



# MADBURY PUBLIC WORKS EXPLORATORY COMMITTEE

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## Approved

### OFFICIAL BUSINESS

**Minutes of:** December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022

**Meeting Convened:** 6:09 pm

**Members in Attendance:**

Mark Avery - Chair

John Bickford - Vice Chair

Eric Fiegenbaum

Anne Dickerson

John Steele

Richard Lipari - Alternate

Deb Ahlstrom

**Support Staff:**

Daphne Chevalier - Recording Secretary

**Meeting Attendees:**

Jim Davis

**Absent Members:**

Hugh Mercer - Alternate

Jay Moriarty

**1. Seating of Alternates**

Richard Lipari is seated as an alternate this evening in Member Moriarty's absence.

**2. Review of PWEC Website**

Member Fiegenbaum sent information via email to committee members regarding login instructions. He explains the recommendation is that if a committee posts minutes, they need to do so consistently. Chair Avery prefers to make the website public and if someone would like to have their contact information removed, they can contact him with that request. After a brief discussion, the general consensus from the committee is to open the website up to the public. Member Fiegenbaum says members can send to him any documents they'd like to see added to the website.

**3. Approval of Minutes**

**Motion** made by Member Steele to accept the minutes for November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022.

**Seconded** by Member Lipari. **Motion passes unanimously.**

**4. Correspondence**

No correspondence entered into the minutes at this meeting.

**5. Election of Board Secretary**

Chair Avery explains the role of the committee secretary. Alternate Member Lipari volunteers to fill that role, provided it is acceptable to the committee that an alternate take on that role.

**Motion** made by Member Fiegenbaum to appoint Alternate Member Lipari as secretary for the Public Works Exploratory Committee.

**Seconded** by Member Steele. **Motion passes unanimously.**

#### **6. Guest: Jim Davis on current Buildings and Grounds responsibilities**

Chair Avery invites Mr. David to speak. Mr. Davis highlights his history in his position and the current responsibilities he holds. He was originally hired in April 2014 to mow lawns, but his position has grown into two part time positions covering 40 hours a week. State regulations for the NH Retirement System prevent Mr. Davis and his colleague from working more than 32 hours a week. In the spring and summer, his primary duty is mowing; he mows about 27 acres a week and sometimes as many as 40 acres, as some athletic fields need to be mowed twice a week to keep the grass at the right height. As a result of how busy he is with mowing, the housekeeping tasks are not always able to be completed. In the fall, he is responsible for mowing as needed and fall cleanup. There are about multiple town properties covered: the cemetery, Tibbets and Demeritt Fields, the safety complex, the town common, the library, the fire station, the old library, the town hall, and a pump house out in the woods. Some of the projects he's been involved in include the following: replacement of heating system at the safety complex, ice dam and roof leak problems, solar project, roof problems at town hall, overseeing painting, building a new shed, and purchase of a truck. Mr. Davis feels this position could be a full time position if the town needed to replace him.

Member Steele asks about housekeeping; Mr. Davis explains this involves custodial services (cleaning). He has pulled in others to help complete the custodial work in the buildings.

Regarding budgeting items, the administrative line includes machinery repair rather than being charged to one particular building. Other items in that line include reaching out to contractors. Member Lipardi asks about building maintenance; Mr. Davis has replaced pumps driving our irrigation systems. Mr. Davis says there is not a Clerk of the Works position but a person on the ground who can be contacted during the day. Member Steele asks about long term projections for the capital fund to cover capital maintenance. Mr. David discusses how he does that planning as part of his 32 hour week. Member Steele asks if OSHA compliance training is part of his job as an employee for the town. Mr. Davis says moving ahead, safety training needs to be taken into consideration. He cannot have people under age 18 doing any of the work other than basic housekeeping tasks.

Member Fiegenbaum explains that as a volunteer firefighter for the town, Mr. Davis is called away from his grounds responsibilities to assist with the fire. Mr. Davis states his job doesn't involve the transfer station. There is a trailer that has given him the ability to move about town for grounds keeping, but he avoids driving on Rt. 155 with the machines when possible for safety reasons. Currently, the Moharimet Drive communal area is being maintained by the residents.

Regarding snow removal, the current truck has the potential for a snow plow. The parking lot at town hall and the safety complex snow removal is covered by a contractor. Mr. Davis plows the paths and a contractor plows the roads. Mr. Fiegenbaum says the town has a contractor who

mows the roadside areas. There are also some rough areas. The conservation committee does some mowing for wildlife.

Mr. Davis explains that in other small towns, the position he has is usually under public works. He is concerned about what to do with his current position and whether it should be under a public works director or under the highway department.

Regarding equipment, the town currently has a 1-ton pickup truck and 3 capital mowers (2 big field mowers and a small lawn tractor type between commercial and homeowner used for small buildings and the cemetery). Replacement costs are in the operating budget not the capital budget. These are big ticket items. Current replacement time seems to be 15 - 20 years. Mr. Davis purchased items from Scaggs out of Newfields and John Deere. When considering purchases, Mr. Davis has to consider not just the purchase price but how quickly repairs can be returned. He has found a better response from Scaggs than from John Deere. Another helpful piece of equipment is the cyclone rake, which breaks down the leaves so they will decompose more quickly and has enabled Mr. Davis to make soil over time. Another of his major functions is snow removal from the town hall roof; given the building's history of ice dams, he needs to rake the roof after every storm. The town is installing foam insulation, which should help with the ice dams.

