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**TOWN OF ASHLAND
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, MARCH 15, 2021
ASHLAND TOWN OFFICE
5:30 P.M.**

I. CALL TO ORDER -- Town of Ashland Chairman of the Board Eli Badger called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and requested a roll call of the Selectmen: Selectman Alan Cilley, Selectman Andy Fitch, Selectman Bob Letourneau, Selectman Ann Barney 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. BOARD RE-ORGANIZATION

a. Chair Badger opened the nominations for Vice Chair of the BOS. There were no nominations.

b. Chair Badger opened the nominations for Chair of the BOS.

MOTION: Alan Cilley

To nominate Eli Badger as Chair of the BOS

SECOND: Andy Fitch

ROLL CALL VOTE: 5 – 0

MOTION PASSED

c. Chair Badger opened the nominations for Vice Chair of the BOS.

MOTION: Andy Fitch

To nominate Alan Cilley as Vice Chair of the BOS

Alan Cilley declined the nomination

MOTION: Eli Badger

To nominate Andy Fitch as Vice Chair of the BOS

SECOND: Alan Cilley

ROLL CALL VOTE: 5 – 0

MOTION PASSED

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: Andy Fitch

To approve the meeting minutes of March 1, 2021

SECOND: Alan Cilley

ROLL CALL VOTE: 3 (Badger, Cilley, Fitch) – 0 – 2 (abstained, Barney,

1 Letourneau)

2 **MOTION PASSED**

3 **MOTION:** Alan Cilley

4 *To approve the meeting minutes of March 4, 2021*

5 **SECOND:** Andy Fitch

6 **ROLL CALL VOTE:** 3 (Badger, Cilley, Fitch) – 0 – 2 (abstained, Barney,
7 Letourneau)

8 **MOTION PASSED**

9 **MOTION:** Andy Fitch

10 *To approve the meeting minutes of March 8, 2021*

11 **SECOND:** Alan Cilley

12 **ROLL CALL VOTE:** 3 (Badger, Cilley, Fitch) – 0 – 2 (abstained, Barney,
13 Letourneau)

14 **MOTION PASSED**

15
16 **IV. OLD BUSINESS**

17 **a. Town Email Update**

18 Interim Town Manager Newton reviewed MS Outlook and Notchnet options for
19 email service, including current costs for Notchnet and much higher anticipated costs
20 for email migration to Microsoft 365 and Outlook. If the email stays with Notchnet,
21 anyone who already has Outlook can set up their town email to use Outlook
22 (Notchnet can provide help for that). It was also noted that the current list of town
23 email addresses needs to be reviewed.

24
25 **MOTION:** Andy Fitch

26 *To keep the town email with Notchnet*

27 **SECOND:** Bob Letourneau

28 **ROLL CALL VOTE:** 5 – 0

29 **MOTION PASSED**

30
31 **b. Newfound Plumbing Estimate**

32 The Board reviewed the recent estimate of \$1389.64 from Newfound Plumbing for
33 work on the Town Hall boiler, which includes a boiler tune-up (\$440) and other
34 work on valves, etc. (\$949.64). Some questions that were shared included whether
35 the fuel supplier does regular maintenance on the boiler, when the regular
36 maintenance is usually done, and whether the regular maintenance is best delayed to
37 late summer or fall. Craig clarified that the boiler *inspection* is done annually under
38 the town's Primex insurance, is related to insuring safety, and is not related to the
39 functionality of the boiler.

40
41 **MOTION:** Andy Fitch

42 *To approve the repairs on the boiler and delay the tune-up to the fall*

43 **SECOND:** Bob Letourneau

44 **ROLL CALL VOTE:** 5 – 0

45 **MOTION PASSED**

1
2 **c. TOTF Quarterly Report**

3 The Trustees of the Trust Funds (Amanda Loud, Walter Durack and Lisa Rollins)
4 met with the BOS for their quarterly update on management of town funds. Amanda
5 noted that the Trustees are now signing checks from the capital reserve funds on a
6 quarterly basis (March, June, September, December) and will meet next on March
7 22. Department heads receive regular reports on the status of their capital reserve
8 funds. Walter summarized the written quarterly report on the town’s investments,
9 stating that the performance has been good.

10
11 **d. Town Manager Search Update**

12 Ms. Newton provided an update on the town manager search being conducted by
13 MRI. By March 2, they had received 28 resumes from 15 states. After narrowing
14 down the list, essay questions were sent to the top candidates; the essays are
15 currently being scored and ranked. The next step in the process is phone interviews
16 of the top candidates. Ms. Newton expects a further update in a week or two.

17
18 **e. Water/Sewer SRF Loan Documents**

19 The BOS recently authorized Chair Badger to sign the SRF loan documents, for the
20 Facility Plan Loan and the Energy Audit Implementation Project Loan. It was
21 recommended that, rather than the signature line naming an individual, it should
22 indicate generically “The Town Manager.” A new motion approving the change,
23 along with the minutes for documentation, will be forwarded to the engineers.

