

**Town of Sumner
Select Board Meeting Minutes, May 13, 2025**

The Sumner Select Board meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Members Present: Jesse Wallingford & William Savage

Public Present: Jeffrey Coombe, Deb Frino, Susan Runes, Cheryl Savage, Bonny Bishop, Lori Hand, Sandra Farrar, Jodie Mauro, Amy & Shawn Corson, Staci Wallingford, Maryann Haxton & Marty Elkin, Bill Glass, Richard Estes, Nancy Newton.

Motion by Jesse Wallingford to approve the 4/22/2025 Select Board minutes, second by William Savage, voted and approved unanimously.

Warrant #41

Expenses: \$221,376.33 / Checks: 15953-15976

Receipts: \$35,216.47 / Receipts: 1851-1955

% of 2023 Real Estate Taxes Collected YTD: 97.2%

% of 2024 Real Estate Taxes Collected YTD: 88.7%

Budget Informational Meeting: Ms. Campbell asked if there were any questions regarding the proposed budget. Nancy Newton said she believed there was a previous discussion about leaving all town roads as dirt roads. She asked why this plan has changed and why her taxes are being used to pave Bonney Road. Bill Glass (Roads Committee member) explained that there are thresholds used to determine if a road should be paved (heavily used roads) or if it should remain as a dirt road. In the road budget for this year, not every road can be paved. Bonney and Gammon Roads are heavily traveled roads, so it was deemed a better investment to pave Bonney Road. Amy Corson said the intention was always to leave Bonney and Gammon Roads paved. Ms. Newton said it was supposed to be done in sections. Shawn Corson said it is not cost effective anymore to pave in sections. The amount of money in the proposed budget for roads will cover the paving of Bonney Road. Ms. Newton asked if the amount for next year will increase. Mr. Corson said they are hoping to keep it about the same next year. Sumner is not using a bond to cover the cost, but instead we are paying as we go, provided the budget passes at this year's town meeting. If not, the town will pave what they can. If we elect not to do road maintenance, as the townspeople have elected not to do in the past, then we know what the consequences are. This year the plan is Bonney (base), next year is Bonney (final coat) & Gammon, and the next year there will be a couple of other major roads. The town is still paying for a bond for Tuell Hill, which will be paid off this year. Amy Corson said the price difference in paving a mile of road from 3 years ago to now has almost doubled. By delaying the repairs and only doing a little at a time, we are increasing the budget over time. Ms. Newton felt the town was going from one extreme to the other. If you go back through all these SB meetings, it was discussed to leave them dirt. Chair Wallingford said part of the reason that Bonney Road was brought to the forefront versus building other roads is that it isn't plowing well in its current state, so the roads committee voted to grind it and put paving as the next major repair. Cheryl

Savage asked if it would be beneficial to apply for a bond, since the existing bond will be paid this year? Mr. Glass said we cannot get a bond until our audits are up-to-date. The town recently hired a new auditor, so hopefully we can get caught up (we are still working on getting the 2022 audit done).

Maryann Haxton asked for explanation of items in orange on the proposed budget. Ms. Campbell said that the orange items are contracted obligations, and the amounts cannot be changed on the budget. Susan Runes reminded everyone that county taxes and school budget are going up every year (40% for county and estimated 9.3% at this time for RSU 10). Even if we didn't raise any more money for the roads, we would still be seeing an increase in taxes. Mill rate last year was 13 and will be estimated at 15. Chair Wallingford said that our percentage of the RSU increase is due to the ED 279, which means that because Sumner had a revaluation done in 2024, our percentage changed based on the value of our town.

Jodie Mauro asked what would happen if the school budget does not pass. Ms. Campbell said that the School Board will have to come up with a new budget. We vote on the school budget separately from our budget. Even though it is part of our taxes, we don't vote on that at our annual town meeting, so we won't have to redo our budget. Those present were encouraged to attend the May 28, 2025, Annual Budget Meeting at 6:30 at Mountain Valley High School Auditorium to vote the school budget down. Ms. Frino said that over the last 10 years Maine has dropped from in the top 10 of all states academically down to 50th under the current superintendent's tenure. We were probably only 10 or 15 Sumner residents shy of voting down the budget last year. Ms. Campbell reminded people that they can vote absentee for the referendum on June 10th being held in Sumner. Maryann Haxton asked if Kristen Chapman been given any information regarding impacts of federal government funding cuts. Ms. Frino said no one is sure at this point.

