



MADBURY PUBLIC WORKS EXPLORATORY COMMITTEE

13 Town Hall Road, Madbury, NH 03823

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Approved

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

Minutes of: March 8th, 2023

Meeting Convened: 6:05 pm

Members in Attendance:

Mark Avery - Chair

John Bickford - Vice Chair

Deb Ahlstrom

Jay Moriarty

Eric Fiegenbaum

John Steele

Support Staff:

Daphne Chevalier - Recording Secretary

Meeting Attendees:

Steve Hoginski

1. Seating of Alternates

No alternates to seat this evening.

2. Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Member Fiegenbaum to accept the minutes as presented for February 8th, 2023. **Seconded** by Member Bickford. **Motion passed unanimously.**

3. Correspondence

No correspondence to enter today.

4. Meet with Contractor Arthur Hartford (tentative due to travel constraints)

Member Moriarty reported that Mr. Hartford could not be here this evening due to unexpected circumstances, but he would like to come in to speak with the Committee. Member Moriarty suggested postponing Mr. Hartford's meeting to the 12 April meeting and will reach out to confirm Mr. Hartford's availability.

5. Updates from last meeting's homework tasks per 8 Feb minutes

A. Letter to contractors (Fiegenbaum)

Member Fiegenbaum shared a copy of the letter he sent out to the twelve contractors inquiring about their interest in plowing for Madbury. He is hoping it could lead to other potential contractors if they are not able to take on the snow plowing themselves.

Mr. Hoginski asked if Member Fiegenbaum had reached out to Pike and Brock's in

Rochester. Member Fiegenbaum said he did send them a letter. Chair Avery suggested

posting the search on the town website or reaching out to other places to seek recommendations. The Committee discussed the last storm and how Mr. Hartford was doing additional tasks that are not part of his plowing contract (e.g. chipping trees); those are fees that get billed to the town separately.

B. Building costs (Steele)

Member Steele reported he spoke to contractors and builders and found the cost for building a facility averages about \$300/square foot. Much of the cost will depend on the size of the facility. He reported on a neighboring town who hired Great Northern to build their oversized facility with a salt shed, which came to about \$321/square foot. He stated a ballpark figure for a facility that would work for the next ten years is roughly \$1.5 - 1.6M. One town opted to buy older equipment and rebuild it to save money on the initial equipment purchase. Rollinsford purchased a multipurpose truck (side discharge under the truck), which allows them to do road shimming during the summer, which saved them money. Overall, given the costs to build and purchase equipment, Member Steele estimated about \$2.5M as a start-up cost for a public works department. He suggested it may make sense to put off buying all new equipment in the first year, instead starting with a new truck at first to offset the replacement cycle and balance out the costs. Member Steele reported the from what he could determine on the Build Back Better website and Senator Shaheen's website, it appears there is a USDA World Development Community Facilities Development Grant Program, which may potentially be a way for small towns to obtain funding under facilities development and emergency preparedness. The Committee discussed grant funding options, including a grant writing boot camp offered through the NH Municipal website, contacts at UNH, and contacts in the Brookline Public Works Department. Chair Avery suggested the Committee may need to consider where a facility could go. Member Moriarty said the old dump was not used for very long, so it is not very deep. Eric reported that people from the State consider it a covered site.

Member Steele reported he reviewed the State benefits page and it seems 14% of an employee's pay is matched and goes to cover benefits for regular employees. Ms. Ahlstrom thinks this might be the retirement portion only. Mr. Hoginski asked about the building behind the police station and if it could be used. Administrator Fiegenbaum said that property is not owned by the Town. He shared one possibility is the Town could haul away what is in the old dump site instead of monitoring it continually and use that site. Chair Avery suggested the Committee bring in a list of Town properties to the next meeting for review. Member Steele suggested the Committee work to create a list of costs for facilities, equipment, and compensation. He said a partnership with other nearby towns won't work; they're tapped and uninterested. The third option is talking with Mr. Hartford to see if he would continue to perform the service if the Town purchases the land and equipment. Member Moriarty doesn't recommend using Mr. Harford's site given the wetlands in that area.

Member Bickford asked if there is property available on Kingman Farm. Member Moriarty shared the land is not big enough and the house wouldn't benefit the Town.

Regarding the transfer station site, there is only one square area that's been used for a dump, so there is still quite a bit of land there. Member Bickford asked about the potential for purchasing a particular property on Hayes Road if the owner would be willing to sell. Chair Avery said salt storage can become an issue. Under Madbury's ordinances, government use is not required to abide by the ordinances, but his personal preference is not to go against the ordinances Madbury is asking its citizens to follow. The Board discussed a few different properties in town that might be worth exploring further. Administrator Fiegenbaum will bring in a list of Town properties for the Committee to review at the next meeting.

