

**TOWN OF ASHLAND
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2021
ASHLAND TOWN OFFICE
10:00 A.M.**

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10 **I. CALL TO ORDER** -- Town of Ashland Chairman of the Board Eli Badger called the
11 meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and requested a roll call of the Selectmen: Vice Chairman
12 Kathleen DeWolfe, Selectman Frances Newton, Selectman Alan Cilley, Selectman Andy
13 Fitch and Chairman Eli Badger all acknowledged they were present via the video conference,
14 constituting a quorum of the board. Chairman Badger notified attendees that the meeting was
15 occurring over video and teleconference, a provision authorized by the Governor’s Emergency
16 Order #12 that waived the physical presence of board members during the Covid-19
17 pandemic.
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19 **II. ASHLAND ELECTRIC DEPARTMENT**

- 20 **a. Recent Power Outage:** Craig Moore reported that the recent town-wide power
21 outage was due to a circuitry problem in our substation. Electrical service was
22 restored via a backup transformer. A specialized crew has been contacted to
23 investigate the outage and determine the cause and resolution. BOS members
24 were reminded that the work order needs to be signed today to schedule the
25 maintenance appointment for Monday.
- 26 **b. Electric Department Staffing:** One lineman has recently accepted a position
27 with Eversource. Of the two remaining linemen, one is currently on duty with the
28 National Guard and the other is in his second year of training. Additional
29 discussion will be held about advertising, hiring and retaining skilled linemen.
30 IBEW in Concord was suggested as a source for advertising. Selectman Fitch also
31 has a contact who might provide knowledge for the discussion.
- 32 **c. Electric Rates:** Craig Moore shared a comparison of electric rates between
33 Ashland, Wolfeboro, NH Electric Cooperative, and Eversource. Additional
34 information (such as costs, number of kwh billed each month, etc.) is needed for
35 developing a rate increase plan, for short-term and long-term needs. It was noted
36 that replacement of the old mechanical meters with new technology would also
37 provide more accurate usage measurements.
- 38 **d. Meter Proposal:** The BOS recently had 2 presentations regarding proposals for a
39 new electric meter system, with remote reading capability. Craig Moore will
40 prepare a comparison of the two proposals, including such areas as costs,
41 services/equipment included, timeline, compatibility with the water meters, and

1 compatibility with current billing software. The BOS will schedule a meeting on
2 Wednesday, February 17, at 6:00 p.m. to discuss the information.

- 3 **e. Inquiry:** A letter of interest was received from John Duffy, PE, inquiring about
4 our needs in the area of electrical distribution engineering. Chair Badger will
5 contact him for further information.
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7 **III. UTILITY BILLING PROBLEMS**

- 8 a. Another resident complaint was recently received about the continuing inaccurate
9 utility bills. Chair Badger emphasized that resolution of this issue has to be a top
10 priority. He also noted that water, sewer, and electric billing was previously
11 handled by three people, and is now being done by one staff person. The billing
12 staff needs assistance for such things as phone answering, data entry, and general
13 gatekeeper tasks.
14

15 **IV. OLD BUSINESS**

- 16 a. **Interim Town Manager:** Al Gould, of MRI, informed the Chair that the only
17 interim town manager that is available could work three days/week via phone or
18 Zoom from Portsmouth, at the previously quoted rate of \$85/hour. Some Board
19 members felt that such remote availability would not serve the needs of the town
20 at this point.
21 b. **Town Manager Search:** Chair Badger also reported that MRI has received 8
22 responses, so far, to the Town Manager advertisement, with still a few weeks to
23 go until the deadline. Katherine Davis, Finance Officer, asked if some temporary
24 town manager duties could be given to a part-time department head. It was
25 questioned whether that was legal or advisable to do.
26 c. **Temporary Finance Assistance:** Katherine Davis, Finance Officer, asked if
27 Greg Colby, an accounting subcontractor, could be hired to provide temporary
28 assistance. Ms. Davis listed some tasks that are needed, e.g., addressing issues
29 from the 2019 audit, reconciliation of software merger, reviewing of bank
30 statements, and preparation for 2020 audit.
31

32 **MOTION:** Selectman Newton

33 *To hire Greg Colby one day per week as a subcontractor to assist with finance*
34 *issues.*

35 **SECOND:** Kathleen DeWolfe

36 **ROLL CALL VOTE:** 5 - 0

37 **MOTION PASSED**
38

39 **V. SELECTBOARD ITEMS**

- 40 a. **Franklin Savings Bank:** Chair Badger reported that Linda Guyotte, Town
41 Treasurer, informed him that Franklin Savings Bank will start charging additional
42 yearly, monthly and transaction fees for the town's cash accounts in that bank.

1 Chair Badger will set up a meeting with an FSB representative to get further
2 details. A Board member asked for information regarding cash accounts that are
3 held in the bank.

- 4 **b. 2019 Audit:** Chair Badger asked that the Board members review the 2019 audit
5 report. Issues and concerns will be discussed at a future meeting.
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7 **VI. NEXT MEETINGS**

- 8 **a. February 15 (Monday), at 3:00 p.m.** Agenda will include the public hearing for
9 Warrant Article 21 (library income-generating equipment).

- 10 **b. February 17 (Wednesday), at 6:00 p.m.** Agenda will include discussion of
11 electric meter proposals.
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13 **VII. ADJOURNMENT** – The meeting was adjourned at 11:08 a.m.
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15 *Notes provided by Mardean Badger*