

MONKTON SELECTBOARD MEETING
MINUTES

Tuesday, December 12, 2023
(Approved 12/26/2023)

The meeting was called to order by Stephen Pilcher at 7:02 pm.

Members in attendance: Stephen Pilcher (chair), Paul Low, John McNerney, Marikate Kelley, Walter Crandall

Members absent: none

Others in attendance: Jessica Demeritt (recording secretary), Stan Wilbur (town administrator), Jaime Schulte, Bob Heiser, Debra Sprague, Susan Randall Davis, Barbara Crandall, Linda Watson, Joe Szarejko, residents of Old Airport Road, Dave Bristol, Curtis Layn, Robert Howard

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

M. Kelley said the town closed on the sale of the old town hall. The language on the closing was consistent with the vote at town meeting.

S. Pilcher said there was a kickoff meeting for the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan.

REGULAR BUSINESS:

APPROVE MINUTES

J. McNerney moved to approve the minutes of November 28, 2023 as written. P. Low seconded. All voted in favor.

REVIEW AND APPROVE CHECK WARRANTS

J. McNerney moved to approve AP 31211 in the amount of \$29,472.68. M. Kelley seconded. All voted in favor.

J. McNerney moved to approve AP 31128 in the amount of \$3,157.16. M. Kelley seconded. All voted in favor.

J. McNerney moved to approve PR 31204 in the amount of \$13,230.77. M. Kelley seconded. All voted in favor.

REVIEW AND APPROVE OVERWEIGHT PERMITS, ETC

none

FACILITY USE REQUEST

P. Low noted there was a request for January 24, 2024.

PUBLIC COMMENT

S. Randall Davis read from a statement regarding future road maintenance concerns on Old Airport Road with regards to the proposed Town Forest.

NEW BUSINESS:

TOWN FOREST COMMITTEE UPDATE

C. Brynn noted that about half of the remaining \$50,000 project budget has been raised. J. Schulte said most of the funds are approved. There is a boundary adjustment under way to resolve a Right-of-way issue. There was another site walk on Saturday 12/9. The management plan will be under development. A Masters level class from UVM will be using the proposed town forest as a classroom, while doing an inventory and assessment of the site and share the data with the town for the management plan. There was a request for \$1500 for the eight graduate students for the semester. **M. Kelley moved to authorize the chair to sign the letter of agreement with a UVM field naturalist program and the town of Monkton with the understanding that the forest committee will attempt to get funding elsewhere for the program before it is put in their budget. J. McNerney seconded. The vote passed 4-0-1. W. Crandall abstained.**

C. Brynn spoke about the proposed 2024 budget and suggested a mailing during the management plan process.

There was discussion about the negotiation of a road maintenance agreement between the town and the residents of Old Airport Road. C. Brynn proposed that the town and Old Airport Road would each contribute 50% for the projected road maintenance cost for 2024. She said 2024 would be unique because it would be a learning year, and once more data is gathered, a better plan could be made in 2025. J. Schulte said the road costs are currently shared among the property owners on Old Airport Road. There was discussion about how to determine maintenance costs and current and future road use. S. Pilcher asked how much A. Johnson has contributed to the road maintenance. J. Szarejko said there were 3 loads of gravel in 2021. S. Randall Davis noted that A. Johnson did not pay their share. She said the agreement was for the road to be maintained proportionately, noting it was imprecise. M. Kelley asked if the hope was to have a long term agreement, or a new agreement every year. C. Brynn said she thought it would vary each year. M. Kelley said it was uncommon to have to negotiate an agreement each year. S. Pilcher said he is most interested in how the residents of the road feel about the town picking up \$3945 of road maintenance costs. L. Watson spoke about the history of the road and road maintenance. She noted that the town could pay for 100% of costs because of the change of quality of life, but believed 75% of the costs was a reasonable request. There was discussion about how the road maintenance is currently funded. M. Kelley noted that until there is a negotiated agreement, the Selectboard cannot decide anything. She noted that the town lawyer is still doing title searches. There were concerns expressed about the public using the road. P. Low note that he and other residents maintain his class 4 town road at their own expense. He said the negotiations for the future of the road need to work towards the satisfaction of all parties. J. Schulte said the purpose of the meeting was to present a budget amount. **M. Kelley moved to approve the forest committees budget request: \$1500, \$1000, and \$3945. P. Low seconded. S.**