Chair Avery reinforces the idea of OSHA safety trainings and the importance of being aware of OSHA regulations to protect the town from potential liabilities.

Mr. Davis does not apply pesticides or herbicide; he is not licensed, so he hires contractors for those jobs.

Member Steele asks if Mr. Davis has a bid process for the work he contracts out; Mr. Davis says the short answer is no. Mrs. Ahlstrom says there is no cap on the purchasing policy. They usually get two or three quotes and research potential contractors. Member Fiegenbaum says the town tends to lean toward hiring local contractors.

## **7. Review and discussion of supplied road and budget information**

Vice Chair Bickford shares his calculations for the costs if the town were to plow the roads and shares concerns that reaching certain roads can be problematic, as can identifying where to turn around. He states the mileage the town would be required to drive is more than the actual mileage of the roads (for example: Piscataqua Bridge Rd). Mr. Fiegenbaum says the town does not plow Class VI roads; the town mostly plows Class IV and Class V roads. Class VI roads are ones the town wants to maintain the right of way as an emergency lane but no plowing. Ms. Ahlstrom says Madbury currently has a four year contract for plowing. The committee discusses the amount the town is paying for snow plowing as well as the types of salt/sand applications on roads.

Vice Chair Bickford asks a question about the Capital Improvement Program title page about which amounts are appropriations or expenditures. Mrs. Ahlstrom explains what a capital reserve fund is and how that fund can be used to plan for the purchase of equipment and

machinery for the town. The committee discusses potential grants that may be available for cost savings for the town. The road budget is a big maintenance item and is part of the CIP. It is the expectation of the road agent that costs will increase. The committee discusses the different tasks associated with road maintenance and budgeting for those items.

Ms. Ahlstrom walks through how the road budget for 2023 came about: there was a discussion about what projects the road agent would like to see done next year, this year's projects and their costs were reviewed, they used those costs plus a 20% increase to estimate what the new projects would cost, and ended by with trimming that proposed number down by eliminating projects. This means the road agent is falling behind on his projects because there are some he can't do as a result of increased costs to the taxpayer.

Mr. Fiegenbaum reviews the Inclement Weather Road Maintenance Policy with the committee. Chair Avery says the increase in the cost of road maintenance is an order of magnitude greater than inflation.

#### **8. Research assignments/Next Step Discussion**

Chair Avery says the committee can work in smaller groups, but those meetings need to be open to the public and need to be noticed. However, asking factual questions and data gathering do not need to be done as a public meeting.

The committee discusses next steps. Chair Avery would like to have more information from the road agent about how the contracts are executed. Member Dickerson would like a points of comparison list of the items the committee is examining. Member Steele agrees it would be good to define the scope of what the committee is trying to solve. The Brookline Assessment was a good model for PWEC's work. Chair Avery says the committee needs to be able to compare costs to know what to bring to the voters. What would a full public works department look like? A hybrid model? The committee may also want to talk with the town about what plans they are using now to contract out costs. Vice Chair Bickford suggests not taking on too much all at once, as that could be chaotic. Instead, he suggests identifying the sore points and working on those first. Member Lipari suggests proposing multiple phases. Vice Chair Bickford asks if the committee should conduct a survey to see what the town's people would like.

Member Steele says the immediate need is to assess roads and road maintenance. Chair Avery states the transfer station is run by the road agent. One large concern is AJ Hartford aging out and no longer being available. Another big concern is the road agent retiring. Chair Avery mentions another option to consider is trash pickup as part of public works.

Member Steele suggests homework for the committee be to review the charter and become knowledgeable about what this committee wants to do. He wants to research if there are any other towns in NH or VT that contract out winter maintenance and make a list of potential available contractors in the area who would even be willing to take on a contract with Madbury. Member Dickerson says perhaps Madbury could partner with a nearby town (Durham or Lee). Member Steele says the state DOT doesn't have the staffing to assist Madbury. He spoke with Bill Belanger, Director of Operations for the Dover DPW, who said if Madbury partnered with

another municipality, that municipality would prioritize their own community first and Madbury would be last in line. Chair Avery said the committee could investigate the cost of a full time employee. He doesn't see how we can do our own plowing without having a full time employee. The Committee thinks a cost comparison between the cost of a contractor versus a full time employee would be useful information.

Member Fiegenbaum suggests committee members return with a list of all the tasks that might fall under a DPW and prioritize those tasks. Then, the committee can brainstorm what solutions might be out there and how flexible they are. Member Fiegenbaum wants to know how difficult it is for other towns to get extra plow people.

Chair Avery suggests taking a second look at the list of questions in the charter as well.

**Chair Avery adjourns the meeting at 8:17 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted by Daphne Chevalier.