

**Town of Sumner - Select Board Minutes
April 25, 2023 6:00 pm**

The meeting was called to order by Haxton at 6:04 pm.

Reading of the minutes from April 11, 2023, were read by Haxton and approved with a motion by Stewart, seconded by Munroe and so voted.

Members present: Kelly Stewart, Mary Ann Haxton, Don Munroe, Shawn Corson, Sherry Sullivan, Laurie Arsenault

Public present: Cynthia Norton, Bill & Cheryl Savage, Lori Hand, Matt Sullivan, John Roberts, Andrew Wickson, Gail Eastman, Matthew Turcotte, Richard Estes, Tina Leitzel, Warren Leitzel, Joel Chapman, Kristen Chapman, Staci Wallingford, Jesse Wallingford, John Guy, Chris Tripp, Matt DeMillo, Brian Bullocks, Marcia Turcotte, Doug Fournier, Mike Henderson, Bob Stewart

Warrant #16

Checks	15022 – 15025	\$82,651.21
Receipts	1637 - 1700	\$42,039.37
2022-2023 Tax Collected	\$1,280,721.39	86.80%
2021-2022 Tax Collected	\$1,250,886.36	86.50%

Open Session:

Sullivan stated that the Sump Tightness Testing had been completed, the mechanicals of the test follow state regulations however the Town needs to complete weekly walk-through inspections and have a certified AB Operator employed with the town to log the inspection. Sullivan will set up a training course for Corson through ME DEP Think Smart for certification.

Wallingford expressed concern surrounding a series of rumors that are circulating. Wallingford stated there has been question regarding misappropriation of funds in the fire department. All residents in attendance would like to confront the rumor. Haxton and Munroe stated that the misappropriation of funds is a speculation at this time and has not been received as a formal complaint, therefore will not be discussed.

Robert Stewart, Sumner Volunteer Fire Chief, and Kelly Stewart, interim secretary to the Sumner Volunteer Fire Department and member of the Town of Sumner Select Board, submitted a letter of resignation from the Sumner Volunteer Fire Department. Haxton noted that Robert Stewart had not signed in agreement on the letter of resignation. Robert Stewart signed the resignation letter in agreement below Kelly Stewart's signature.

Robert Stewart stated he is resigning as Fire Chief after twenty-five years of service, eighteen of which have been Fire Chief. Robert Stewart stated he has not stolen or hidden equipment. Robert Stewart stated that he has passed out things like batons and mace purchased from Admiral Fire Safety to protect fire department personnel and town office personnel from crazy people. Robert Stewart stated that \$11,000 in operations and \$15,000 in equipment is not enough money to complete testing every year. Robert Stewart stated that after the funds are used there are no funds left in the budget for a truck because years ago funds were set aside to purchase a new truck, it did not add up to enough and the truck fund was spent.

Warren Leitzel asked Robert Stewart, why would you resign? Robert Stewart replied he is tired

of feeling like the bad guy- now there are only seven members in the department.

Mike Henderson, new member of the volunteer fire department and former Fire Chief of West Paris, stated that equipment testing should be completed annually. Some equipment has not been tested since 2004 and 2019. Henderson and Brian Bullocks, assistant Fire Chief, have requested Safety Works to do an audit of the equipment. Henderson stated that the fire department is out of service by law at this time due to lack of compliance.

John Roberts and Andrew Wickson, former members of the Sumner Volunteer Fire Department, stated they previously resigned because they did not feel safe operating equipment and were not provided proper protective gear. Roberts and Wickson articulated their unease to the attention of the Fire Chief, Robert Stewart, and select board member, Kelly Stewart, at several fire department meetings at which time they did not receive a response to remedy the concern.

Cynthia Norton, former town office staff of approximately forty years, stated there was never a concern addressed by the fire department at a select board meeting.

In response to Norton, Sullivan made comment that the head of department and select board member involved in the fire department should have immediately addressed the lack of compliance, especially if regarding inadequate funding, at a select board meeting. These officials were elected to their positions and took an oath to uphold a level of accountability to the town.

Haxton noted that the vacancy of Fire Chief was to be filled on a temporary basis until the following fire department meeting, Thursday, April 27, where the members will hold a vote for new fire chief. Haxton moved to appoint Doug Fournier as an interim Fire Chief until the May 9 select board meeting, Munroe seconded, and the vote carried. Brian Bullocks will notify the select board of voting results and Sullivan will put the notification on the agenda for May 9. Fournier stated that Brian Bullocks will act as assistant fire chief.

Doug Fournier voluntarily took the Fire Department out of service until the appropriate testing has been completed to become in compliance with the state. Haxton made a motion to place the fire department out of service until the appropriate testing has been completed, seconded by Munroe, and so voted. Gail Eastman, President of the Ladies' Fire Department Auxiliary, became concerned with the fire department being out of service and offered to assist with costs to become compliant. Sullivan commented in response to Eastman that invoices and previous spending habits should be reviewed before additional funds are available to the department.

