

Meeting Minutes
Freedom Board of Selectmen
Date: 10-21-2024

Approved 11-4-2024

In attendance: Laura Greeley, Heather Donahue, Ryan Willette, Cindy Abbott, Jim Waterman, Beth Owen-Mishou, Brian Murphy, Samantha Turner, Mike Therrien, Thomas Clay, Rene Ouellet, Meredith Coffin, Elaine Higgins, David Spencer, Gunner Wood, Steve Bennett, Phil Bloomstein, Willa Smith, Sean Gagnon, Bobbi Gannon, Michael Smith, Willa Smith

Zoom Meeting: Meeting ID: 431 235 8395
Passcode: TownMeet

1. Call Hearing to Order: Cindy Abbott called the hearing to order. She read the warrant in totality starting at 6pm.
 - Article 1. Elaine Higgins nominated Rene Ouellet as moderator, Tom Clay seconded and all approved.
 - Rene Ouellet was sworn in as moderator by Cindy Abbott.
 - Laura Greeley provided copies of the letter from the county commissioners.
 - Rene Ouellet opened the meeting.
 - Laura Greeley spoke about the abatement request from Peace Ridge which was declined by the town. Laura Greeley attended the meeting with the county commissioners. Laura spoke at the meeting on behalf of the town. She explained that Peace Ridge had had a case with the town of Brooks which Peace Ridge had won. A Pilot (payment in lieu of taxes) was proposed and rejected by Peace Ridge. She has reached out numerous times to set up a meeting with Peace Ridge but has been unable to arrange it to date. They have been sent their tax bill for 2024.
 - Samantha Turner asked if there was anyone from Peace Ridge at this evening's hearing. The response was no.
 - David Spencer asked if all the property was in Freedom. The response was yes, except for the entrance that is in Albion.
 - Steve Bennett asked about the structures on the property.
 - Assessor Agent Jackie was not allowed access to the property
 - Sean Gamey asked about the residences on the property.
 - Elaine Higgins asked about the laws regarding 501 c 3's. Her concern is the woodland.
 - [Laura Greeley](#) asked if the government has any limit to the amount of acreage available for the walking of dogs.

- Tom Clay reiterated that there is no access allowed, they have built watch towers. He is concerned that the code enforcement officer was not allowed access.
- Samantha Turner asked what occurs if we don't grant the abatement today. She asked if they could take us to court.
- [Laura Greeley](#) is going to continue to make a case to Peace Ridge regarding their impact as community members that they could offer us a "pilot".
- Tom Clay mentioned that our budget being in the red, "breaking our bank" then getting what they want. He suggested that all of the towns that are being impacted by Peace Ridge should all get together.
- Heather Donahue mentioned benevolence and how is Peace Ridge showing benevolence to the town.
- Rene Ouellet synthesized what everyone has been saying.
- Meredith Coffin stated that this is now and what are they going to be building next year. Who is reviewing their non-profit paperwork.
- Ryan Willette suggested submitting a 706 a.
- [Steve Bennett](#) is not in favor of rewarding them, but he is concerned we cannot win and it would cost the town more money.
- Rene Ouellet reviewed what is being proposed in the vote.
- Samantha Turner asked what the Select Board would like to see.
- Heather Donahue stated that she would not like to see us spending more money on legal fees. She would like input regarding what we will do next year.
- Elaine Higgins: agreed with [Steve Bennett](#) and she is concerned that Brooks has spent a lot on legal fees.
- Tom Clay asked if there was a process moving forward that townspeople could be heard by the commissioners.
- Laura Greeley said that moving forward we can take statements and gather evidence to submit to the commissioners.
- Steve Bennett feels it would be a waste of money to fight them but there is another issue and we need to have a tax policy that deals with non-profits. The town can create a policy that would allow us to extract money from all non-profits that use town services.
- Ryan Willette stated that the Select Board was told by the atty that we cannot charge a 501- c 3's for services.
 - Ryan Willette says that the right thing to do is to refund the money, because if we don't we will accrue more interest and that we use the time to develop a plan to address concerns for next year.
 - Laura Greeley agrees that we should pay them. They are doing this under duress (Ryan Willette).
 - Dave Spencer asked about where this land was located.

- Brian Murphy asked if they can prevent a site survey on the part of the town. The only person that can go onto someone's property is the assessor.
 - Elaine Higgins made a motion that all discussion cease, Ryan Willette seconded and all approved.
 - Rene Ouellet suggested that if people would like to volunteer to assist with research regarding 501 C-3's and their impact on the town, they should reach out to the Select Board.
 - R.O. read the Article.
 - Elaine Higgins made a motion to see if the voters of the Town of Freedom will vote to approve the article for transferring expenditure of up to \$5604.82 (Principle \$5,287 and Statutory interest \$317.25) from the General Fund to pay Tax Abatement for Peace Ridge Sanctuary, Heather Donahue seconded the motion.
 - Meredith Coffin made a motion to see if the voters of the Town of Freedom will vote to approve transferring expenditure of up to \$5604.82 (Principle \$5,287 and Statutory interest \$317.25) from the General Fund for a refund to Peace Ridge Sanctuary, Phil Bloomstein seconded. It was not a unanimous vote.
 - Ryan Willette made a motion to adjourn the hearing, Tom Clay seconded and all approved.
2. Call the Select Board Meeting to Order / Finalize Agenda: Laura Greeley called the meeting to order at 6:50 pm.
 3. Announcements:
 4. Review and Approve Minutes: Secretary's Report: Heather Donahue made a motion to approve the minutes as amended, Ryan Willette seconded and all approved.
 5. Fire Chief & EMA Director Reports: Jim Waterman
 - Jim would like a sign for Country View Lane. Ryan Willette has asked to table the sign discussion for two weeks from now.
 - Ryan Willette made a motion to table the sign discussion until the next Selectmen Meeting, Heather Donahue seconded the motion and all approved.
 - Discussion ensued about whether it is the town responsibility to provide a Lane sign. There was discussion about whether it is a buildable lot.
 - [Laura Greeley](#) suggested that they look at this ordinance.
 6. Public Works: Ryan Willette
 - The speed sign is off
 - Trucks 7 and 8 are getting inspection stickers
 - Truck 6 needs work on the starter
 - Need engine oil

