



**SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES
OF DECEMBER 9, 2024**

Members: Don McDowell, Christopher Palermo, Laura Streets, Richard Craig, George Cormier

Absent:

ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Brent Raymond, Town Manager; Judi Alberi, Executive Assistant; Elizabeth Townsend, Human Resources; Tina Sweet, Finance Director

PARTICIPANTS/GUESTS: Mason Kemerer, Martin & Laura Green, Jerry Throne, Tom Cloutier, Jamie Jaret, Jeff Elbaum, Jasmine & Ryan Farrell, Brian & Carey Yeaton, Maggie Cleary, Kent Hedberg, Tony Cote*, Cari Varner*, Mariah Stokes, Alison Link, Joe Gardner

**participating via Zoom*

6:30PM - CALL SELECTBOARD MEETING TO ORDER

Don McDowell called the Selectboard Meeting to order at 6:30 PM at the Tegu Building.

6:31PM - AGENDA CHANGES/ADDITIONS

None

6:33PM - NEW BUSINESS

1. Continuation of Manager's proposed budget discussions

a. Summer Camp discussion - Elz Townsend, HR Director

Don McDowell, Chair, received emails and communications via Front Porch Forum regarding the proposed budget discussions. Most of these have been respectful, but there has been misleading dialogue that erodes communication. Budget cuts have been spread across all departments and not just the library. The EMS department has cuts to personnel and equipment, including a defibrillator. The Highway Department has plans to cut staff and equipment, with no sidewalk repairs or paving projects. The Fire-House is so inadequate that it requires custom-built, more expensive firetrucks. The Police Department is too small for the staff. The cells are so unusable to house prisoners that it requires two police officers to drive them to St. Johnsbury. The insufficient staff necessitated overtime. The Town Government has cut salaries and the Noyes House maintenance has been delayed. The Tegu building needs a new roof and better security, which will not be done this year. The Pleasant View cemetery and the library budget have been reduced. All of these budget items equal \$700,000.

Elz Townsend, HR Director, explained the decision to discontinue the Summer Camp due to staffing shortages and liability concerns. There is a significant shortage of qualified counselors. This is a national trend for the 25/26 year. This recruitment problem has resulted in struggles to meet desired child-to-counselor ratios of 1:10 or less. This impacts camper safety and program quality. There is a statewide shortage of lifeguards. Activities in the water are very popular, but without lifeguards, there will be a diminished ability to provide adequate water safety supervision. Our program is unlicensed and

operates seasonally. To offer a full summer program leaves inadequate time for training staff. The 2024 Program had a \$23,147 deficit. The program was not self-sustaining as planned. High operating costs and insurance premiums were due to the program's high-risk nature.

Selectboard comments: Laura Streets added that there are liability issues and high risks to the children's program without trained counselors.

Chris Palermo suggested other towns may let our children join their programs. However, at this time, no other towns were available for this. Richard Craig thinks we should have a recreation program. However, it's complicated. George Cormier would like to find a way to structure the program for less. Don McDowell asked for other alternatives.

Community comments: Many people were upset about losing Summer Camp and thought it was important. One comment stated that much was heard about risk but not about the community. Another commented that Summer Camp was cheap child care for working parents. A suggestion was offered to identify grant funds for the program. One person suggested putting the issue on the ballot for the town's vote. Another suggested cutting the program rather than eliminating it. Two people spoke against cutting the library's funding.

9:00PM - ADJOURN

Motion made by Richard Craig to adjourn. Motion seconded by Laura Streets. Motion carried. (5/0)

Meeting adjourned at 8:03 pm

Submitted and filed this 12/9/2024.

Bonnie McDermott, Scribe

Please note all minutes are in Draft form and are subject to approval at the next Selectboard meeting.