Old Settlers Cemetery as the stones are so old some are laying in the ground and it's a big part of the Town's history getting lost. Dan said it's a fascinating cemetery, Alton added there's a lot of young people there from the 1700s. Corey asked if there was a sign, Alton said no there isn't. Corey asked why they don't put signs up to mark these places, adding it's like Chapman's; his father in law is buried up there and it's kind of weird driving through someone's yard to go out there. Dan said there are a lot of old cemeteries like that in town. Martha asked about contacting Guy, Alton said he will do it. Bill Aboud asked about the cemetery committee contacting the Historical Society about it, Alton said the cemetery committee contacts him, he got Pleasant View cleaned up by the prisoners.

6c. Trailer on 97

ACTION: none taken

Discussion: Alton asked what was happening about the trailer on 97 [tax acquired foreclosure]. Dan answered that's going to be discussed during executive session. Alton said he drives in and checks it but wasn't sure what was going on.

7. New Business:

7a. Snow Plowing

ACTION: none taken

Discussion: Corey said he has taken a job doing maintenance at the old VanBalen building and it will include snow plowing so he won't be able to do both. He added the new one [job] is a full-time position that he can't pass up and made a decision a couple weeks ago to take it so the plowing position will have to be posted in the paper. Alton added they could put two positions in the paper, it wouldn't bother him. Corey said it was something he really did take a lot of time and think about because he's been self-employed for so long but is sick of dealing with workers, and he likes plowing snow and had fun, but he had to pick one. Dan said to advertise the position. Alton said he talked to a guy who would do it, who lives in Warren, and another guy he's afraid might apply for it and won't be good. Laurie said just because someone applies, it's a process to go through and doesn't mean they'll get hired. Corey asked if Alton thought the guy in Warren would apply. Alton said he probably would, but the guy is his age, he hauls hot top in the summer and wouldn't mind plowing in the winter. The Board decided to advertise the position in the paper, Alton said look for two, Corey said you actually could look for two so that you have one alternate.

7b. Ledge on Stones Point Rd

ACTION: Selectwoman Martha Marchut made a motion, seconded by Laurie Haynes, to have Alton double check on the two areas in question and contingent upon his decision whether or not something is needed we will have someone take care of the problem and will fund it through one of the sources that we've agreed is acceptable.

Discussion: Bill Aboud said the rock is only about a foot from the side of the road, Alton clarified it is a ledge. Bill said he was told before once it was ditched, they would clear the debris from the roadside, Bill said it is so close that last year the ice came almost across the road and the build up right there could be dangerous. Alton said he studied it himself, the other day in the hard rain the water wasn't going across the road. Alton said no one complained about it until the ditching, Dan added that's because no one could see that it was there. Alton asked what he [Bill] would like to be done. Bill mentioned blasting it. Alton said they could blast it or get a poulder down there. Dan suggested leaving it alone and seeing what happens. Bill said they are going to pave the road, then if it doesn't work out you're going to bring in big equipment and mess up the road; this is the time to do it. Corey said he can see both sides of it, he's kind of a preventative maintenance and sees it as snow plowing; if you send a hammer down there and could take care of it, if ice does back up there it's going to push the ice out there pretty easy. He could see doing it now before the roads are paved, but then still have to wait to get the bills in and see how much money is left. He added Bruce Meklin would know about what that would take time wise with the machine. Corey said hanging that wing up on that pushing snow back down there leads to more repairs. Corey asked about getting an estimate on it from Bruce before deciding, in the meantime bills should come in to see what's left in the budget. Alton said paving might happen this week, Corey said if it is going to be done it should be done before paving. Dan added he didn't think it was even a problem until Bill brought it up. Alton agreed, and said it will be better this winter anyway because the ditches are done. Corey asked if the plow will go up over that ledge, Alton said maybe the new guy will do it different as it won't be Corey this year. Martha asked if \$300 can be squeezed out of anywhere in the budget to fix it. Laurie said there are bids for all the money being spent, what does it add up to. Corey said \$259,000 for paving, \$3700 for ditching (rounding up). Dan said the culvert was added on afterwards and asked how much that was, another \$1000? Alton said the culvert was \$400 something, Lisa added that wasn't putting it in, that was just the culvert. Dan said you're at about \$265,000 for everything and that comes out of excise tax. Lisa said you also have the local road assistance. Alton said there was \$271,000 in