Pilcher explained that the Selectboard needed to prepare a budget for the town for 2024. Budgets are a projection. S. Pilcher said it would be a living document that could adjust over time. There was discussion about how the town budget runs from Jan to Jan. **The vote passed 4-0-1. WC abstained.**

Joe Szarejko asked about liability. M. Kelly explained that a person bringing a claim may need to meet a higher standard of care for property used for recreational purposes, but cautioned that people should check with their own attorney. There was discussion about private roads. The draft agreement from the town attorney is still being clarified. The negotiation can continue.

MONKTON VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT ARPA FUNDING REQUEST

C. Layn said the fire department was proposing to replace two current trucks with one new truck. He said they will sell the old trucks. He explained that when a chassis arrived at the facility, the buyer pays for the chassis. The MVFD is asking for \$150,000 in ARPA funds for the chassis. A completed truck would be delivered 400 days later. The full payment is due when the truck is delivered; the final cost has not yet been quoted. Alexis Fire will have a 10% increase on January 1, so the department could get a substantial cost savings if the commitment were made now. S. Pilcher asked where the money would be coming from for the final payment. C. Layn explained that trucks were leased in the past. He said there was a truck fund with about \$80,000. There was discussion about options to lease a new truck. S. Pilcher asked how long fire trucks last. C. Layn said they have trucks that are 24 years old. The pumper truck and utility truck (has gear and no fire fighting equipment) go together. M. Kelley asked if there were grants available. C. Layn said members of the fire department need to meet extensive training requirements in order to access some grants. There was discussion about how Starksboro funds their fire department. C. Layn explained that the fire department does its purchasing in November and December. **M. Kelley moved to allocate \$150,000 ARPA funds for a fire truck chassis. J. McNerney seconded. All voted in favor.**

2024 BUDGET

Dave Bristol said the Housing Committee would like to request \$1000 for a survey. The purpose of the survey is to get baseline information for current housing use in Monkton. The committee would like to learn how people view their residences. S. Pilcher shared the survey with the Planning Commission. There was discussion about how to reach renters. **M. Kelley moved to approve the Housing Committee's budget request for \$1000 for the 2024 year. W. Crandall seconded. All voted in favor.**

S. Pilcher presented how he reviews the budget status report. There was discussion about multiple line items. The overview of the budget appeared to be in decent shape, said S. Pilcher. P. Low is working with the road foreman on the highway budget. S. Wilbur said salaries need to be considered. S. Pilcher noted that the social security raise was 3.2%. J. McNerney said road crew employees currently pay a small percentage of their health care premiums. He suggested an

increase to that percentage to something that is more typical, and increase their hourly wages to offset the extra cost. He proposed speaking to the road foreman about the concept. J. McNerney said he would investigate further. There was discussion about bringing someone in to explain benefits to town employees.

2024 TOWN MEETING WARNING

S. Pilcher noted J. Kenyon had created a separate article petition. He also noted that changing the board of listers to an assessor would need an article.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR ANNUAL REVIEW

There was discussion about adjusting the job description. There was discussion about facilities management.

OLD BUSINESS:

SALVAGE YARDS IN MONKTON

no action taken

OTHER BUSINESS:

M. Kelley moved to approve the errors and omissions certificate from the listers. W. Crandall seconded. All voted in favor.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, December 26 at 7:00pm.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

none required

M. Kelley moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:43 pm. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Demeritt