Staci Wallingford asked the fire department members, what can be done to maintain state compliance? Haxton requested budgetary information that details costs specific to annual maintenance, proper protective gear, and state regulation testing, to be completed prior to May 9.

Haxton stated that concerns have been raised from select board members, Mary Ann Haxton and Don Munroe. These concerns will be addressed but cannot be discussed until further investigation has been conducted. Due to the nature of the concerns, Haxton and Munroe are holding an additional select board meeting on May 2 at 1 pm, at which point the select board will enter two executive sessions.

Executive Session #1:

To conduct an executive session, pursuant to 1 M.R.S. section 405(6)(E), to consult with legal counsel concerning the Selectmen's rights and duties relating to complaints received regarding a public official and an appointee.

Executive Session #2:

To conduct an executive session, pursuant to 1 M.R.S. section 405(6)(A), relating to: (a) complaints received regarding a public official and an appointee; and (b) a possible investigation

of said complaints.

Haxton stated that Robert Stewart is invited to participate in the second executive session pursuant to 1 M.R.S. 405(6)(A)(2). Haxton stated that Robert will not be permitted to attend the first executive session given that it is for the purpose of consultation with legal counsel and such sessions are reserved for Board members only pursuant to 1 M.R.S. 405(6)(E). Haxton stated that given the apparent conflict of interest presented by the circumstances here a determination will be made as to whether Kelly can attend the first executive session.

RSU #10 Report: Joel Chapman

Chapman reported that RSU has been working to finalize their budget. Initially the budget was increased by twenty percent. Chapman and other representatives advocated for budget cuts and have reduced the increase to less than five percent overall, with Sumner absorbing only absorbing less than one percent increase, most of which accounts for the rising cost of utilities and an increase of personnel for students who require additional support. Chapman provided budget documentation and advised that the final budget would be voted at the next meeting. The meeting will be held on May 1 at Buckfield Junior-Senior High School.

CEO/LPI Report: Fred Collins

Front Street Site Visit Update – Sullivan stated that an update has not been provided by Collins regarding the status of Front Street. A follow-up will be requested at the next Planning Board Meeting on May 2.

Roads Report: Shawn Corson

Corson advised that limited road weight posters have been removed. Corson is currently prioritizing Gammon Road by having trees and debris removed from both sides of the road. Joel Chapman is completing the removal. Corson advised that wood will be left alongside the road and is available to property owners as needed, otherwise it will be removed at the end of the project. Chapman requested flaggers of road guard near the swamp for safe passage. Corson will be onsite and assisting Chapman. As the weather clears in the upcoming week, Corson will operate the grader on Gammon Road. He stated that a second operator may be needed.

Black Mountain Road work will begin the week of May 1. Corson is predicting a four-week completion time and does not anticipate and road closures.

A culvert on Redding Road will be replaced. The road will close for several hours. Corson will advise of date prior to for town notification.

Corson received the state bridge report for Twin Bridge and Andrews Road Bridge. All notation has remained unchanged.

Sullivan stated a salt bid in the amount of 1000 tons has been submitted and is waiting for budget amount to be returned.

ACO Report: Shawn Corson

Corson has received two calls since the last select board meeting. He transported four kittens to the animal shelter. Corson does not want to continue as animal control officer. Sullivan stated we will post notice for an animal control officer if anyone is interested in applying.

Forms, Reports, Correspondence:

No forms, reports, or correspondence.

New Business:

FirstLight Fiber Internet Sign Up Event – Sullivan received a request from Paul Badeau to host a Fiber Sign Up event at the Sumner Town Office on May 16 at 5 pm. Fiber is available to all residents in town. Pizza, gear and other prizes will be available.

Old Business:

Updates on Broadband / Fiber – Haxton stated an arrangement with GWI has been initiated to provide more frequent updates regarding the status of broadband installation. At this time, Firstlight has installed fiber throughout most, if not all, of Sumner. GWI will continue its efforts and at completion will provide a second option internet option.

Cemeteries – Sullivan stated the record of cemetery plots has not been recovered and is requesting any resident who might know more information regarding the cemeteries to please contact the Sumner Town Office.

Outgoing ACH Payments – Sullivan is still working with Androscoggin Bank to create an outgoing ACH file for direct payment to eliminate check processing.

Upcoming events:

Scholarship Applications Deadline – April 30th

Budget Committee Meeting – May 9th at 5 pm

Town Meeting – August 8th at 6 pm

Haxton made a motion to adjourn the select board meeting at 7:33 pm with a second by Munroe, and so voted.