there total. Laurie said if there is enough then maybe you should just do them. Corey said he feels it'll be preventative maintenance long term. Dan said it can also be taken from the overlay, he felt that was already voted on earlier in the year as back up. Alton didn't think you could take from there without Special Town Meeting, Dan said maybe he is wrong but thought it was already covered at the Town Meeting. Lisa said she would check. Dan said there is probably plenty and wouldn't have to use it anyway. Lisa asked if there is a motion. Alton said they didn't know what they were going to do yet and asked who was going to check on it. He said he was told he shouldn't have been down there so he wasn't going down there to check on it, someone else can do it. Bill said he would walk Corey down, Corey agreed he would go down and look at it. Corey said Bruce is really the only one who has a hammer and has been down there doing the ditching, he said it'll be nice and done, ditches will flow perfect, and road will be paved. Alton said Dan questioned him on going down and checking on stuff and asked if he wants him to check on things or not. Dan said he did not question him. Alton said you did, you asked why I was doing the culvert, all I did was pick it up and help them put it in, if you don't want me to do it say so and I won't anymore. Dan said that's your choice, I questioned why you were down there working with the Meklin's. I asked a question and was satisfied with the answer if your feelings are hurt I apologize. Alton said if you don't want me down there just say so, Dan said as Selectman we look over the warrant and you're allowed to ask questions. Corey added in all fairness everyone [the Board] should make the decisions, I think this is what Danny is getting at too, we are a Board of 5, we all make decisions. Laurie agreed with Alton, she said herself, Danny, and Martha would refer to Alton and Corey as the experts on what to do [road stuff]. Corey said all the one-man band stuff, and the stuff they deal with in town, everyone should be involved. Dan said this is all blown out of proportion, he was reading a warrant and asking a question, when you don't understand something, you ask questions, that's all. Alton asked if the Board wants someone to check on work being done, such as hot topping. Dan said it can be checked, there's no problem with that. Martha said they all agree that they should all be included in decisions that get made but occasionally things come along that have to be decided quickly that we can't all be, but our default position is that we are all included.

Motion Carried 4-0-1, Alton abstained

7c. RSU #13 Finance Director, Peter Orne, and Chairman of the School Board, Loren Andrews, to address the Board

ACTION: none taken

Discussion: In regards to the RSU #13 budget, Peter and Loren first started with apologizing to the tax payers that the bills had to go up, he added it is their intention to have increases of about 3-4% every year for costs of living increases for the staff. He also added a few years ago when St. George pulled out of the district there was a pretty big increase due to that hole they had to fill. He said that this year, they'll get to specifics, but they made a lot of cuts and made a lot of changes but are in an era [like every school district probably around the country] where special ed costs are exploding. The number of kids and the complexity of the problems is staggering and what happens in classrooms in some parts of the district is scary. He said they need to and want to meet their needs, which means the budget needs to increase to do so. He added another part is health insurance; adding they give fairly good benefits to their wonderful and deserving staff. He added they do that because they feel they should but also because of other school districts they need to offer competitive wages and benefits. He said those two things are the main causes for the big budget increase. They went to ad cuts were necessary cuts, they weren't only due to saving the budget, but cuts that should have been made, but might not have been seen if not for the other two changes coming [special ed and health insurance costs]. They went on to discuss staff contracts and how employees were working with no contracts for years, and many kitchen workers had been working for less than \$10 per hour before the State made minimum wage increases. They wanted to raise wages before the State mandated it so they could have choices in hiring staff, adding at one point they were paying staff \$11.50 an hour while similar positions in Camden were already at \$17 per hour and RSU 40 even had \$2-3 higher per hour. They went back on to health insurance adding that many staff are taking it for their spouses too which raises costs. They said that is addressed in contracts,