Open Session: Deb Frino – The Education Exploration Committee met on May 1st (minutes available) at Buckfield Town Office. There will be another one on 5/15/25 at the Buckfield Town Office. The meeting on 5/29/25 will be held at the Sumner Town Office. There are two people from Sumner on the committee. There is currently no one from Hartford on this committee. We continually review the purpose of the committee: Is it in the best interest of our communities' kids for us to withdraw from RSU 10, and is it in the best interest fiscally for our communities for us to withdraw from RSU 10? The committee is going through the school budget line by line and the RSU does not separate things out. For example, transportation is one lump sum. Ms. Frino said it took 2-1/2 weeks to obtain the correct number of school bus drivers for Hartford, Buckfield and Sumner. Mr. Glass asked if the committee had reached out to Peru as they have withdrawn from an RSU. Ms. Frino said they have been in contact with Dixfield to find out what worked, what didn't work, challenges, etc. They spoke with the principal of Dirigo Middle School who was involved in the separation process. He said the first 3 years were horrid, and now that they are 7 years out things are great. He said that they have invested in their kids, invested in their buildings, and they have saved enough money to build a bus garage. They have local control. They decided to pull out when RSU 10 said they were not investing in any of Dixfield's buildings. Ms. Frino said we cannot say to people that it will save us money because we don't know yet. However, her opinion is that it will be better to have local control over where

we spend our tax dollars. The Dixfield Middle School principal said when people in his community started to say, “this is going to be expensive” he told them “divorce is expensive.”

Ms. Frino said many members of the public attended a committee meeting, she asked Linda Andrews how she felt dealing with RSU 10 as opposed to when we were part of SAD 39. Her response was one word, “AWFUL.” Ms. Andrews said that when she taught for SAD 39, we had community schools. She taught 1st grade in Buckfield and said it was a community school, you knew the people in your neighborhood. RSU 10 divides teachers up into subjects. When Ms. Andrews was in SAD 39, the teachers could come from Hartford-Sumner Elementary School to Buckfield Junior Senior High School to see what her students were doing and vice versa.

We have two new members on the committee (Staci Wallingford from Sumner and Jade from Buckfield). Sandra Fickett is a Select Person in Buckfield who the committee is going to ask about getting a bus to go from this area to Rumford for the May 28th meeting. She is going to ask for a second bus if the budget is voted down to take residents for a second vote. Ms. Frino is hopeful that the committee can recruit people from Hartford.

There is a September deadline to get this issue on the ballot for November. Ms. Frino is not sure the committee will be ready as it is a long process. Right now, they are trying to figure out how many kids go to Regions 9 and 11, and what does it cost us to send them there and transport them. Lori Hand asked if there were any students going to Region 9. Ms. Corson said if there is a course that is not offered at Region 11, students can go to Region 9.

There was an article in the Sun Journal recently that a Lewiston State representative is proposing that the community no longer be allowed to vote on school budgets. We need to contact our legislators to tell them to vote no (Michael Lance & Joseph Martin). Mr. Wallingford said he spoke with Mr. Lance who said he will not be voting in favor of this proposal.

Discussion of whether the Nezinscot Region towns will have to buy back our schools and buses. Ms. Newton said they gave Dixfield back their schools, but they didn’t have to. Ms. Haxton asked if the RSU is aware of our intent to withdrawal. Ms. Frino says she believes they are aware. Discussion of ED 279. Ms. Savage said if the state dictates how towns are taxed, we should work to change this. Jesse Wallingford reiterated that if we do not have the backing of Hartford residents we will not be able to move forward with the withdrawal. Reminder that the next Education Exploration Committee will be this Thursday, 5/15/2025 at the Buckfield Town Office.

