

Colebrook Selectboard Meeting

March 8, 2021

5:00pm

Town of Colebrook, Town Hall - Courtroom

Selectmen Members Present: Greg Placy, Chairman; Sue Collins, Selectman; Ray Gorman, Selectman.

Staff Present: Sharon Penney, Town Manager; Christine Charman; Assistant to the Town Manager; Melanie Mathieu, Tax Collector; Greg Marchand, Sewer & Water Department.

Guests: Jonathan and Amber Dodge; Nathaniel Lebel; Town Moderator, Tracey McKinnon, Town Clerk; Hannah Campbell; North Country Chamber of Commerce.

Chairman Greg Placy, called the meeting to order at 5:22pm.

**Town Meeting Update.** Greg reported that he, Ray, and Christine had worked with the school custodial staff to set up the voting room (music room) for tomorrow's voting day.

Ray reported that he and John Shatney will be meeting at 9am the school tomorrow, to finish setting up the sound system in the gym. Justin Falconer will be there to set up the video feed and laptop projector as well. They are going to have two public microphones available: One at the front of the gym directly in front of the stage, and another at about half-court. This will make it less intimidating for towns people to get up and speak, since everyone will not have to walk all the way to the front microphone.

Sue will be at the gym at 9am to set up her laptop. She will be making hand-outs available for everyone. This will be helpful if we must use the overflow room (cafeteria). Mel is going to hand carry a hard copy of the slide presentation to Colebrook Copy Center on Tuesday morning.

The voting room was set up to reflect, as best possible, the map that Tracey drew for her walk-through with Christine earlier this month. Mike Gilbert will be in and out throughout voting day to make sure everything is working properly. He will be spraying the voting booths intermittently as well.

**Request to meet with the Board.**

**Jonathan & Amber Dodge, Town Forest Update.** Jonathan and Amber reported that there are many and varied people using the town forest for walking, biking, and snowshoeing. They would like the select board's permission to improve the small structure near the burn pit to create an information kiosk with trail maps, a guestbook, and other posted information.

Also, they would like to have a better sign at the driveway, since even with clear instructions, folks seem to get lost getting to the trailhead.

Finally, Jonathan reported that he and Amber have purchased a “snow dog” which is a walk behind groomer (or it can be attached to a snowmobile). They use it on their own property. They would like to use the “snow dog” on the Town Forest trails, reporting that it is very nice to have a smooth trail to follow and that having groomed trails will make it more difficult for folks to get lost.

Amber mentioned that it would be nice to change the gated entrance somehow because having vehicles parking on the road seemed a bit precarious. She mentioned, too, that it might make sense to (eventually) place cameras at the entrance for safety purposes.

There was discussion about the Town’s insurance and whether the use of the snow dog would be covered under the insurance. Sharon suggested that the Town create a Memorandum of Understanding about the Town Forest use, including grooming, to memorialize expectations.

Greg made a motion to allow Jonathan and Amber to continue to make improvements at the Town Forest as specifically discussed in this meeting: Improvements to the building already on site; grooming with the “snow dog”; signage at the entryway; and, eventually, produce and provide trail maps.

Sue Collins seconded the motion.

Further discussion ensued along the lines presented in the motion. Jonathan is going to check with his contacts in Gorham to find out what they are doing about liability coverage pertaining to grooming. The “Cycle North” club is going to cover costs associated with grooming.

Greg offered to go with Jonathan and Amber to look at the gate/entrance and discuss options. He reiterated that the select board is very supportive of this project.

The motion passed unanimously.

### **Regular Agenda.**

**Review draft minutes 02-22-2021.** Sue Collins made a motion to approve the February 22, 2021 Select Board Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded by Ray Gorman and passed unanimously.

### **Old Business**

**Former Sherry Washburn Property on NH Route 26 – status/update:** Mel continues to work on the letter and noted that Washburn relatives have been inquiring about the property. Sue encouraged Mel to get the letter out as soon as possible to get the 90-day clock ticking.

**Town Meeting Update** (follow-up to above): Sue mentioned that there was an increase in the Stone Garden grant amount. Chief Rella did not have this information during budgeting. This is a budget neutral item since the grant reimburses the programmatic expenses completely.

Sue will create a complete list of people whom the select board would like to thank at the opening of the meeting. The Citizens of the Year awards will be presented at the beginning of the meeting as well.

### **Tabled/Pending Items**

**Tammy Letson response to the water bill memo:** Sue presented the issue around third quarter, 2020 water billing. Tammy sent Sue an email explanation that outlined the issue:

*“When the town switched from average billing to meter billing, they had to change the rate from cubic feet to gallons. Unfortunately, due to a miscommunication and/or misunderstanding with Tim from BMSI, the rate was changed across the board for all users, not just ones with meter reads. The average read calculation was not adjusted though.”*

Sue reported that, because of this missed queue, the town under billed approximately \$5,107 during Quarter three of 2020. She recommended that the town not attempt to collect this from taxpayers. She noted that the ongoing issues with water and sewer billing have aggravated some citizens and that sending out an additional request because of the town’s error, could create a backlash and was not a good idea.

