

Colebrook Select Board
Selectmen Meeting Minutes

March 31, 2025

Selectboard Members: Greg Placy, Sue Collins, and Ray Gorman

Staff: Tim Stevens & Heidi Lawton

Other: Moira Chappelle

Hearing of the Public: None

Regular Agenda:

A. Review and approval of Minutes of 3/17/25. Sue made a motion to approve the minutes of 3/17/25 minutes as edited by the Town Manager and Selectman, Sue Collins, Ray seconded, motion passed.

B. Review and Sign Payroll and Disbursement Manifests: The Selectmen reviewed completed payrolls and disbursement manifests and signed them.

C. Town Manager's Report:

-Tim explained he had sent out all easements and received back fourteen of the forty-six that are signed and ready to go. This week we are going to get ready to cut their checks. We will start reaching out to the other ones that we have not heard from this week. Greg would like Tim to reach out to the tough ones first, like Walgreens and the apartment building by the river. Tim explained that the school would be reviewing theirs at their meeting tomorrow.

-Harvey Swell Project: Tim advised the board that the lining of the culvert is not self-mitigating, it wasn't NH Fish & Game, it was Fisheries, inside of NH Fish & Game, and it came out by way of permit. So, when the wetlands permit came out, DES got it, Tim had called NH Fish & Game, and they had said there would not be an issue. Sue asked what "self-mitigating means?" Tim said, "it helps take care of itself, it doesn't get worse, it allows the fish to pass as they are supposed to." Tim explained what they want is a dirt bottom, not a culvert because it is not a dirt bottom. For the town to do that there are two major issues, one is we throw out everything we have done so far, which is in the final plans and then start over with doing the whole process over: the planning, work to be done, etc. The fact that if we do the open bottom bridge, our twenty percent is going to be in the ballpark of \$300,000.00. If the town just pays the fine, it is \$30,000.00. Tim called Trout Unlimited, and they were understanding. Sue asked, "so you can't put in the culvert and then line the bottom with gravel." Greg said, "no because you are decreasing the

amount of water flow through the culvert for one thing.” Tim said, “Trout Unlimited said just the liner would be decreasing it.” Greg explained the flow of the water and how it drops, and how the fish can’t take a break. Tim said, it either stays the way it is now, as a red listed bridge not helping the fish at all or we make it better with the riprap and everything else. Sue asked Tim if he had it in writing that the fine is \$30,000.00 or can we all of a sudden get a surprise one million dollar fine? Tim said no, and that they would have to have the fine in place before they approve the wetlands permit. Greg said his question to NH DOT would be, if we went this route, how many years until this is back to a red listed bridge again? Does it have the same life span as the other way, in the past fish passage was not a criterion for a red listed bridge. Tim said, in talking with NH DOT they did say, we are here for you, towns, whichever route the town wants to take, we are good with. NH DOT has the money set aside. Discussion ensued. Tim will talk with NH DOT about Harvey Swell.

-Pleasant Street Bridge Project: Tim found out that the first year it is about ninety thousand, the second year is one hundred and ten thousand, the third year is when we can get reimbursement for the first three years and the town would get reimbursed with the first two and the third year, get reimbursed our eighty percent, which is two hundred and sixty-six thousand. Then the fourth year is construction and with construction, we can put in every month for reimbursement. Sue asked, right now what do we have for a claim in for Bear Rock Bridge? Tim just talked to Melanie, and she just put in a reimbursement for that. Sue said, “when we signed the contract with AB, the state sent us \$286,132.00.

-Kearsarge Lease: Tim advised that this was brought up at Town Meeting. Instead of reading through the whole lease, Tim called Kearsarge, and they said yes, that they will return the solar site to the exact same condition as it was when the town took on the lease, with the exception of wear and tear. They gave Tim the exact paragraph and line where it said this in the lease. Sue asked, do we need something in our agreement with them talking specifically about decommissioning and putting money aside into a decommissioning fund? Tim said, “they said they were removing everything, and they were putting our property back to the way it was.” Tim said it is already in agreement that way. Sue said we have not approved of the agreement yet. Tim said no, but we have approved the study.

