

**WARREN BOARD OF
SELECTMEN REGULAR MEETING
Wednesday, May 17, 2023**

CALL TO ORDER:

C. Sackett called the meeting to order at 5:00 and led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Select Board Members Present: Chuck Sackett, Todd Bixby, and Shirley McCartin

Staff/Officials Present: Fire Chief – Art Heath, Town Administrator – Austin Albro, Tax Collector – Maria Sanders, Police Chief – John Semertgakis

Public Present: Jeremy Hair, Lauren Hair, Donna Hopkins, Daniel Dempsey, Olivia Dempsey, Daniel Arbor, Chris Suprock, Parker Hogan

SELECT BOARD MANIFEST: *S. McCartin moved approval of the manifest, as presented. T. Bixby seconded the motion. Vote: McCartin – yes, Sackett – yes, Bixby – yes, and the motion passed 3-0-0.*

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: *T. Bixby moved approval of the April 19 minutes, as written. S. McCartin seconded the motion. Vote: McCartin – yes, Sackett – yes, Bixby – yes, and the motion passed 3-0-0. T. Bixby moved approval of the May 3 minutes, as written. C. Sackett seconded the motion. Vote: McCartin – yes, Sackett – yes, Bixby – yes, and the motion passed 3-0-0.*

FIRE CHIEF:

Due to a Board of Directors meeting of our Dispatch Service, Chief Heath offered his report prior to Public Comment in order to attend both meetings. Chief Heath reported that the most recent activity was an alarm activation at Glenclyff Home. Additionally, there was an early morning alarm activation at AppleKnocker's due to a brief power outage. Chief Heath reported a mutual aid call for a Rumney brush fire. 2 new members have joined the department, Chief Heath noting both new members were under the age of 30 and brought the total department roster to 16. Finally, Chief Heath reported that the pump for Engine 2 would occur in July, at the earliest.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- a) Chris Suprock articulately addressed the Board of Selectmen, explaining his concerns and motivation for engaging the Town in a conversation about the drastic rise in Warren's property values and concern for the residents of Warren. Mr. Suprock explained that in another New Hampshire community where he lived years ago, property values raised and local government saw the opportunity to make changes to their community, capitalizing on increased property values. Mr. Suprock expressed an understanding of the Town's requirement to adhere to State laws but noted that the law relative to

assessments and revaluations was historic and quite possibly needs to be revisited. Mr. Suprock explained that increasing property values are forcing residents to make tough decisions about whether to continue to live in their community. He suggested that those residents who are able may consider donating property to the National Forest, or converting to a non-profit for tax purposes. Mr. Suprock concluded that he was approaching the Board with a constructive perspective, willing to work together and stand up for lower income residents. Mr. Daniel Arbor expressed that questions about the assessment process led to an in depth look at Town finances. There was conversation about the structure of government in Warren, as Chairman Sackett explained the role of the School Board. There was discussion about the monthly school payments which were increasing from \$117,000 in June to \$145,000 in July. There was further discussion about the ongoing lawsuits relative to New Hampshire School Funding. The conversation also included the discussion of cooperative schooling, public charter schools, and the location of the schools in Warren and Wentworth. Chairman Sackett explained that he understood the burden that property tax places on our residents, particularly residents on fixed incomes. He explained that the Town has a program, noting that it may be one of the few programs in the State, that provides relief to residents who are at risk of losing their home due to taxes, explaining that relief is provided in the form of less interest and penalties, in exchange for routinely made monthly principal payments. Mr. Suprock expressed a willingness to help address the concerns discussed, which was well received by the Board of Selectmen and Town Administrator. There was general sentiment that the Town Administrator and Mr. Suprock would continue to converse about ideas to ease the tax burden on the residents of our community.

