

TOWN OF PEACHAM  
Wednesday, August 7, 2024  
Selectboard Meeting  
Hybrid meeting in the Peacham Library and via Zoom

Attendance

In-person: Alfred Dedam, Selectboard, Peter Craig, Selectboard, William Kempton, Selectboard, Molly Willard, Selectboard, Andrea Kane, Selectboard, Jeremy Withers, Road Foreman, Rebecca Washington, Town Clerk, Anna Carvalho, Selectboard Clerk, Neil Monteith, Emily Finnegan, Rose Dedam

Via Zoom: Janie Carle, John Reiss

Minutes

1. Call to order by Alfred at 6:31pm, on Wednesday, August 7, 2024
2. Additions to the agenda
  - a. Neil Monteith – Emergency Management – after Town Clerk report
    - i. 2 weeks ago, Neil met with FEMA team for preliminary damage assessment for individual assistance, which he feels we've qualified for. Molly noted that residents can reach out to NRCS and Farm Service Agency now as well.
    - ii. Discussion with Rebecca about making Town Hall as operational command center during emergencies.
    - iii. Susan Rhodes property – debris from upstream was pulled out and piled on her property. He reached out to Steve Young at DEC about how to get debris out. Potential septic stream coming out on Susan's property too. Also, debris around culvert. Challenge is that it's not in the right-of-way, so in these cases, who pays for it? Jeremy explained that it might be necessary for residents to pay upfront to be reimbursed afterwards.
    - iv. Tree on the store in the center of town. Neil could call the fire marshal. Owners did not respond, but they are aware. The power company might be able to do something about it.
3. Highway Department Update
  - a. Flood repairs – a lot of progress, a lot to do. Working on moving from rough to final touches. Everything is open except Willow Brook and Gov Maddock. One hired excavator in town still, but almost done.
  - b. Two-man crew recently, but back to three next week.
  - c. Blacktop sections in South Peacham that need to be contracted out: guidance told Jeremy we don't need an engineer for the big culvert; we just need to shore up bank. A local contractor could handle it. Jeremy has spoken to two local contractors

about getting work done by end of Oct, both want to look at it before they can quote it. It would be two different projects.

- d. Jeremy wants to put up a barricade to prevent people trying to use the Mill Trace bridge until that FEMA project deals with it. Alfred asked about the future of the bridge. Jeremy feels we will be responsible to put it back, but he doesn't think it will happen this year. Molly will reach out to VTrans. The bridge inspectors have inspected it recently. Jeremy doesn't know if we will just redeck it or something else. John Reis commented that he wants the bridge rebuilt to the standard that a fire truck can get across it.
- e. Jeremy noted that regular road maintenance is lacking, but they're trying to concentrate on a little bit of everything.
- f. Backhoe was out of service, but take care of.
- g. Molly asked what won't get done before winter. Jeremy says there will be plenty, but they agreed they will make a plan depending on what needs to be done. We could hire subcontractors, but the town would have to pay for it, and Jeremy noted he is already concerned about the financial situation. Molly asked about a ballpark number for all of the work. Jeremy was hesitant to estimate, but felt 1 over a million wouldn't be out of the question. Discussion on what would be covered by FEMA versus Hazard Mitigation since we don't have a declaration yet. Most of the work they are doing currently would go under FEMA if it becomes available. Discussion about whether price would include all of Gov Maddocks or not. Not clear yet if have to rebuild or not, and how it would be classified if it weren't rebuilt. Discussion of possibility of keeping it as a legal trail. There is a consensus among the board members that we should not rebuild the whole road if we don't have to.
- h. Highway crew position: 8 applications for the position, all very local. Jeremy would like two board members to do interviews with him tomorrow and Friday. Andrea and Alfred volunteered. Alfred requested an executive session to discuss personnel for the hiring so they are prepared. Peter recused himself from the interview process. Jeremy requested a special meeting on Saturday should they determine who they want to hire.
- i. Jeremy will need to order the new tandem axle truck soon. Peter suggested looking into a lease-to-own and ordering two years in advance. Will asked Jeremy how he would feel about being out of warranty, which could be risky. Alfred suggested looking at Western Stars as well as Freightliner or International. Peter commented that municipalities are put on the back burner with International because the State has a contract with them, so they come first. Agreement that board would like to speak with salespeople. Jeremy has not heard ordering has opened up yet, but he will reach out.
- j. Peacham Pond plowing – whether or not to rehire 802 Lawncare, who will do it for the same price if we supply sand. Alfred has heard a lot of positive feedback about his work, and Jeremy agrees. Board agrees to hire him.

