

SELECTMEN'S MEETING NOTES

SEPTEMBER 18, 2019

Called to Order 6:00 pm

Present: Selectmen: Doug Baston, Melissa Spinney, Greg Shute; Members of the Public: Ralph Hilton, Jeff Spinney, Mike Trask, David Abbott, Debra Brown, Carrie Kipfer, Ira Michaud, Tom Abello, Seth Hagar; Press: Jessica Clifford; Clerk: Liz Brown

New Business:

Edgecomb Eddy---Report on school

Edgecomb School Committee Chair Tom Abello and Edgecomb Eddy School Principal Ira Michaud were at the meeting to give a report. They are very happy to have both Alna and Westport students at their school. They have 11 from Alna and 6 from Westport. We are in the 2nd year of a 5-year agreement. There are no capacity concerns at the school now, but Ira will investigate what the physical capacity of the facility is.

Upcoming Plowing Season/Plowing Committee Suggestions----Seth Hagar

David Abbott refreshed for the selectmen the results of the Plowing Committee that he chaired earlier this year. The biggest issue seemed to be the amount of salt being used. Salt is very expensive. There are also citizen concerns that our sand is going out of town to Newcastle roads. The committee thought this was a perception issue, not a real issue; but that perceptions are important. Seth Hagar attended the meeting and the selectmen discussed these issues with him. Seth said the trucks turn around at safe and logical turnarounds, which are not right on the town lines. They aren't crossing over into Newcastle and sanding Newcastle's roads with our sand. That means, for example, that a Newcastle truck may sand and salt all the way to the corner of the Sheepscot Road and 218, because that is where they turn around. Trucks do fill up with sand at our shed before a major storm or if they are going to be coming back to sand later. People may see that truck cross over into Newcastle, but that is because it is headed back to the shop where all the equipment is based and will later leave from there to plow Alna roads.

The selectmen said that it was felt that 18 loads of salt (this was last year's) was excessive. Seth said the hills and intersections get straight salt, per prior directions from the town. Last year the town office parking lot also got straight salt. Selectman Baston asked where he felt extra salt was needed. Seth said at minimum the intersections and hills are key, and hills both ways. They do a salt run at the end for all roads. The new town office's driveway and parking lot will not get the salt this year as it is gravel, but the fire department parking lot will still get it.

Seth said that he needs the selectmen to understand and support the plowing/sanding/salting practices so that they can help explain them to citizens. He says his company is here to serve our town and will do whatever we ask. If we want to experiment with using less salt on a main road – like 218 – then we need to make sure the citizens know what we are doing and why.

Part of the issue is changing expectations by the public. When everyone had two-wheel drive sedans there was the expectation that you would need to drive slower on snowy days. Now people have heavy SUVs and trucks and expect to be able to travel at normal fair-weather speeds.

The selectmen also talked to Seth about shoveling the ramps and emergency exits of the new town office. The back outside double doors open in so they do not need to be shoveled.

Salt & Sand Building Road Update

Selectman Baston gave an explanation about the problem of drainage to Seth Hagar. Seth will get with Jeff Verney to find out where it's best to put the cuts in the snowbanks to try and divert runoff away from Deb Brown's property.

The selectmen had asked the town's attorney for an opinion concerning the town's obligations on the Sand Building Road. Her formal reply by letter supported the selectmen's position that the town's obligation is no more (and no less) than any other easement-holder's obligation on this private road. She cautioned against setting a precedent by the town contributing more than we should to maintenance. To date, the town has paid all maintenance on that road.

Jeff Verney's rough estimate is that it would cost about \$2,500 to clean the ditches out and put a culvert in. That would probably address some of the drainage issues. That would be \$500 for each of the five easement-holders to pay. No property owner can be forced to pay a share though. The selectmen said that the town is willing to put in its \$500 share if the other parties can come to an agreement. Selectmen Baston agreed to write to the parties on behalf of the selectmen to this effect.

Other—Hagar

Seth was asked to give an estimate to pave a 30-foot strip in front of the town office. Jeff Verney also asked him what he thought was the best thing to do about the Cross Road. He thought shimming and paving it would be the best. He will give an estimate. He will also figure the estimate using a mill, as that is what the state uses. Jeff Verney and Seth Hagar will meet the first part of next week to see what needs to be done.

Tax Acquired Property

The town has tax acquired property (R06-059) across from the dry hydrant on the Rabbit Path. It has a gravel driveway and turn-around and would be perfect for a parking lot for those using Pinkham Pond. The selectmen would like to have an estimate from Jeff Verney on a brush head clean-up of the site.

The selectmen will bring it up in March to see what town residents would like to do with it. Jeff Spinney volunteered to mow it.

Selectman Shute thinks there is possible boat launch money available from the state. He will check on it.

Old Business:

Old Town Office Sale Update:

The closing is scheduled for tomorrow.

ConnectME Grant/Tidewater Update:

We were able to sign up the required number of Tidewater fiber internet customers so the project will go forward. Tidewater has advised the town of their construction schedule.

Head Tide Dam Update:

The contractor is out of the river and ahead of schedule. The start of the viewing platform was put in place. They are working on stabilizing the side. Some adjustment to the walkway to river is needed but they are working on it. They will be back next week to wrap up all the work. More old artifacts were found. One abutment had a date on it. Chris Cooper has been really involved with plantings, including a Sweet Gum. The project completion date is hopefully near the end of October/beginning of November.

Public Comment:

Selectman Baston talked to Ron Lear at the Wiscasset Transfer Station about his thoughts on changing the funding formula for the three towns. Ron is thinking about proposing a pay-by-the-bag system and wondering what people think about it. It is fair, but there was general concern that it might lead to more illegal dumping. The selectmen would like to hear what Alna citizens think.

Meeting Adjourned: 7:24 p.m.