- b) Daniel Dempsey introduced himself and explained that he was happy to answer any questions from the Board about the lighting project. Chairman Sackett asked whether the lights needed to be on all night, every night while explaining his opinion and echoing feedback from others. He explained that he did not anticipate any controversy when the lighting project was introduced. Mr. Sackett expressed that if it were up to him, the lights would be saved for Town events, holidays, and special occasions, but explained that is not how local government works. Mr. Dempsey explained his original idea was for the Rocket to be lit, as a symbol of local pride, all night and to be seen by those who drive through our small town after the sidewalks were rolled up and the shutters closed. Mr. Dempsey explained this was the people's project and he was just leading the efforts. He noted that any financial concerns have been alleviated by donations and no tax burden would be passed on to the residents. The Town Administrator noted that he had received 3 pieces of correspondence, 2 emails and 2 letter in support of the Redstone lights. Donna Hopkins asked Mr. Dempsey whether there was a timer available to turn the lights off at a certain time. Mr. Dempsey replied that was a possibility. S. McCartin suggested that rather than just special occasions and town events, that the lights could be on until midnight every day. There was additional discussion. S. McCartin suggested that the lights could

even be left on all night Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. The Board agreed that this seemed like a reasonable compromise and suggested that the trial continue another 4 weeks with the lights timed to turn off at midnight from Monday through Thursday and to be illuminated all night from Friday through Sunday. Mr. Dempsey stated that he would get them set up on a timer. The Administrator encouraged residents to share their opinions with the Town.

- c) Jeremy Hair expressed concern that the recent decision to no longer allow Blue Wave Taekwondo to utilize the Town Hall for storage may create a hardship due to the financial constraints of the organization. Mr. Hair explained that the price to participate in Taekwondo has been the same for 14 years and offered a brief history of Taekwondo in the Warren Town Hall. The basement was discussed a potential option, to which Mr. Hair did not decline but admitted it would be less convenient. The Administrator also noted that Parks and Rec had not used the Snack Shack currently on the school ball field for years and suggested that as a potential solution for storage. The Town Administrator and Mr. Hair will get together to tour the basement and discuss storage options and alternatives, but it was clarified that the main floor of the Town Hall would not be used for storage. The Administrator noted that that Mr. Russell has indicated the ability to store the clothing racks, without clothes, at the Transfer Station or Town Hall basement for the Bagley's clothing events.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Treasurer, Sheila Foote was not present at the meeting and provided a report to the Board for review.

The Town of Warren Operating Account has a balance of \$93,237.01 after tonight's approved manifest of \$37,587.81.

The Tax Collections Account balance is \$204,934.53

The Town Clerk Collections Account balance is \$9,133.50.

CHIEF OF POLICE:

Police Chief John Semertgakis was present at the meeting and provided a written report of his recent activity to the Board of Selectmen. VIN Verification, Lake Tarleton Road; VIN Check on a boat. Theft, Mountain Meadow Road; report of a chainsaw theft, under investigation. Noise complaint, Lund Lane; resident complaining about firecrackers. The Chief noted ongoing cases with the Beckett School. The Chief also explained that if any residents are missing their game cameras, that were set up without permission on private property, he may have them.

Additional Notes: 36 Stops, 5 Citations

BUILDINGS & GROUNDS AND TRANSFER STATION:

George Russell was not present at the meeting but submitted a written report. G.

Russell reported the mowing season has started. He reported that the new brush hog works great. He thanked Don and Donna Bagley for their help cleaning out flower beds. G. Russell noted additional vandalism on the gazebo. The Board dreadfully noted they did not want to install surveillance cameras but continued vandalism merits consideration. G. Russell noted that the Transfer Station shipped out light iron, thanking John Corso for his help. A bale of cardboard and a bale of aluminum cans was produced. Currently G. Russell is working on shipping out baled plastic.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR:

The Town Administrator reported that the ARPA reporting was completed in the last month, the 2017 major flooding event reimbursement had been submitted last week, and reimbursement for the 2022 revision of the Hazard Mitigation Plan was also complete. The Town Administrator shared that he was ready to present the Board with the leading website option for consideration of approval on May 31. Lastly, the Administrator noted that he had recently attended the annual Risk Management Summit presented by PRIMEX and the focus was cybersecurity. He acknowledged that he was continuing to manage a number of resident concerns and grant reporting.

NEW BUSINESS:

- a) The Board of Selectmen opened and reviewed the sole bid received for the Town Hall Deck replacement. After discussion and review of the proposal, the Board voted unanimously to accept the bid as proposed, noting that it was scoped to the original project description and under budget. The job was awarded to Ken's Carpentry, who submitted a bid of \$10,000-\$14,999.
- b) The Board of Selectmen reviewed and signed a number of Reports of Timber Cuts for April 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023. The Board also reviewed and signed the Reports of Excavated material for the same period.
- c) The Board of Selectmen reviewed and signed an Intent to Cut for property owned by John King further identified as Map 237, Lot 1 and Map 238, Lots 3 & 4, logged by Joshua King.