- k. This weekend's possible weather concerns. Preparing for potential issues with getting equipment lined up.
4. Town Clerk/Treasurer Update
- a. She will provide contracts to sign at next meeting for private contractors for FEMA documentation.
  - b. \$210,000 on flood repair so far, not including crew hours and equipment. Already borrowed \$75,000 from Tax Anticipation Note for this week's AP, and will take out the rest, totaling \$300,000. We will need another line of credit because the TAN will need to be paid back by the end of this year. Selectboard only has authority to borrow on a one-year term on new loan, so depending on FEMA, we will need to reevaluate. Rebecca needs a number to take to the bank. Agreement to shoot high. If FEMA comes through, we'd paid back the loan and it would cover the interest paid. Agreement to request line of credit for \$1,000,000.
  - c. State has paid a full year of highway funds in advance to help cover costs. We will have to budget accordingly later in this year.
  - d. Hazard Mitigation Grants – for the town, there are multiple projects that need a pre-app. Discussion of making town hall ready to be used as an operational command center, and applying for a grant for that. Each road project needs a separate pre-app. Molly commented that she was concerned about getting town apps started due to the rolling funds. She encouraged the town to get the apps in as a placeholder that can be further fine-tuned. Discussion to define town corridors for the applications. Discussion of costs of getting roads back to how they were versus how they need to be. Molly explained the system of funding, and how projects that didn't qualify for Hazard Mitigation grants would automatically get kicked over to the APRA FRC funding.
    - i. **Peter moved for Rebecca to do the pre-app for the different town corridors, seconded by Molly, all in favor, so moved.**The town could put apps in on the behalf of town residents who had damage as well, so Rebecca asked about reaching out to them, and whether the town wants to take that on. Discussion about how to determine candidates who would qualify. Discussion about posting flood relief resources. Discussion about using 211 info to determine who to reach out to in order to be more objective. Individual FEMA assistance is could still be forthcoming.
  - e. Debris – need to approve a memorandum of understanding
    - i. **Andrea moved to give Rebecca permission to sign the form, seconded by Will, all in favor, so moved.**
  - f. Election for State primaries on Tuesday, August 13<sup>th</sup> at the Town Hall. Ballots are available now, or residents can go to the Town Hall between 7am-7pm on Tuesday.
  - g. Rebecca approved a liquor license for 1-day catering for the Fall Fondo for White Mountain Distillery.

- h. Town of Peacham Facebook page – not administered. It’s useful during emergencies, but there is already a Town Clerk page. Board agrees to suspend/freeze it unless it’s needed again.
  - i. Jock dropped off a framed picture of monument, so it’s there to be delivered.
  - j. Rebecca will reach out to Alfred as the contact for Town Hall building maintenance.
- 5. Peacham Pond Boat Ramp – Emily Finnegan – District Manager for Caledonia County Natural Resource Conservational District
  - a. Background – Conservation District is a subdivision of State government. In state statute, but not state employees. Her team works on many different types of projects, mostly natural resource projects related to water quality. Hired Fitzgerald Environmental for the Peacham Pond project, worked with Jeremy, Fish and Wildlife, and Peacham Pond Association who will maintain. In bid process to hire a contractor for the project. Described the design. Should help with erosion. Bids due Friday – there are 3 so far. Construction window is after Labor Day to Oct 31<sup>st</sup>. Ramp will be closed for re-grading at some point. Regarding the fill, it was only available should the town want it, but it’s not part of the scope of the project.
  - b. Emily noted that while they are not an emergency response program, they work with many of the programs already discussed and listed some potential options:
    - i. When the town owns the parcels after buyouts, the conservation district could be a tool as project admin for the flood plain restoration.
    - ii. Town could apply for Trees for Streams too, if banks are stable.
    - iii. Emergency Watershed Protection Program could help with bank stabilization. Residents would need to apply with the town as a sponsor.
    - iv. They do culvert projects related to brook trout, which may not apply to Peacham extensively.
    - v. There are options for agricultural producers, like river corridor easement programs.
    - vi. Town storm water projects could be possible as well.
- 6. Peacham Pond Parking – Allen Freund – Removed himself from the agenda
- 7. Set 2024 Tax Rate
  - a. Education Tax rate (homestead and non-homestead) come from State. On education side, homestead is increasing 18.3%, non-residential is increasing 6.51%. On the Town side, tax rate is calculated by amount voters voted to increase at Town Meeting (budget and appropriations) and divide it by the grand list. So, town rate came to 0.8629. So combined, the homestead rate is going up 15.48%, and non-residential rate is increasing 7.51%. The town itself is going up 9.52%. A portion of that is due to the one-time appropriations increase by the Peacham Fire District. Tax bills will go out next week. Mostly out of Selectboard control at the moment.
    - i. **Peter moved to approve the document Rebecca provided, seconded by Molly, all in favor, so moved.**

