



## MADBURY PUBLIC WORKS EXPLORATORY COMMITTEE

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# Approved

### OFFICIAL BUSINESS

**Minutes of:** February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023

**Meeting Convened:** 6:09 pm

**Members in Attendance:**

John Bickford - Vice Chair  
Richard Lipari - Secretary (Alternate)  
Deb Ahlstrom  
Jay Moriarty  
Eric Fiegenbaum  
John Steele

**Support Staff:**

Daphne Chevalier - Recording Secretary

**Meeting Attendees:**

Susan Ossoff, Madbury resident

#### **1. Seating of Alternates**

**Motion** by Member Fiegenbaum to seat Mr. Lipari as an alternate for Mrs. Anne Dickerson this evening. **Seconded** by Vice Chair Bickford. **Motion passes unanimously.**

#### **2. Approval of Minutes**

**Motion** by Member Steele to accept the minutes for January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

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

Member Fiegenbaum states a correction to the information presented at the last meeting. There is public money available for fire or police, but he isn't sure if there is money available for public works.

#### **3. Correspondence**

No correspondence to enter into the minutes this evening. Member Fiegenbaum reports the website has been updated with new materials.

#### **4. Member Resignation and Replacement**

The Committee received a letter from Member Dickerson informing the Committee that she unfortunately needs to resign from her position. Vice Chair Bickford wants to thank her for her time. Deb says the Board of Selectmen would appoint an alternate. Mr. Lipari expresses interest in stepping in as a full time member if the Selectmen so choose.

## **5. Report of and discussion of members research**

Member Steele shares a report of how much the Town currently spends on public works costs. Member Ahlstrom says there might be some capital fund expenses embedded in those numbers. She thinks it might be good to include the appropriation amounts for capital improvements as well. The Committee will update the budget report as needed to accurately reflect current public works expenses.

Member Steele reports he was unable to get information about the costs of hiring a new contractor. He thinks sending letters from the Town to the list of contractors he provided would be advisable for the Committee to do its due diligence. He reviews a list of tasks that fall under the responsibility of a Public Works Department. He found that some of the items that were listed by the Committee as potential Public Works tasks were covered by other departments in small towns: transfer station operations, garbage collection, cemetery maintenance, ball field maintenance. Member Ahlstrom suggests adding facility maintenance, janitorial services, and facility management under the list of Public Works tasks. Based on the information Member Steele found as part of his research of comparable towns, he believes Madbury would need 2 full time and 5 part time employees to meet the Town's needs. He reports out on wage averages for both full and part time positions, as well as the facilities and equipment needed with associated costs. Member Moriarty reports that he found that a new 6 wheel dump truck with a plow would cost about \$220k. Member Lipari asks about the lifespan of a truck. Member Steele says if stored in a heated facility, along with routine maintenance, the Town can increase the longevity of the vehicle. The Committee discusses the various options for the types of facilities Madbury could have and the benefits and detriments of each option.

Member Bickford asks if the Town would need a contractor for maintenance. Member Steele says maintenance could be done by the dealership to keep the warranty effective. Member Moriarty expresses the concern that maintenance on snow plows may need to be done immediately at inopportune times, e.g. 3 a.m.

Member Steele presents an overview of Rollinsford's Highway Department, as Rollinsford is a good comparison for what Madbury would need. He then presents data for appropriations versus expenditures for both Lee (four full-time and four part-time) and Barrington (eight full-time employees). He believes that based on per mile costs, Madbury is in line with these surrounding towns. Member Ahlstrom doesn't believe Lee is including their benefits packages in the highway budget line. Member Steele believes a full benefits package likely averages around \$18k per employee. He reviews the budget for the Town of Brookline, but he doesn't believe Brookline is as similar to Madbury as some of the neighboring towns he reviewed earlier. He shares the town road mileage and population numbers for Barrington and Lee. Member Steele has a call out to the road agent in Strafford and is waiting to hear back.

Member Steele found that between \$14 and \$15k per mile is about the average cost.

The Committee discusses how to use the cost comparisons as guidelines for facts and figures and how best to present that information to the Selectmen.

**6. Generate questions for anticipated visit by Contractor Arthur Hartford during March meeting**

- How long does it take to complete a pass with the plows?
- How many hours do you put in?
- Can you provide a breakdown of hours you spend on the various tasks you complete (plowing, road patches, etc.)?
- What kind of equipment would Madbury need to take care of the plowing?
- Do you know of any contractors who would want to take on Madbury?
- What is your opinion about using land as an incentive for getting a contractor here?
- What would it take to extend your contract past 2025?
- What would you expect to see happen in Madbury when you retire?
- What are the challenges you foresee?
- What do you consider the minimum equipment necessary for Madbury?
- Do you know how we might be able to locate good drivers?

Member Moriarty expresses his preference for continuing to contract out for snow removal.

**7. Generate basic talking points on the PWEC for presentation at Town Meeting**

Member Ahlstrom encourages the Committee to consider the additional cost of administrative staff needed to support the options being presented to the Selectmen. The Town may need to hire an HR person to handle benefit packages, payroll, and similar tasks, which is something that Madbury currently doesn't have.

Member Ahlstrom says for the Town Meeting, the Committee should share an overview of what they've been doing: collecting data and identifying different options (all in-house, all contract, hybrid model).

Member Ahlstrom reports that Madbury is one of the only towns that still elects an auditor. These days, banks will not lend to Towns that haven't hired a CPA firm to conduct town audits. This would be another expense the Town would incur if Madbury were to take out a loan to fund a public works department.

Member Fiengenbaum suggests the Committee return to this topic at the next meeting. Member Ahlstrom says the Committee also needs to determine who will speak at the Town Meeting.

**8. Other New and Old Business**

No other business for the evening. The Committee discusses homework tasks to complete for the next meeting. Member Steele will look into building costs. Member Bickford will finalize the data he's been compiling and bring that in. Member Fiengenbaum will generate a letter to send to contractors. Member Ahlstrom suggests including a self-addressed stamped envelope to make it easier for them to respond. Member Steele suggests sending the letters certified to confirm receipt. Member Fiengenbaum suggests potentially including a postcard for ease of acknowledgement.

**Motion** to adjourn by Member Ahlstrom. **Seconded** by Member Fiegenbaum. **Motion passes unanimously.**

**Meeting adjourned:** 8:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Daphne Chevalier.