TAX COLLECTOR: Tax Collector Maria Sanders offered a brief update to the Board, noting that the Tax Office was closed last week, as scheduled. There was discussion about the eligibility requirements for tax payer arrangements for resident's who are delinquent with property taxes. The consensus was that the current application would not change and continue to be considered on a case-by-case basis. It was explained by Chairman Sackett that the program began years ago as alternative to deeding the homes of residents and provided some relief in the form of penalties and interests for resident's faithfully making monthly payments. The program, which has helped a number of proactive residents fulfill their principal tax obligation, was recently revised to ensure that all participants are able to make progress toward fulfilling their outstanding obligation and not accruing new property tax liens.

NEW BUSINESS, CONT.:

- d) The Board of Selectmen reviewed and signed the annual contract for Tax Map

services provided by CAI Technologies. There was general discussion relative to the procedure a resident or business obtains a copy of the maps. The Administrator clarified that he is happy to provide digital copies and that the only fee for a printed copy was the standard photocopier use rate.

- e) The Board of Selectmen discussed the local contractor's suggestion to conduct additional hazardous material surveying at the Former Jameson Building which would any contractor the information necessary to provide the Town a more accurate bid for disposal. The Board agreed that a decision would be made after notice of the County ARPA Municipal Grant opportunity had been received, reiterating their intent to not fund the project by local taxation.
- f) The Board of Selectmen reviewed and signed the Tax Collector's Warrant and the Town Administrator noted that bills would be due July 6, 2023.
- g) The Board acknowledged that there would a Public Hearing on May 31 to discuss the Glenclyff Water Project, CDBG Application at 5:00 at the Town Hall.

CORRESPONDENCE & NOTICES: The Town Administrator and Board of Selectmen reviewed recent correspondence and notices.

- a) There will be a presentation by Twin State Clean Energy Link on May 31, 2023 at the Board of Selectmen meeting.
- b) There will be a public hearing to discuss the Glenclyff Improvement Cooperative's Application for CDBG funds for a water system project.
- c) The Town Administrator, echoed by the Board acknowledged Joe Monninger for promoting a thoughtful, respectful dialogue about Town Clock.
- d) Notice of an alleged violation from D.E.S. for a resident conducting work along the Baker River was received.
- e) The Town Administrator noted that there were copies of emails and a letter that was received relative to lights on the Redstone, noting there were 2 emails and a letter in support of illumination.
- f) The Town Administrator shared that on May 31, representatives from the Twin State Clean Energy Link project would be at the meeting to present their project and is scheduled to take approximately 30 minutes.
- g) The Town Administrator asked for guidance from the Board ahead of responding to Donna Bagley's letter relative to the storage cabinet on the Town Hall stage. The Board reiterated that only 2 groups utilize the Town Hall for storage and that moving forward, neither group will be able to use the main floor of the Hall for storage. It was confirmed that the storage cabinet would not be rebuilt and the Board is hopeful that the use of the Town Hall stage will increase with the additional space and ability to utilize back stage.

NON-PUBLIC(I):


S. McCartin moved to enter into nonpublic session, in accordance with RSA 91-A:3 II (e). The motion was seconded by T. Bixby. Vote: Sackett – yes, McCartin – yes, Bixby – yes, and the motion passed 3-0-0. The Board entered into nonpublic session at 7:14 P.M.

C. Sackett moved to leave nonpublic session and return to public session at 7:35 P.M. T. Bixby seconded the motion. Vote: Sackett – yes, McCartin – yes, Bixby – yes, and the motion passed 3-0-0.

C. Sackett moved to seal the minutes for 40 years because it was determined that divulgence of this information would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person other than a member of the Board. S. McCartin seconded the motion. Vote: Sackett – yes, McCartin – yes, Bixby – yes and the motion passed 3-0-0.

ADJOURN:

C. Sackett moved the adjournment of the regular meeting of the Select Board. The motion was seconded by S. McCartin. Vote: McCartin – yes, Sackett – yes, Bixby – yes, and the motion passed 3-0-0. The Board adjourned at 7:36 PM.


Chairman, Chuck Sackett Jr.
Selectman, Todd Bixby
Selectman, Shirley McCartin