



# MADBURY PUBLIC WORKS EXPLORATORY COMMITTEE

13 Town Hall Road, Madbury, NH 03823

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## Approved

### OFFICIAL BUSINESS

**Minutes of:** January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023

**Meeting Convened:** 6:05 pm

**Members in Attendance:**

Mark Avery - Chair

John Bickford - Vice Chair

Jay Moriarty

Deb Ahlstrom

Eric Fiegenbaum

John Steele

Anne Dickerson

Hugh Mercer - Alternate

**Support Staff:**

Daphne Chevalier - Recording Secretary

**Meeting Attendees:**

**1. Seating of Alternates**

All members present; no need to seat alternates.

**2. Approval of Minutes**

**Motion** made by Member Steele to accept the minutes for December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

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

**3. Correspondence**

No correspondence to enter into the record this evening.

**4. Discussion of Public Works Level of Service/Scope of Problem**

Member Fiegenbaum reviews a list of tasks that the Town's current contractors complete.

Member Steele says the scope of the problem seems to be roads, which would fall under the responsibilities of a highway department. Member Moriarty says the Town doesn't have a formal contract with the current contractor for small road tasks, but the Town hires him out for small jobs as they come along. Member Steele says maintaining trafficable roads in Madbury is the central problem, but given the amount of specialized equipment required for some of the roads tasks, it is unlikely Madbury will be able to maintain the roads without the use of a contractor.

Member Avery says the purpose of the committee is to provide the Selectmen with a recommendation for handling public work tasks in the future. The Committee discusses the

current status of small jobs completion in Town by AJ Hartford and options for how the Town may be able to complete those tasks once Mr. Hartford retires. The Committee is concerned about the lack of availability of contractors and the increasing costs required to hire them.

Chair Avery provides a history of public works in the Town; the current model has been used for quite some time. Is the Town comfortable with what we have or does the Town want more, understanding that will cost more money? He would like to see how the costs of contractors would compare to the cost of a full time employee.

Member Moriarty agrees the biggest single issue for Madbury is snow plowing. Member Steele says if the Town goes the route of hiring a public works director, the Town will need to find someone with a variety of skill sets, such as administrative and engineering. Vice Chair Bickford wonders if Madbury has a realistic set of projects for a public works director to address with an adequate number of resources and contractors. Vice Chair Bickford would like to see a history of the number of plowable weather events. He'd like to know how the plowing in Town currently occurs. Member Fiegenbaum reviews how plowing passes occur in the Town. Member Steele reviews general guidelines for how plowing typically works in other municipalities. Vice Chair Bickford says he estimates it would take just under 5 hours for a single pass. The Committee discusses that there may be some opportunities for reciprocity with the City of Dover.

Chair Avery believes where the Town gets their snow plowing from will likely determine which way the Town needs to move forward. Member Moriarty says plowing is becoming more expensive; contractors are requesting more hours at higher pay and with benefits. A 6-wheeler plow truck, the largest advisable to use in Madbury, currently costs about \$220k, and the Town would need to have a minimum of two trucks. There is also the need to consider what would happen if one of the plows breaks down. Member Steele says a full time employee could do some of the routine maintenance tasks during the off time in the winter, but the trick will be finding someone who is willing to be a jack of all trades. He suggests we could potentially contract out maintenance tasks to other municipalities or even companies like C&J Railways, which currently maintains the trucks for Rollinsford.

The Committee discusses what an operating budget for a public works might require and how that compares to what the Town currently expends for public works tasks. There is a discussion about reaching out to nearby municipalities, for example Lee and Dover, to see if they would take over a few roads in Madbury.

Member Steele suggests the Committee identify what the operating budget is and personnel requirements would be for a public works department and deliver that information to the Selectman. He further suggests the Committee incorporate the in-house equipment requirements needed to maintain the current level of service to the community. The Committee discusses the rising costs of CDL drivers.

Chair Avery says the next step is to collect figures. Member Steele says another task is to define the duty description of what a director of public works would do and to identify the resources needed for associated personnel and equipment costs. Member Moriarty says Barrington took

eight months to fill their public works position, and they paid a \$85k salary. Factoring in benefits, the Town is unlikely to find a full time public works person for under a \$100k cost to the Town. If Madbury takes over their own plowing, the Town will need to have a salt and sand storage shed and a building office capable of getting the trucks in if repairs are needed. The bulk of repairs would likely need to be done at a truck shop. A fuel supply and a loader to handle the salt and sand will also be needed. Member Moriarty says a used loader would suffice.

Member Steele wonders if there is a way Madbury could provide an incentive for a company to be here, perhaps by offering to rent land at a very low rate. Chair Avery says it might be good to think about what are some other ways Madbury could fund services without raising taxes. Member Moriarty thinks one option is to build the salt and sand storage sheds and a fuel depot and provide that as a service to contractors.

Member Fiegenbaum says the current level of service in Madbury is adequate, but sometimes the timing is not so great, sometimes being delayed due to maintenance issues or logistics.

The Committee discusses the next steps toward data collection, including the following information:

- Cost of full time employee, including a director and a worker or a dual director/worker.
  - Look at similar towns in the region to see what the salaries are and review a list of responsibilities for those people as well
- Contractor costs
- Equipment costs (Current contract calls for the following equipment: 2 6-wheeled trucks or larger with frame and wing setup with hopper/spreader for salt/sand;  $\frac{2}{3}$  yard loader, 2  $\frac{3}{4}$  ton or more pickup or utility trucks with snow plows, 16 ton grader, 180 yards of sand/salt)
- Facility costs - pole barn equivalent type structure
- Misc Tools costs
- Fuel storage costs
- Rubber tire Backhoe and Bucket (could be rentals)

Member Dickerson asks if there is any State money available for funding these types of projects. Member Fiedgenbaum says not for public works equipment or employees. The Committee discusses options for renting versus purchasing equipment such as an excavator or backhoe.

Chair Avery says to research a range of costs for a facility, but the Selectmen may prefer a 1-heated bay structure and covered storage instead of a multi-bay structure.

The Committee volunteers for research tasks to complete for the next meeting:

- Member Dickerson volunteers to work in a subcommittee to collect and organize the numbers.
- Member Steele will talk with neighboring towns, including Rollinsford, Lee, and Barrington, and look at job descriptions, equipment, and salaries to see what those towns have for resources. He will also look at options for buildings. Member Moriarty will help with this.

- Member Ahlstrom will bring in costs for benefits packages.
- Member Bickford will bring in information about potential contractors.
- Member Dickerson will review some of the data that Vice Chair Bickford pulled together and put together a working matrix.
- Member Fiengenbaum will review salaries from the State's municipal records.

Member Moriarty shares that Mr. Hartford would be willing to come in any time to answer any questions the committee may have. The Committee agrees it would be best to have Mr. Hartford attend the March meeting so the committee has time to generate a list of questions prior to his attendance.

**Chair Avery called the meeting adjourned at 8:16 p.m without objection.**

Respectfully submitted by Daphne Chevalier.