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**TOWN OF ASHLAND
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2021
ASHLAND TOWN OFFICE
6:00 P.M.**

I. CALL TO ORDER -- Town of Ashland Chairman of the Board Eli Badger called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and requested a roll call of the Selectmen: Vice Chairman Kathleen DeWolfe, Selectman Frances Newton, Selectman Alan Cilley, Selectman Andy Fitch and Chairman Eli Badger all acknowledged they were present via the video conference, constituting a quorum of the board. Chairman Badger notified attendees that the meeting was occurring over video and teleconference, a provision authorized by the Governor's Emergency Order #12 that waived the physical presence of board members during the Covid-19 pandemic.

II. NEW BUSINESS

a. Ashland Electric Department

i. New Metering System

The Board has received 2 proposals (VPPSA/Aclara and Eaton) for replacing the old manual electric meters with a new electronic, automated metering system.

Craig Moore provided a spreadsheet for the VPPSA/Aclara proposal, which totals \$531,053 and includes Aclara meters, meter installation, CIS integration, miscellaneous service entrance costs, insurance claims, contingency and GIS integration. There remain some elements to be clarified to result in a more accurate proposal cost – a more precise number of residential, commercial and industrial meters is needed; installation by our own staff needs to be investigated; sockets may need to be upgraded or changed which will impact the contingency costs. VPPSA's data collection and analysis would provide more accurate estimates of the amount of power to buy. Further discussion with VPPSA is needed to fine tune the proposal.

The other proposal is from Eaton, with a total cost of \$300,000 or more. Their cost breakdowns were received just prior to the meeting and were categorized very differently from the VPPSA proposal, so Craig will work on a parallel comparison between the 2 proposals to present to the BOS. It was noted that the Eaton proposal included fewer meters and it is not clear whether the Eaton meters will be compatible with the VPPSA system.

1 Eaton can provide 5-year financing (about \$65,000 annually) or 10-year
2 financing (\$35,481 annually), with no payment up front. VPPSA costs
3 would be added to our power purchase bill, with no interest.

4 Before further discussion of the 2 meter proposals, the BOS needs an
5 update from the Finance office regarding financial status of the Electric
6 Department, more accurate quantities of meters, and side-by-side
7 comparison of the proposals.

8 **ii. Update on Electric Repairs**

9 Craig is still waiting for a full report of the repairs needed after the recent
10 power outage. Eaton has tested the relays, which were good. They will
11 return to focus attention on the transformer. It was noted that the
12 transformer is extremely low on oil; the oil level and extreme cold might
13 have had some relation to the outage, but more testing is needed.
14 Replacement of a transformer, if it were needed, may be around \$400,000.
15 Paperwork for the replacement of the recloser, estimated at \$14,000 for
16 turnkey installation, will be processed for BOS approval.

17
18 **III. OTHER BUSINESS**

19 **a. Tax Liens**

20 The Town Clerk/Tax Collector has indicated that it is time to process tax liens on
21 properties. The BOS would like to meet with the Tax Collector in a non-public
22 session to review the process and review the list with her.

23
24 **b. Whipple House**

25 The BOS discussed the request from the Ashland Historical Society for assistance
26 with the expense of re-shingling part of the Whipple House roof. A petitioned
27 warrant article is requesting \$2,000 from the town for part of the cost. The BOS
28 indicated that they would like to know the total estimate of the re-shingling
29 project for the town-owned building. They also could consider using some
30 Building & Grounds Capital Reserve Funds for part of the project, rather than
31 adding to the tax impact on the budget. Further discussion with the Ashland
32 Historical Society would be beneficial.

33
34 The BOS agreed that to ask the town's new Building Inspector to do an inspection
35 of the building, to evaluate the current state of the building. It was clarified that
36 the inspection does not include any indication of costs of repairs.

37
38 **c. Covered Bridge**

39 The DPW Director reported that, after inspection, there is nothing structurally
40 wrong with the Covered Bridge. As a working bridge, it is only showing some

1 cosmetic, normal wear and tear. Some floor boards were replaced last year.
2 Guardrail repairs by DPW staff have been delayed due to the tripling of the price
3 of pressure-treated lumber. A citizen has mentioned raising some money for
4 improvements or repairs.
5

6 **d. Town Clock**

7 The BOS has received communication regarding a quote for repairs to the clock
8 in the steeple of the Community Church. It was clarified that the town owns the
9 clock, but the steeple and the building are owned by the church. The town has a
10 capital reserve fund for the clock, which has a balance of around \$4,000. The
11 BOS needs more information regarding the cost and extent of repairs to the clock,
12 the condition and future of the steeple, and a contact person at the church. The
13 BOS will discuss a response at a future meeting.
14

15 **IV. NEXT MEETING**

- 16 a. Monday, February 22, 2021, at 3:00 p.m.
17

18 **V. ADJOURNMENT**

- 19 a. The meeting was adjourned at 7:04 p.m.
20

21 *Notes provided by Mardean Badger*