Greg Marchand agreed with Sue on this point.

Sue added that during the February 22, 2021 select board meeting the board was assured that Quarter 1, 2021 water and sewer bills would go out by the end of April 2021 and that the board is anticipating a corrective action plan from Mel at their March 22, 2021 select board meeting.

Sue made a motion to not send out corrected bills since the error was committed in Quarter 3 2020. Ray Gorman seconded the motion which pass unanimously.

Mel assured the select board that the bills should all be fine now.

At this point, Greg Marchand brought up an issue with the burned Puleo property on Cooper Hill. The property has been demolished and the water meter, which was working after the fire, was destroyed, or taken away. Greg noted that the meter was operational and still ready after the fire because he went in and shut it off. He did this in the presence of the fire marshal and others. The ordinance is clear about the destruction or removal of water meters, so the Town of Colebrook sent Mr. Puleo a bill for the \$400 replacement cost of the meter. Mr. Puleo is upset – but has not requested to come before the select board yet.

### **Signatures Needed**

The select board reviewed the water/sewer abatements and signed them for: Champagne and for White. They reviewed and signed the current use penalty abatement for Letourneau. There were some questions about the Letourneau abatement, but since making a lot line adjustment with the planning board, the owners combined two lots so as not to get a current use penalty.

### **New Business**

The select board discussed the need for revaluation of some Colebrook properties because the valuation for property tax purposes was markedly low compared to the actual real estate market value.

Sue suggested that the select board direct the assessor (through a letter) to perform annual pick-ups, re-evaluated based on the sale price of certain properties. Dottie compiles a listing of all real estate transactions in Colebrook.

This topic will stay on the agenda for the March 22, 2021 select board meeting. Dottie will produce copies of that transaction listing (April 1, 2020 – April 1, 2021) for the select board's review before the March 22, 2021 meeting.

Sharon reported that the Hydrosorce settlement check had arrived and that we will need a public hearing to accept that money.

Sue asked about the Amanda Heald abatement which was "up to \$500 of interest waived." Mel responded that she cannot abate interest and that it was difficult for her to explain.

Mel needs to ask Tammy, but basically the interest is coming off incrementally. She will clarify with Tammy.

### Town Manager Update

**NHDES Closed Landfill permit renewal:** Sharon reported that the five-year permit for the landfill had been renewed by NHDES.

**Selectman "Pro Tem" Position for 3-9-21:** She reported, also, that David Brooks will be at the town meeting tomorrow.

**Generator Update/Department Head Meeting:** Sharon and Greg Marchand reported on the generator issue during the recent power outage. Greg Marchand noted that the fuel in the generator had gelled, so it did not kick on during the outage.

Sharon said that the issue was discussed and that good cross-department sharing happened during the recent department head meeting. Kevin Rice will be the point person on generator management. She said it was good to get that protocol tightened up in the meeting.

Sue asked Sharon about the placement of the reflector sign at the intersection of Hughes Road and NH Route 3. Sharon sent a request down to the highway department and will check with TJ again on this.

Sue asked about the status of the town's federal grants. Sharon said that the Northern Borders grant is not closed, and that the USDA has some finalizing to do and some administrative money to be distributed.

There is no update on the household hazardous waste program. Sharon phoned Derek but has heard nothing.

Sue noted that Greg Sipple reported a new business on Route 26 in Colebrook. It is a C.B.D Store that has not submitted a site plan to the planning board. The Town of Colebrook needs to issue a "*cease and desist*".

Sue made a motion to issue a "*cease and desist*" order to the owner of the C.B.D. Store/property owner on Route 26 in Colebrook for operating without a site plan and without other required permits.

Ray seconded the motion.

Discussion continued about the serving of a "*C&D*" and its effectiveness, particularly in this case.

The motion passed unanimously.

The State of New Hampshire Fire Marshal will be at the Colebrook Fire Station at 3:00pm on March 15<sup>th</sup> to discuss aspects around building inspections.

Sue noted that the American Rescue Plan Act adds approximately \$10 billion for infrastructure programs to help local governments continue with local infrastructure projects.

Sharon reported that she had attended a Zoom presentation about these funds earlier in the day. The meeting included Benoit Lamontagne, Congresswoman Kuster and many other people.

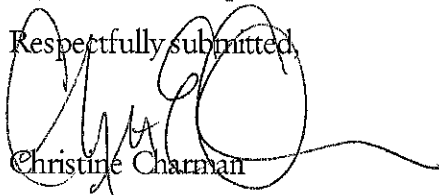
Sharon will submit a Letter of Intent by the March 24, 2021 deadline for the Town of Colebrook to be considered as a potential grant submitter/recipient. Sharon said the letter is basically a placeholder. She will include a paragraph about APP.

Sue noted that in a previous town meeting, the voters had given the town manager/select board approval to make submissions to all grants possible for improvements within the town.

The board discussed the public hearing for the \$3,000,000 +/- for the water project.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Sue Collins, seconded by Ray Gorman. Meeting adjourned at 6:54pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christine Charman', written over the typed name.

Christine Charman

Assistant to the Town Manager