-Utilities Meeting: Tim advised at the last utilities meeting Consolidated had an issue with someone new being brought into management that hadn’t been there before, and they started looking at the project and said, “this could be a lengthy project for us and Tim said, hold off we are ten years into this program and the last couple of years we have been discussing that we are planning on doing this on this date, etc. He said, we are going to do everything we can in our power to make it work, but it could be lengthier than what we are currently planning to do the consolidated portion of moving it underground. Consolidated is going to work up a schedule. Josh said NH DOT is not very happy. Consolidated is going

to get their schedule to Josh and NH DOT so we can look at it. They are scheduled to start this summer. Ray asked, how long extra is consolidated talking about? Tim said he said he is going to make it a priority, but it could possibly take them a year to do their portion. Greg said, if they can get their conduit underground and get the cable into the underground conduits, the time is to splice the ends. It is all night work because they can't interrupt daily business. Discussion ensued.

-Corliss Lane: Tim sent out a letter to all the owners of property on Corliss Lane because in the past they have put winter sand piles on the side of the road and in consultation with the Attorneys, that is a safety hazard, if anyone hits one of them, it could cause damage to vehicles, can send a car off into the road, send a car into someone riding a bike, etc. It is against the law to do this. There were two individuals that were not happy. By statute, if an ambulance comes by and you need to pull over, you need to be able to.

-Letter from LA Drew: Tim received a letter today from LA Drew concerning the Clark residence. Tim advised he recently heard back from the only family member that was interested in the property, and they are not interested at this time. Tim was advised by our attorneys that Estate Recovery is tough to work with, they have money that they have given to whomever, and they like to get their money back. The lien process is about three years out, the other process is you have to go to every heir that could possibly have a say and have them completely sign off saying they are not interested. The hard part is you have to get Estate Recovery to say we'll waive the \$16,000.00 and give this to the town, if the town is willing to clean up the property and make it a park. The Town could try to get a grant to do this through mitigation because the property is on the river. Sue asked, what is the \$16,000.00? Tim explained the \$16,000.00 is a lien that Estate Recovery has on the property. Sue asked why do they have this lien on the property? When the state issues people money under certain circumstances, they put a lien on the property. Ray had a question, Greg said, if we accept this property, we are accepting it with the lien on it that the town has to pay off. Sue asked how much is owed in property taxes? Tim said nothing, they paid up until he passed away. Ray asked if there was any way to negotiate this lien? Tim said if we can show them that the property is not worth what the lien is on it, and the town is willing to clean it up, and the town agrees to that, and the family agrees to that and doesn't change their mind after it is all cleaned up. Mr. Clark was one of twelve children and there are six surviving siblings, and any of their offspring are also in the mix. The property is about .5 acres. Ray asked if any of the relatives were interested in the property. Tim said one person was, but they are not now because of the lien on it. Sue asked how much we are going to spend on legal fees for .5 acres. Tim said the attorney is going to look at it and see what Estate Recovery says and find out what options are available to the town, and obviously every one of the family members would have to sign off saying they don't want it.

-Selectmen asked the lady in the audience if she wanted to speak to the Selectboard about anything. She explained her name was Maura Chappelle and that she just moved to Colebrook and she wanted to come to a selectboard meeting.

New Business:

- A. Water Rates: Tim had Melanie do a printout of what the town receives when the water bill is \$75.00 and then what it would be if the rate went up to \$85.00, if the bill were \$60.00 and went up to \$65.00, etc. Tim also did research on surrounding towns and figured it out as close to 7500 gallons, since that is what our rates are based on. Tim showed the board what Gorham, Berlin, Northumberland, Littleton, Errol, and Lancaster charge for their water rates. Discussion ensued. Sue will look at the report.

Old Business:

- A. John Cotnoir Status: Tim advised the board that the town cannot do anything with this property yet, they have to wait another week before they can actually take the property. Tim said he believes the time has lapsed, Tim thinks the town has given him notification and no movement has been made. Tim said the town needs to consider the proposal by the landowner.
- B. Close out of Bear Rock Bridge & NH DOT Claim: Tim is not sure if Melanie has submitted this yet or not. Tim said it was in the works; he told Melanie that she needed to get this done. Sue asked, so when Melanie submits, does the state come back and say the twenty percent you owe is twenty percent of x? Tim was not sure. He thought it might be in the Scope of Work.
- C. Bill Bromage Sale of Property: Tim said they hired someone that didn't last more than four weeks, and Lise Howson is back. Tim had a long discussion with her and read her the minutes from the original minutes from 1976. She said that during the merge they looked at all of the rules and guidelines that Colebrook Development had and there was nothing there about the Town of Colebrook getting the money from the sale. Tim pointed it out to her in the minutes. Lise had never seen or heard of this before but will bring it to her board. Lise explained to Tim that all the money they get from the sale goes into a revolving fund for the Town of Colebrook, that goes back into economic development and loans. She said they are not going to actually walk away with any money on the day of the sale, because they are providing the loan to Colin Finn for the sale of the property. Discussion ensued, and Ray would like Tim to keep on this with the Town Attorney.