24
25 **MOTION:** Eli Badger

26 *To authorize the SRF loan documents to be signed by “The Town Manager”*

27 **SECOND:** Alan Cilley

28 **ROLL CALL VOTE:** 5 – 0

29 **MOTION PASSED**

30
31 **f. Utility Clerk Position**

32 Ms. Newton shared with the BOS members two job descriptions prepared by the
33 Finance Officer, Katherine Davis. Ms. Newton asked the Board to review the
34 descriptions, express concerns, determine if the positions should be posted. Ms.
35 Davis noted that previous applicants for the finance position could be approached to
36 see if they are interested in a utility clerk position.

37
38 The BOS members discussed at length the type of position needed to support the
39 utilities office staff. Various comments were offered by the BOS members,
40 identifying many issues to be considered or questions to be answered – Should the
41 position be full-time or part-time? What would be the range of pay? Could a part-
42 time utility clerk and a part-time administrative assistant be combined into a full-
43 time position? Do we need 1 person or 1-1/2 people or 2 people to handle the utilities
44 office work? Is the town office work space too crowded to provide for another staff
45 person? Should utilities staff be moved back to the utilities building? Is it unsafe for
46 a person to work alone at the utilities building?

1
2 Ms. Davis said that, in a recent restructuring, the utilities office position is now
3 overseen by the Finance Officer. She cited the 2019 audit recommendation to
4 separate billing responsibilities from the cash receipts collections/posting
5 responsibilities.
6

7 Mr. Moore explained the recent progress made in converting some of the manual
8 recording of electric meter reading to remote reading with handheld devices. About
9 half of the route books have been converted to the handheld readers. This will enable
10 direct linking of the handheld devices with the billing software and will result in less
11 time needed for manual data entry in the office.
12

13 Citing the need for extended and concentrated discussion of staffing (especially the
14 utility clerk), the Board agreed to a special **meeting** for that purpose on **Tuesday,**
15 **March 23, at 5:30 PM.**
16

17 **V. NEW BUSINESS**

18 **a. Ambulance Service Agreement**

19 Fire Chief Heath explained the recent letter announcing a sizeable increase in the fee
20 that Ashland pays for the ambulance service agreement with Plymouth. The 3-year
21 agreement runs on a fiscal year (July to June), whereas Ashland's budget is a
22 calendar year budget; the increase was received after the 2021 budget was
23 determined. Chief Heath said that Ashland cannot take over all ambulance transports,
24 because he cannot guarantee that there is always a 2-man crew for every call. Past
25 studies have also shown that contracting with a private ambulance service would be
26 much more expensive than the Plymouth contract.
27

28 **MOTION:** Bob Letourneau

29 *To approve the Ambulance Service 3-year agreement with Plymouth*

30 **SECOND:** Ann Barney

31 **ROLL CALL VOTE:** 5 – 0

32 **MOTION PASSED**
33

34 **MOTION:** Alan Cilley

35 *To authorize the Board of Selectmen to sign the contract, with confirmation of the*
36 *approval supported by these meeting minutes*

37 **SECOND:** Bob Letourneau

38 **ROLL CALL VOTE:** 5 – 0

39 **MOTION PASSED**
40

41 **b. Sewer Budget Discrepancy**

42 After the recent budget approval by the voters, an error was discovered in the
43 formula that totaled the proposed sewer budget expenses – the formula did not
44 include the last item category of debt service. The resulting shortfall in the approved
45 sewer budget is \$32,690. The Board indicated that the shortage will have to be
46 absorbed. However, the Town Office will check with DRA regarding the enterprise

1 status of the Sewer Department, which might affect how the shortfall can be dealt
2 with.

3
4 **c. Busky's Periodic Review**

5 Busky's Auto, on Main Street, operates a licensed junkyard. Because it existed
6 before Ashland's Zoning Ordinance prohibited junkyards, it is grandfathered, but
7 must still meet certain criteria established by the Board of Selectmen. It is required to
8 be inspected annually, usually in March. The Board agreed that the inspection could
9 be done by the town's Building Inspector/Code Enforcement Officer along with BOS
10 Chair Badger.

11
12 **d. Squam River Hydro**

13 Under the previous Town Manager, the Town terminated its power purchase
14 agreement with Squam River Hydro, because the town did not need the additional
15 power, was paying more per unit than the town's power purchase rate from VPPSA,
16 and could not recoup the loss through sale of that power to another entity. This issue
17 is currently awaiting review and comments by Ashland's town counsel.