Member Bickford stated if the Town can't find a contractor, beginning the process of building a facility should be the top priority. Member Steele said it may take a few years before being able to open the doors on a facility (minimum of 2 - 3 years from start to finish). Member Moriarty said the days of cheap interest are on the decline. Member Steele suggested perhaps a government loan or grant can help facilitate this work. Chair Avery brought up the concern for how long Madbury would be able to hire a new contractor. If Madbury does manage to find a contractor, is that person a bridge contractor? That might give Madbury more time to use capital reserve funds rather than take out loans. If Madbury finds a contractor who is located quite a distance from town, Madbury will most likely need to offer facilities.

C. Plow Schedule and Road Maintenance Summary (Bickford)

Vice Chair Bickford shared his findings with the committee as reported in the Town of Madbury Road Maintenance Summary dated 2/14/2023. This reports on the equipment that Mr. Hartford owns and uses for his contracted work for Madbury. Vice Chair Bickford reported he went through all the 2022 invoices for labor and equipment for road maintenance and repairs outside of the snow contract. He reported on his process for data gathering and how he organized it into his report. The Committee discussed the large number of labor hours the mini-excavator used and how valuable that piece of equipment is. Chair Avery mentioned that in-house maintenance and training would also be required of a public works employee, a factor that will need to be considered in determining how many people would be needed for a public works department. Mr. Hoginski believes Madbury needs two full time people. Member Steele suggested maybe a couple of part time guys could help with the plowing in the winter. Chair Avery stated road work alone wouldn't pay for the employee; they would have to do some other tasks as well.

6. Continuation of potential additional admin staff costs and loan costs

Ms. Ahlstrom shared the Committee needs to be aware there is no HR or Accounting department for the Town. The administrative work is very part time. Madbury doesn't have any debt, which should be an additional consideration. Chair Avery stated there's no guarantee the town would vote to bond the project. Ms. Ahlstrom stated she has seen some municipalities using in-house software. She believes Madbury could probably find a vendor to do that work. Member Steele said the Town of Oxford, NH has done work on long-term cap planning. Perhaps that's a resource for the Committee. Chair Avery stated Town employees will also be a cost that

needs to be rolled into the Committee's recommendation. It could potentially have a larger effect than is the charter of this Committee. Ms. Ahlstrom wondered if there is the possibility for a shared HR department between multiple towns, but Chair Avery isn't sure there is a town geographically close to Madbury to partner with. The sub board is looking to put more money into the cap reserve. Currently there is \$200k in the capital reserve fund. Ms. Ahlstrom said there is another capital reserve to assist with the initial cost for Madbury's first audit (likely to be \$18 - 20k). Ongoing audit costs if Madbury bonds would be \$13k yearly in today's dollars. People are short staffed and it is hard to find people to do that work. Member Steele asked if a federal grant would result in additional audits. Ms. Ahlstrom stated there is a \$750k threshold at which point Towns are required to do a single audit. Chair Avery states these are all additional costs the Committee needs to consider if Madbury goes to bonding. The Committee discussed the pros and cons of bonding and how that would be received by the voters in Town.

Chair Avery said it might be good to consider which direction, either a road agent model or public works model, the Town should pursue and bring that person on board to help in the development of the public works department.

7. Review of Talking Points for PWEC Report at Town Meeting

Chair Avery shared a draft of talking points to share at the Town Meeting. He thinks the time to talk about this Committee may be when the warrant article to put money in the capital reserve is presented. Administrator Fiegenbaum suggested maybe the Committee could chime in to support the Select Board's recommendation to put \$80k in the capital reserve. Member Steele and Member Bickford are willing to stand up to address what the Committee is working on and its charter.

8. Other New and Old Business

Homework tasks for next meeting:

- Member Moriarty will call Mr. Hartford to confirm his availability to meet with the Committee
- Administrator Fiegenbaum will bring in a list of town land
- Administrator Fiegenbaum will conduct contractor outreach
- Member Steele will explore grant opportunities further.
- Administrator Fiegenbaum will touch base with MaryLee and CC Steel and ask where the Committee should be looking for grant assistance.

Ms. Ahlstrom shared Durham has had some luck with grant-funded projects and could be a good resource.

Member Steele asked at what point the Committee will be dissolved. Chair Avery said the Select Board didn't select a set timeline so the Committee is open to take the time it needs. If the Committee wants a solution that can be voted on in the next election, by November or so, Member Steele suggested submitting a progress report in July. Ms. Ahlstrom suggested using Town Meeting as an opportunity to inform the public about what is happening and the needs of the Town to increase buy-in as we move toward needing to take action.

Motion to adjourn by Chair Avery. **Seconded** by Member Fiegenbaum. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned: 7:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Daphne Chevalier.