Planning Board Update: Jeffrey Coombe – The Planning Board approved one building notification on Butterfield Road. The PB has been working on a comprehensive plan questionnaire to be made available to townspeople. Forms are available at the town office, the post office, on the website and an email to Sumner residents who are on our email list. They will also be available at the town meeting on Tuesday, June 24th at the Hartford-Sumner Elementary School Cafeteria at 6:00 pm.

Fire Department: Doug Fournier – No report submitted.

Roads Report: Shawn Corson – Got the grader going, got the new motor and radiator. The weather is not cooperating, but we are gaining. We will have Barrows and Decoster Roads done tomorrow, and then all we have is the Bradeen Road and all roads will have been done once. Reclaim at the pit has been brought to Bonney Road for building up and shimming some places. There are two big rocks that Mr. Corson’s excavator cannot handle, so we need a bigger machine to pull them out. There are a few culverts to replace. He is focusing on Bonney Road to get that ready to go, so if the budget is passed, we’ll be ready. Chair Wallingford asked, when they gave Mr. Corson an estimate on pavement, if they would be able to do the work this year? He said they still had two times that they could fit this project into their schedule. Mr. Corson felt if the 3 miles were done at once the paving company would be more willing to find time this year rather than only 1.5 miles, hopefully in the middle of July/End of August. Mr. Wallingford asked if the road would be 18’ wide or 20’; Mr. Corson said 20’.

ACO Report: Brandon Holmes - April 2025: Sumner logged 10 calls and 243 miles of travel. Three animals were returned to their owners, two animals were taken to the shelter, no citations, or unresolved calls this month. We still have a couple of issues that are waiting on the district attorney and the court’s office, no updates.

RSU 10 Report: Kristen Chapman – Ms. Chapman was not able to attend tonight's meeting but asked Ms. Dulac to remind everyone that there is a regional budget informational meeting at 6:30 at Buckfield Junior Senior High School. The Annual Budget Meeting is on May 28th at 6:30 at Mountain Valley High School Auditorium (buses hopefully will be available to transport residents from the Nezinscot Region to this meeting). The referendum vote will be held in each town on June 10th from 8 am to 8 pm.

Forms, Reports, Correspondence: None

New Business/Old Business: None

Upcoming Events:

- May 19th Regional Budget Informational meeting at Buckfield Junior Senior High School at 6:30 pm.
- May 28th Annual School Budget meeting at Mountain Valley High School at 6:30. Sandra Fickett is working on getting a bus to transport residents. Further info pending.
- June 10th Annual School Budget vote at the Sumner Town Office from 8 am – 8 pm.
- Education Exploration Committee meeting on Wednesday, May 15th at the Buckfield Town Office.

Notices:

- The Board of Appeals has one opening
- The Planning Board has one opening for an alternate.
- Looking for members for a Comprehensive Plan Committee to update the current Comprehensive Plan, last updated in 2014.

- **The Select Board Meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 11th at 6 pm due to the vote being held on June 10th and the Annual Town Meeting on Tuesday, June 24th**
- Jesse Wallingford's seat is up for SB and has taken out papers for a new 3-year term. Mr. Savage has submitted his resignation effective 6/24/25, Jeffrey Coombe has taken out papers for Select Board for one year that will finish out Mr. Savage's term. Kristen Chapman and Sandy Williams have taken out papers for School Board. Anyone can also step up and nominate themselves at town meeting. Your name will not be on the ballot, but any resident can stand up and ask to be written in.
- Benefit for the Sumner Food Bank on June 7th (they are losing federal funds) at 5:30 pm. There will be a raffle in person and an online auction. Donations of fresh produce can be accepted at the food bank, just no canned produce. They have increased the refrigeration capacity by about 400% since the pandemic began. The food bank has accepted local donations of meat and produce with a disclaimer.

Motion to Adjourn:

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Savage at 6:48 pm, with a second by Mr. Wallingford, voted and approved.

Submitted by Norma Dulac, Select Board Secretary