18
19 **e. Planning Board Appointments**

20 The Board of Selectmen received 2 appointment requests for the Planning Board.

21
22 **MOTION:** Andy Fitch

23 *To appoint Kathleen DeWolfe as a regular member for a 3-year term (2021-2024) to*
24 *the Planning Board*

25 **SECOND:** Alan Cilley

26 **ROLL CALL VOTE:** 5 – 0

27 **MOTION PASSED**

28
29 **MOTION:** Bob Letourneau

30 *To re-appoint Mardean Badger as a regular member for a 3-year term (2021-2024)*
31 *to the Planning Board*

32 **SECOND:** Andy Fitch

33 **ROLL CALL VOTE:** 4 – 0 – 1 (abstained, Badger)

34 **MOTION PASSED**

35
36 **f. Ashland Garden Club Permit**

37 The Ashland Garden Club (a private organization) has inquired whether they need a
38 vendor permit for their annual spring plant sale in Memorial Park. It was explained
39 that a vendor permit indemnifies the town from liability.

40
41 It was the consensus of the Board to issue a vendor permit to the Ashland Garden
42 Club and waive the fee.

43
44 **g. TAC Representative**

45 Ashland's representative on the TAC Committee (Transportation Advisory
46 Committee) of the Lakes Region Planning Commission (LRPC) needs to be

1 replaced. The TAC group provides advice to the LRPC on transportation issues and
2 needs of the Lakes Region communities. Bob Letourneau noted his past experience
3 with transportation issues and offered to serve as Ashland’s representative.
4

5 **MOTION:** Eli Badger

6 *To appoint Robert Letourneau as Ashland’s representative to the TAC committee of*
7 *the Lakes Region Planning Commission*

8 **SECOND:** Andy Fitch

9 **ROLL CALL VOTE:** 5 – 0

10 **MOTION PASSED**

11
12 **VI. SELECTBOARD ITEMS**

13 **a. Interim Town Manager**

14 Ms. Newton read a statement in which she offered to resign as the Interim Town
15 Manager in order to allow the new Selectboard to choose an Interim. Board members
16 acknowledged that there had been some public concerns expressed with the process
17 of appointing the Interim Town Manager. Ms. Newton explained that legal counsel
18 had advised that the practice of a Selectboard member providing coverage in the
19 absence of a Town Manager created a conflict with the statutes creating the Town
20 Manager form of government.
21

22 **MOTION:** Andy Fitch

23 *To continue with the appointment of Fran Newton as Interim Town Manager*

24 **SECOND:** Alan Cilley

25 **ROLL CALL VOTE:** 5 – 0

26 **MOTION PASSED**

27
28 **b. Meeting Schedule Going Forward**

29 The BOS members agreed to meet at **5:30 PM**, for their regular meetings on the first
30 and third Mondays of the month.
31

32 **c. Taking Minutes for Meetings**

33 The Board discussed the need to hire someone to take minutes at Selectboard
34 meetings. Members of the town office staff will first be asked if anyone is willing to
35 do it for overtime.
36

37 **d. Meeting Locations**

38 Mr. Cilley asked when the Board might begin meeting in person again. Some Board
39 members expressed discomfort with meeting in person due to health safety and also
40 noted the need to maintain social distancing, while others wished for in-person
41 meetings to allow the public to address the Board members in person. This issue will
42 be discussed again at a future meeting.
43
44
45

1 **e. Workplace Memo**

2 Mr. Cilley inquired about the status of a memo that had been drafted earlier. Mr.
3 Badger noted that not all Board members had responded to the memo.
4

5 **f. Electric Rates and Public Hearing**

6 Mr. Moore inquired about the status of the discussion to increase electric rates. Mr.
7 Fitch is finishing research on Ashland rate comparisons with other local electric
8 utilities. Updated information will be discussed at the March 23 special meeting. The
9 Board agreed to set a date for a public hearing to discuss proposed new electric rates.
10 The **public hearing** will be posted for the first BOS meeting in April – **April 5 at**
11 **5:30 PM.**
12

13 **g. Statement**

14 Chair Badger made a statement to clarify a recent accusation made by others. At a
15 recent meeting, there was a discussion regarding whether the Town Clerk could
16 appoint an assistant if there was already a Deputy Town Clerk. Mr. Badger denied
17 that he had made a statement mentioning Jeanette Stewart as having done something
18 inappropriate. It was later verified with Town Counsel that the Deputy Town Clerk
19 can appoint an assistant, which must be approved by the Selectboard.
20

21 **VII. NON-PUBLIC SESSION**

22
23 **a. Non-Public Session**

24 **MOTION:** Andy Fitch

25 *To enter Non-Pubic session for the purpose of NH RSA 91-A:3(a), The dismissal,*
26 *promotion or compensation of any public employee*

27 **SECOND:** Alan Cilley

28 **ROLL CALL VOTE: 5 – 0**

29 **MOTION PASSED:** The Board entered Non-Public Session at 7:51 p.m..
30

31 **VIII. PUBLIC SESSION:** The Board returned to public session at 8:24 p.m. The Non-Public
32 minutes were sealed.
33

34 **IX. ADJOURNMENT**

35 a. The meeting was adjourned at 8:26 p.m.
36

37 *Notes prepared by Mardean Badger*