and the district doesn't cover as much for spousal coverage to make it more feasible. They say they now have incentives on having families choose different health insurance plans in their contracts, offering plans with higher deductibles to prevent such high increases in future years. They discussed the special education part goes to students with autism, ones with other social/learning disabilities that need special supports, and also the gifted and talented program that is on the other end of the special ed spectrum. Dan Staples asked who does the placement of students needing special ed. The answer was the special ed director; adding there are two psychologists on staff, and legal needs are met. There are outside sources as needed and a process the director follows and works hard to not over identify. He added the review process can be up to one time per month for some students. Dan asked if there is a reimbursement, anything from federal programs for disabilities. The answer was yes there is, the federal government is required to reimburse the State for 20-25%, but that number right now is at about 11-12%. The State is due by statute to reimburse the RSU for about 70%, and we are at about 30-35%, so the fact that the State is being undercut, they are undercutting as well. They summarized if the federal government would reimburse the State what they are supposed to, our property taxes would go down. They said if that change could ever happen, it would be the best thing that could happen, especially for our taxpayers. Dan asked about the mess up last year, where we had to pay back \$630,000. They answered that had no and will have no impact on Cushing. Dan said it does because it's in the budget. The response was that it is only on the revenue side, and only comes from Rockland and Thomaston as the two towns that were a part of the mistake. Those two towns will have special assessments and are the only two towns responsible for paying back that money. They discussed how the current formula used to calculate towards the budget doesn't take into account incomes, it only takes on property valuations, Cushing being one of the higher towns in the State because it's on the water, but also one of the towns that has incomes lower than some places, adding that every time the State doesn't pay it only hurts the property owners and makes it harder and harder on them. They are working with the legislature to try to find a formula that will work to help fit school budgets without having to only raise property taxes. Dan Staples explained many people ask him personally things about the budget and the taxes and reasons for the raise, he was surprised to see after all the questions and getting them to come to the meeting more people weren't there [only four] and he apologized for not having more of the turn out he had expected. Peter understood, and said he is in his office every Tuesday from 10-12 and is always willing to meet with anyone and answer any questions; he said in the last 8 weeks he has had one person stop in. They said it bothers everyone that is has happened the way it has. They later added that special support services have gone from about 15-16% of students to about 24-25% of students now district wide. Because of the diagnosis of some of these children, not only are more students requiring the special support but more of it in general; it's not only speech once a week, but many requiring a full time one on one, one student often requiring three on one. They spoke of the correlation between special education numbers soaring the same time the drug epidemic really started in the area, stating there is no data but pretty confident the two tend to go hand in hand. Also adding some of these children in some homes are kept in a room, basically alone, until they go to kindergarten, and then they get to school and have no idea how to interact and behave making so many social/emotional problems. They add after one year, the pre-k program is showing to be successful helping these four-year-old students adjust and adapt for the classroom. They feel by having a pre-k program they hope the extra money early on will make the change to save later on as some children will graduate out of the special education programs. They later added that they have the budget for next year started and hope to have it done early this year [by year end] so there is more time for discussion. Martha asked if it is a time to re-look at administrative costs, instead of just looking at the costs per student is it time to look at the cost of the people running the programs. They said they do every year, there are costs to public education and hiring costs. They added teachers used to take on a lot of administrative roles that doesn't happen as much anymore due to the change of culture and reporting mandates. They added they look at this carefully, and also look into transportation costs knowing they are spending more than they need to in certain areas of that. They added due to the different start times there are two bus runs, looking into ways of changing that to maybe go back to one bus run, adding there is no reason older kids can't be on the bus with younger kids. He added they are looking at nutrition, and ways they could save money there. He said as administration those are things they are looking at and trying to find better, more efficient ways which could ultimately make a difference. The hope is that all of our towns should be

receiving funding, although Thomaston and Rockland do; they are still underfunded. Towns like Yarmouth receive \$0.50 on the dollar, half of every bus is paid for by the State; our buses, none of it is paid by the State. They added they meet with the legislature to try and make changes, ways to help districts like RSU #13 because it is not right.

8. Comments from Citizens: The Galligani's who were in the audience introduced themselves, they have had summer property on Orne Ln and have been coming up for years. Bill Aboud said if interested he would be happy to join Alton while looking at the ledge on Stones Point. Dan asked what expertise he has in that stuff. Bill answered he's a citizen and pays taxes. Dan asked again what expertise adding Alton does this for a living. Laurie said he [Alton] doesn't need any influence one way or another jokingly. Corey said the bad part is he is a paying taxpayer, Laurie agreed. Mr. Galligani spoke up about the ongoing septic issue on Orne Ln. He added this is the first time he's been in a situation like this and knows they have heard one side, and just asked if the Board had any questions from him as the other side. Alton replied they really shouldn't get into it, adding that is Scott's thing. He said we [the Board] are not enforcers in any of that stuff, that is up to Scott, that is his job. Mr. Galligani added Scott has been fantastic, and Alton added he really does know his stuff.

---Executive Session---

The Select Board entered into Executive Session, pursuant to 1 M.R.S.A. §405(6)(E), to discuss consultation with legal counsel, at 7:45 p.m. A motion was made by Selectman Alton Grover and seconded by Corey Jones to go into Executive Session.

Motion Carried 5-0-0

Selectman Dan Staples made a motion, seconded by Martha Marchut, to enter back into the main meeting at 8:03 p.m.

Motion Carried 5-0-0

ACTION: Selectwoman Martha Marchut made a motion, seconded by Selectman Corey Jones, to have Dan Staples contact Kristen Collins and ask her to contact bank with offer to accept \$12,000 plus legal fees to dispose of property on Rt 97 (Map 11, Lot 8)

Motion Carried 5-0-0

9. Adjourn

ACTION: Selectwoman Laurie Haynes made a motion, seconded by Dan Staples, to adjourn at 8:07 p.m.

Motion Carried 5-0-0

Respectfully submitted,

Samantha Jones
Recording Secretary