- D. Rodney Smith Plowing: Tim talked to Rodney Smith about plowing. Rodney said he needed to plow so he could get in and out. Tim said but you are leasing from us and if you are trying to get in and out, you should not be billing us. The Town is not using the building, you are. Tim advised him to please not bill the town for plowing anymore.

Tabled/Pending Items:

A.

For Approval and Signature:

- A. Land Use Change Tax: Tim got four comparable properties so that the Selectmen could compare the properties to these, since we do not have an assessor. The two properties are:

-Dennis Bailey
-Kevin McKinnon

- B. Veteran's Tax Credit:

-Jeffrey Woods

- C. Intent to Excavate:

-Ronnie Rodrique

- D. Tax Abatement:

-Donald Dawson/Netafy: Mr. Dawson is saying his tower is assessed too much. He has two other towers that are the same size but assessed as less. The two other towers are in Columbia. Sue thinks that there is a tower at the County that is owned by Netafy.

-Dan Dagesse: Tim will talk to DRA and see how they want to go about this.

Hearing of the Public and Any Other Business:

-Maira Chappelle: She wanted to know how to get in the meeting or building after hours. The Selectmen explained that she needs to talk to dispatch at the window when she walks in, and they will buzz her in. She asked who replaced Ericka Canales, Tim said no one right now, it is back to Lise Howson. Maura asked the board when we take a house by tax deed, how long do we hold on to it, do we deliberately hold on to it for three years or are you legally allowed to sell it? Greg said the board goes by state law. Maira said, there are two ways on the state law. Greg said it depends, sometimes the town has to wait three years on a property, sometimes they don't. Maira asked, so you do take it case by case. Sue said yes, and as soon as the town acquires the property, they sell it. Maira then asked, how many acres does Colebrook require for a single-family house? Tim said, that is a Zoning Board question, if you go onto the Town Website and you go to Planning Board, it has all the Zoning Rules. Maira asked the board if they were familiar with the House Bills that want to change the zoning regardless of what town has put in place. She said SB 84 if it passes, it will say a municipality can't limit the acreage if it has no water or sewer and is

two acres or more. If it has water but not sewer, it is an acre, and if it has both, you have to say yes. Sue said, "we are not restrictive here." In the HB2 bill it says the NH DOT must sell a welcome center that is not on the turnpike. Sue said, the bill has not been passed yet. Moira wanted to know the selectboard's thoughts on this. What is in the bill this time is that they must sell the Welcome Center. They are saying until June of 2027, the staff can stay there. Greg said as a board we sit neutral. Moira then brought up the registering of vehicles in the state, Sue is definitely in favor of motor vehicle inspections.

-Greg wants to know what is going on with the Margaret Crawford property. Tim asked about it, and the board wants Tim to ask Melanie what the date is that the three-year clock started on that property.

-Greg wants to know about 65 Colby Street. Tim advised the board that he is following up with legal on this. He said when Heidi gets back, he is going to have her, have the Health Officer go over and do a walk through on it. Greg would like Tim to get in touch with Bill Smith on Edwards Street as well and tell him to clean up his property.

-Greg would like the ads to go out for winter sand, stone, and crushed stone out soon to bid.

-Sue would like to know about the Cooper Hill water line. Tim said it is all done. Sue would like a report on it. Tim advised that he got with Brian Sullivan on this and tried to figure out a way to get rid of the freeze, the problem was, once they dug out, the freeze line is below seven feet right now. Brian tried different ways to get the ice to move. He got the ice to move and the next day there was water bubbling up everywhere. So, the pipes from 1905 that are running underneath the road broke, so they went in and repaired it so that Route 3 didn't wash away. Ray said this is going on eight years now, it started at the former Weldon Brooks house, (Greg said that was a service line), then two years ago we had another just like two nights ago where there was a stream going down Cooper Hill, we had to dig it out and pay \$10,000.00 to patch it. We spent a lot of money on that. Tim said I can tell you there is about 250 feet of 1905 pipe that runs right down the middle of the southbound lane. Greg said the other line two years ago was in the northbound lane. Ray asked, so is this just going to continue? Tim said it could, unless we want to dig up all that 1905 piping. Ray asked, "Do we know when they are going to repave that area again?" Tim said, "isn't that part of the Main Street Project? Greg and Sue said no, that only goes to Beaver Brook. Discussion ensued.

