

Selectmen's Meeting

December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Attendance: Selectman Redman

Selectman Staples

Administrative Assistant: Gail Gary-Cox

Other Attendees: Chuck Piper

Mickey Sirota

Pete Milinazzo

Barbara Fellows

1. Called to Order at 4:35pm
2. Public Comments
  - a. Barbara Fellows of 24 Pond Rd North has concerns regarding her property taxes continuing to rise over the last couple of years. Her property assessment value increased \$23,000 last year and increased \$30,000 this year. Barbara has not had a meeting with Jim Murphy, the town's assessor, yet. The Selectmen explained the first initial step for her would be to sit down with Jim and go over her property tax bill and the Selectmen will also talk to Jim about her property. Then Jim will discuss with the Selectmen the outcome of that meeting. Gail Gary-Cox gave Barbara her email to set up a time for when Jim would be back in the office to have that meeting with Barbara.
  - b. Mickey Sirota informed the Selectmen that the deadline to get the request for reimbursement into Matt Henion is the 29<sup>th</sup> of December. The reimbursement comes to \$118. Mickey will complete the packet for the Selectmen's signature then submit. The next report will not be required to be filed until December of 2025, however, can be submitted earlier if we have expenses to be reimbursed.
  - c. Pete Milinazzo updated the Selectmen on the progression of the broadband system. Contracts reviews are currently ongoing. Spectrum will be doing a lot of the work. All major pole applications have been completed. DOT is in place for 22 poles in Searsmont. 1.43 miles of fiber has been installed in Freedom, out of part of the make ready stage of the project. All hub locations have been staked out, and the drafting of legal information is taking place for easements. Speculating that the permits should be granted before the middle of February.

The town has been asked to continue to encourage the residents to pre-register. The project deadline for broadband installation remains October of 2026.

3. Selectmen's Comments

- a. Arpa money was allocated to a general fund account for lost revenues. Laurel just needs to know that these funds are Arpa in the general funds account for calculations.

4. Modifications to the Agenda-none

5. Approval to the Minutes for December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Selectman Redman made a motion to approve the minutes for December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024, as submitted. Selectman Staples seconded the motion. Motion unanimous.

6. Old Business

a. Road Report

1. Selectman Staples spoke with Donald Fuller regarding the beaver dams and cleaning out culverts. Selectman Staples is going to contact Donald about cleaning out the culvert on the Magog Rd, cleaning the bridge on the Ghent Rd, and Donald should also be putting down the gravel from the tire on French Rd South and Mike Reece's. The plan is for tomorrow, December 17<sup>th</sup>, however with the rain being called for this will probably be delayed.

b. Letter Regarding Removal of Memorial on Appleton Ridge Rd

1. Mrs. Deane is trying to find out who made the memorial on the road. Mr. & Mrs. Deane had nothing to do with the making of the memorial. Selectman Staples made a motion that the town will clean up the memorial and have the cross stored at the Town office for a couple of days, if anyone wants to pick it up. Selectman Redman seconded the motion. Motion unanimous. Selectman Staples will contact Donald Fuller about cleaning up the memorial. Selectman Staples is going to inspect the area to inquire about installing a game camera for an approximate time to see if the town can figure out who is constructing the memorial.

7. New Business

a. Posting of the Roads

1. The Selectmen agreed that the roads should be posted for emergency situations at this time as needed, but keep an open mind to the closing of the roads coming soon. Some roads to be of concern are Magog Rd, Pond Rd South, and Walker Rd. Selectman Staples is going to check the inventory of road closure signs in stock.

b. Community Room Rental

1. Due to the frequency of the community room being used the cleaning needs are needing to be increased from once a month to once a week. Gail Gary-

Cox has inquired around Waldo County to different establishments about their rental rates. Searsmont is by far the lowest. The Selectmen will revisit next week, regarding increasing the town's community room rental rates.

c. Sundog Solar Appraisal

1. Chuck Piper explained that the life expectancy of solar panels is 80% of their power for approximately 25 years, then their power decreases from there. The town has approximately 10 years of life left on their panels.
2. To remove the existing PV system from the rooftop array to the inverter AC disconnect would be \$2,750. To dispose of the panels would be \$540.
3. If the town wanted to reinstall the panels after the roof is completed the labor would be approximately double to reinstall, \$5,500.
4. The town would also have some additional cost of materials for reinstallation.
5. The town will consider rather it is beneficial for the town to remove and sell the panels, dispose of the panels, or reinstall the panels.

d. Discussion-Briefing to the Board from Jim Murphy

1. The reevaluation was less of an issue than in every other town.
2. Searsmont currently stands at a 90% ratio comparing average assessed value to average selling price.
3. 2026 should be another reevaluation year if we hold true to every two years.
4. Jim Murphy would like to keep at a 2-year reevaluation interval.
5. Jim's assessing contract is up in February of 2025 which is at \$550 a day. Assessor agent market now starts at \$700 per day and some counties are \$800 a day with less than 7 years of experience.
6. The current contract is for 5 years, Jim would like to offer a new contract for no more than 3 years.

e. Recap Discussion-Meeting with Municipalities in Morrill, Me

1. They did talk about towns using a back up system for covering other towns in need of coverage
2. They talked about how much things are really costing, such as culverts, roads, etc
3. The hidden cost of Federal Grants. Hidden things in the fine print, 30 by 30. The Federal Government wants all states to own or have control of 30% of all the land, so that they can have more control. Discussion of making towns aware of what the towns could be giving up when accepting some of the grants. Advice given to read the fine print or have the town attorney read over the grant to make certain it is good for the town.

8. Selectman Redman made a motion to enter an Executive Session in accordance with Title 22 MRSA § 4306, Discussion for a request for General Assistance. Selectman Staples seconded the motion. Unanimous. Executive Session entered at 6:15pm. Motion made by Selectman Redman to expend funds from Packard Fund to purchase approximately 175 gallons of #2 fuel oil for Applicant 2024-12-16. Selectman Staples seconded the motion. Unanimous. Exit Executive Session at 6:30pm.

9. Adjourned meeting at 6:30pm