Rebecca pointed out that there were no extras in the budget the Selectboard approved last year. It's mostly due to increasing costs.

8. Peacham Disaster Recovery Auxiliary Exploratory committee
  - a. Recognizing the coordination for clean-up efforts and allocating volunteering resources and donated assets from Rose Dedam and Alex Maclean, some feel a it would be beneficial to the town to formalize their work by creating a committee and establish an official structure and procure some assets. Alfred proposed creating an exploratory committee to look into it including Alex, Rose, and a couple Selectboard members to do a review and establish a plan. It would be separate from the Town Hall operational center. Noted the importance of keeping it lean and unincumbered, as this proved to be very efficient and effective during the recent flooding. It might include grant applications to get equipment, which might include stipulations, but try to keep it simple. Agreement that this group could come up with a formal proposal for an official committee to be voted on at Town Meeting. It could be a model for other towns. Molly noted that Hardwick now has a full-time Hazard Mitigation position, which might be the reality other towns as well. Discussion about whether assets they are considering might be subject to FEMA reimbursement or not.
9. Public comment
  - a. John Reis – complained that the meeting went too long. The town should be getting ready for next disaster. He reiterated that he does not want to discontinue or downgrade any roads. Commented he does not agree with rebuilding a road back to legal trail. Requested information about Cow Hill.
10. Approve minutes
  - a. **Peter moved to approve all previous minutes from the month of July, seconded by Andrea, all in favor, so moved.**
11. Review and approve bills
  - a. **Peter moved to approve payroll as presented, seconded by William, all in favor, so moved.**
  - b. **Peter moved to approve AP, seconded by Molly, all in favor, so moved.**
  - c. Rebecca asked about how to pay for framed photo of the Veteran's monument. It could fall under miscellaneous expense, with a footnote in the town report. There is a veteran's monument restricted fund, but she's not sure of its parameters. She will look into it.
  - d. She asked which line to put the Port-a-Potties that were rented for work in South Peacham. Jeremy said it could be in the Highway line.
12. Review correspondence
  - a. Rec Committee – anonymous donation of \$5,000 for restricted fund for kiosk and picnic tables by pump track. Rebecca said OK to set up restricted fund. They will be at next meeting, so will be discussed later.

- b. Memorial Day Chair volunteer – will be discussed at next appointments after Town Meeting
  - c. FEMA informational letter
  - d. Letter from Mark Milazzo from Peacham Pond – thanking Selectboard and road crew for quick repairs to make it passable.
  - e. Johnathan Kaplan – requesting support with postings required for updated open meeting law. Clerk agreed since they are required to follow the Open Meeting Laws and as the only other municipality in town.
13. Executive Session for personnel
- a. **Will moved to enter executive session to discuss personnel matters at 8:57pm, seconded by Andrea, Molly and Alfred in favor, so moved. Peter recused himself.**
  - b. Came out of executive session at 9:19pm. No action taken.
14. William moved to adjourn at 9:19pm, seconded by Andrea, all in favor, so moved.

Documents provided to the Selectboard and discussed at this meeting are available by request to the Town Office.