-Sue asked about the water well, she said the last time we met, Tim was going to talk to Rene Pelletier about only testing one site. Greg said Tim was sick and we haven't got in touch with Rene Pelletier yet. Greg said they can try on Wednesday. Ray said he did not catch what they were talking about, Sue said on the water well project, we were looking at two sites, but they were going to call Rene Pelletier at NH DES to see if the results of the well test on the site in town produced enough volume, then did the town still have to test the well south of town, or could we save money. Ray said that last time he heard the town was contracted and was going to do it anyway. Greg said, that is what Jamie said. Tim said the other portion with Rene is they require two test sites done, so we could possibly get relief from that. Ray wants to know about the well

down near the Northern Comfort, does it need to be tested. Sue said we don't know yet because we have not got the results of the first well testing. Discussion ensued.

-Sue wants to know about the Housing Champion Program Agreement that the County wanted Tim to sign. Tim said he does not have any more information on this but received an email from Morgan at the county for Tim to sign it. Sue does not know what this is and neither does Tim. Sue would like Ericka Canales to come in and explain this to the board.

-There was an email exchange between Councilor Kenney, Senator Rochefort, and Representative Ouellet about our problems trying to find an Assessor. The Colebrook issue is currently pending before the BTLA. The next step is for the town to provide the BTLA with a copy of the RFP issued for assessing services and the number of responses received, if any by April 1st. Tim advised that this has already been done. The town attorney has given all this to BTLA. Discussion ensued.

-Sue said, the last communication the town got from Jason Beaudet at CMA said he is waiting for Amendment #3 for the Main Street Project. Greg believes it is awaiting approval at NH DOT.

-The Town is updating their Hazard Mitigation Plan, Sue wants to know who should be going to those meetings. Greg feels that Heidi should go to the meetings. Sue liked meeting in person because you can see the maps and meet people in person but all meetings will be virtual this time.

-Sue wanted to know how the meeting with Greg Cook from UCVH went that Tim had regarding our payment in lieu of taxes. Tim said it went great, and they agreed to \$5,000.00 every year, they just can't do it this quarter. Sue said it should be more than \$5,000.00 and they need to pay the town for 2024 & 2025.

-Sue asked Tim if we had gotten the refund from Eversource yet for the LED lights? Tim said he would have to follow up on that.

-Sue asked Tim about the status of our UV Building claim for when the building burned. Tim said he had been in contact with Primex this week and he is getting them everything they need. Greg asked where we were with the temporary UV Building? Tim said it is here; they are just waiting for good weather. Greg said on that road (Lynch Road), the town lost another chunk of road there, due to high water.

-Sue would like First Quarter financials as soon as possible since the board has not received any financials yet this year. She reminded the board that the first quarter ends today. She would like a Revenue & Expense Statement.

-Ray would like to know about tax liens, Tim does not have that information for today's meeting. Ray would like to go over the Charitable Exemptions at a Selectmen's Meeting, Tim said he has a folder of all the exemptions if any of the board members want to come in and look at them. Ray wants to know about payment plans and how people are doing. Tim and Dottie looked over the

payment plans and sent letters to people that were not paying enough, and those people were asked to pay a little more so that they could make some progress on their bills.

-Ray brought up an email regarding endpoints. He was confused by the email. Tim explained that when some of the endpoints don't work, we are changing them out to new ones. One of the reasons is we were making abatements for endpoints that were not reading correctly. Ray would like to know how many endpoints need to be done.

-Ray would like the town to work with Joe Kenney on the assessor issue, Ray said he is willing to fight for us, he is not happy with DRA. Tim said, all the assessing firms are aging out, there are no new people learning this trade or being trained. DRA is aware that this is happening, and they know that at the end of five years, they will have to come up and do our assessment, unless we find an assessor. This is also happening in the southern part of the state. Tim got together with nine other towns to try to get an assessor, but none of the other towns responded. Discussion ensued.

Non-Public Session Under RSA: 91-A:3, II (c): none

Determine Date for Next Meeting: April 14th, 2025, at 1:00pm.

Adjourned: Sue made a motion to adjourn, Ray seconded the motion, motion passed to adjourn meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 7:23pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Lawton, Administrative Assistant, Town of Colebrook