- Went up to the Mitchell Road Cemetery, the damage appears to have occurred during a ditching project. The town excavator is too big. Ryan will donate his excavator with the Cemetery committee. A culvert needs to go in there and then back fill with gravel. Rip rap needs to be used. This can be done a bit later in the season. All were in favor of this.
 - Sand Bids were reviewed
 - SD childs (ch22, certified) \$18/yd
 - Davis Dirt Works (ch22 certified) \$18/ yd
 - Murtin Richards: 16\$/ yd
 - John Kirnowski: 16\$/yard
 - Nitrum has no sand
 - Daves World \$22/ yd delivered
 - Ron Littlefield \$12.50/ yard delivered
 - Various projects were reviewed and updated
7. Treasurer's Report:
- Payroll Warrant = \$ 6523.50
 - AP Warrant= \$25580.60
 - Received checks from:
 - Tree Growth reimbursement for: \$7360.54
 - Heather Donahue made a motion to pay the Payroll Warrant = \$6523.50, Ryan Willette seconded and all approved.
 - Heather Donahue made a motion to pay the AP Warrant= \$25580.60, Ryan Willette seconded and all approved.
8. Town Clerk & Tax Collector Report: Cindy Abbott
- Kristy will be working Monday 9-6 and Wed 12-3 next week.
 - She will not do new registrations for new trucks.
 - Rapid Renewal: Diedra reached out to Cindy to do training. The target is for after election day.
 - Next Thursday meals have been canceled.
 - Still time to request absentee ballots.
9. Citizens Issues:
- Tom Clay asked the abatements being one year as it has always been 3 years. Laura Greeley will talk to Jackie and clarify the question.
 - Tom Clay asked Ryan Willette about the frost heaves on Greeley Road. There is no affirmed date for changing those culverts.
10. Review Correspondence
11. Town Officials Reports
- Code Enforcement: Cindy Abbott
 - Ryan and Cindy still need to do a site visit this week with Jason. The time proposed was 8 am on Tuesday.
 - Greeley update: there is no update. She reached out to see if he had been served. Ryan Willette reminded the citizen that calling the police each time creates a record that will eventually help. Laura Greeley asked if they are being fined \$100 as was decided if they did not put in a porta potty. Ryan Willette suggested

that they offer to hold the \$100/day fine if the tenant is off the property within 60 days.

- Laura Greeley asked what we have done about the unpermitted trailer on the property. Laura Greeley specifically stated that she wants him served with a fine for the extra unit as well that is not permitted.
- [Laura Greeley](#) asked about the removal of garbage that is on the neighbors property. Cindy stated that she will need to do an additional site visit.
- Ryan Willette made a motion that Cindy Abbott write a letter that the \$100 fine for the septic and \$100 per day for an unpermitted trailer will be in place until the eviction is complete or there is evidence showing that significant progress is being made in the eviction process, the fines will be waived if the eviction occurs in 60 days. In the event that it does not occur the fines will remain in place, Heather Donahue seconded and all approved.

- Assessors Agent: Jackie Robbins
- Health Official: Patricia Ashland
- School Board Director: Eleanor Hess
- General Assistance Officer: Ryan Willette
 - Received email regarding reimbursement.
- Plumbing Inspector: Cindy Abbott
- Solid Waste Director: Phil Bloomstein
 - There is a bag of garbage on the road that has stickers that has not been picked up. It is too heavy and that is why it has not been picked up. It was suggested that Joe put a paper on the bag that says we no longer pick up bags over 40 pounds.

- Animal Control Officer: Peter Nerber

12. Town Boards & Committee Reports:

- Planning Board: Tyler Hadyniak
 - Meeting tomorrow at 6pm
- Recreational Committee: Alyssa Brugger
 - Planning trunk or treat Oct 26, 2024 2-4 pm
 - [Laura Greeley](#) and others are joining the rec committee
 - Meeting on the last Monday of the month at 6pm.
 - Ryan Willette is arranging a conference call with Paul Flynn regarding Veterans Day on Friday.
- Appeals Board: Michael Smith
- Historical Society: Wilson Hess
- Cemetery Committee: Steve Holmes
- Budget Committee: [Laura Greeley](#)
 - Meeting Tuesday of next week 6pm
- CDAC Committee: Lissa Widoff
 - One member resigned
- Broadband Committee: Phil Bloomstein
- Ad Hoc Policy Committee: Rene Ouellet

13. Old Business:

14. New Business:

- Heather Donahue made a motion to hire Haley Willette to clean the office, Laura Greely seconded and Ryan Willette recused himself from the vote.

15. Date of Next Meeting: Monday November 4, 2024 at 6:00 pm.

16. Next Select Board Workshop Monday October 28, 2024 at 7:30 am

17. Adjourn: Ryan Willette made a motion to adjourn at 8:55pm, Heather seconded and all approved.