



## MADBURY PUBLIC WORKS EXPLORATORY COMMITTEE

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# Approved

### OFFICIAL BUSINESS

**Minutes of:** April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023

**Meeting Convened:** 6:11 pm

**Members in Attendance:**

Mark Avery - Chair

John Bickford - Vice Chair

Deb Ahlstrom

Jay Moriarty

Eric Fiegenbaum

John Steele

Susan Ossoff, Alternate

**Support Staff:**

Daphne Chevalier - Recording Secretary

**Meeting Attendees:**

Arthur Hartford

#### **1. Welcome to New Members**

Chair Avery introduced the Committee's new member, Susan Ossoff, who joined the meeting as soon as she could get there from work. Hugh Mercer informed the Select Board that he is unable to make the meetings, so the Select Board nominated Ms. Ossoff to the Committee.

#### **2. Seating of Alternates**

No alternates were seated this evening.

#### **3. Approval of 8 March and 31 March Minutes**

**Motion** by Member Steele to accept the minutes as presented for March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

**Seconded** by Vice Chair Bickford. **Motion passed unanimously.**

**Motion** by Member Steele to accept the minutes as presented for March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023. **Seconded** by Administrator Fiegenbaum. **Motion passed unanimously.**

#### **3. Correspondence**

No correspondence was entered into the minutes.

#### **4. Meet with Contractor Arthur Hartford**

Mr. Hartford said it takes 2.5 hours to complete a plow pass on each side of town. That is an average; depending on the storm, it could take more time. It takes two loads of sand to get

around each side of town, for a total of four loads. Administrator Fiegenbaum asked if Mr. Hartford could provide a breakdown of hours he spends on the various tasks he completes. Mr. Hartford stated he does not include the required maintenance of the vehicles as part of the fee to the town. He said the equipment Madbury would need to support a Public Works is the same listed in his current contract. He mentioned Mike Fisk is interested in becoming part of the town crew and is a good welder. As far as using land as an incentive for getting a contractor to Madbury, Mr. Hartford doesn't think it will be cost effective because contractors will want a certain amount of money each year. Mr. Hartford plans to relocate at the end of his current contract and has recommended someone he thinks could keep the work going in his absence. Ms. Ahlstrom asked if Mr. Fisk wants to be a contractor for Madbury, and Mr. Hartford said Mr. Fisk may want to take over the business when Mr. Hartford retires. He stated Greg Ross may also be available to help Mr. Fisk with the work.

Mr. Hartford believes the biggest challenge for Madbury will be locating operators: finding the people and having the funds to pay their salaries and retirement funds. Mr. Hartford has been looking for years for people to do the job. He recommended hiring someone with welding and mechanical skills to fix the plows as they break, allowing the trucks to keep moving during a storm. Without someone in-house to fix the trucks, the Town could be without a truck for longer than is desirable. Member Moriarty said it is important for the Committee to recognize that there is a big risk if the town only has two trucks; if one goes down during a big storm, the Town would be in big trouble. Mr. Hartford recommended three trucks.

Mr. Hartford said the Town wouldn't need an excavator, as some of the jobs could be done with a backhoe. He recommended a rubber tire excavator if the Town needed something in the 50 lb range so it is easy to move around town. A rubber tire excavator could be used for culverts as well. It would save on needing a 20-ton trailer and a truck to haul it. He said Madbury might be able to get away without a grader. He recommends a 1-ton dump truck for small ditching, picking up wood, and hauling a chipper, which the town would want to own given how frequently they need to use one. Owning a chipper would allow the town to chip whenever they want to. The average cost of a chipper is about \$65k. Member Moriarty said the mini excavator seems to be used quite a bit. Mr. Hartford said it has been a huge asset, as it only closes one lane of the road.

Member Steele asked if the Town would be in the same situation it is now if it opted to hire another contractor. Mr. Hartford said if it would help the town, and if they could make it work financially for him, he would be open to considering another two-year contract. Mr. Hartford said it would probably take the Town up to ten years to get a Public Works Department up and running. He recommends not buying all new equipment at the start and staying away from International vehicles. He recommended a loader, a couple of trucks, and something to do grading as starting equipment.

Vice Chair Bickford asked about what kind of facilities the Town would need. Hartford said for the longevity of the equipment, the trucks should be inside when they are not being used. He recommends a minimum of a heated 4-bay facility. Member Moriarty said the Town would need at least one maintenance bay and a storage for salt and sand.

Chair Avery asked if there were any specialized tools the Town would need. Mr. Hartford said no. He recommended Harbor Freight tools as opposed to the expensive Snap-On Tools.

After Mr. Hartford departed, Chair Avery called for discussion.

Member Steele asked if, given Mr. Hartford's statements this evening, the Committee is obligated to speak with Mr. Fisk to see if he would be interested in the work. Member Moriarty said he will get more information for the next meeting. He said we need a little more information about what Mr. Fisk's ideas are. He doesn't believe the Committee should be negotiating a contract or recommending who to hire, as that is the Selectmen's responsibility. Though Mr. Hartford has expressed interest in selling the land to the Town, Mr. Moriarty said the land really isn't a great spot, especially for future growth. He is lukewarm on the idea of buying older equipment, as was Mr. Hartford's recommendation, as you won't find many people who will be able to keep the old equipment going. He sees a difficult road ahead, particularly with the costs for employee salaries and equipment.

Chair Avery expressed concerns about a new contractor being able to secure financing to buy Mr. Hartford's business if Mr. Hartford plans to sell. There was some discussion about making a recommendation to the Selectmen. Chair Avery said whatever the Committee recommends, a bridge plan will need to be part of the long-range plan. Member Steele shared he believes the first step is to determine what the Committee's recommendation to the Selectmen will be, particularly if the Committee's recommendation is to create a public works department. He said a public works department is key for ensuring emergency vehicles can get to people's homes and school buses can run.

The Committee discussed how much of an increase to the Town it would be to continue Mr. Hartford's contract. Chair Avery suggested reaching out to Mr. Hartford to find out what kind of money would be required to extend his contract for two years.

Chair Avery asked what would happen if Mr. Hartford wants to sell his property. The Town does not have a salt shed right now. If the Town bought the property, they would need to do some assessments of the property first. Vice Chair Bickford expressed concerns about what property is available in Madbury that isn't wet. Member Moriarty will reach out to make an initial contact with Mr. Fisk and then get another member of the Committee to join him to have a longer conversation. Ms. Ahlstrom said it would be good to know whether Mr. Fisk is interested in being a contractor or a town employee.

## **5. Updates from last meetings "homework tasks" per 8 March minutes**

- a. **List of Town Land (Fiegenbaum)** - Administrator Fiegenbaum reviewed with the Committee the town owned properties identified on the map as well as the satellite photo of the town transfer station. He noted the safety complex has some wet areas as well. Vice Chair Bickford asked what town properties have adequate soil structures for a public works facility. Administrator Fiegenbaum said soil surveys could be conducted to find the sites that are most appropriate for putting in buildings and parking lots. Chair

Avery asked if the bigger concern is the overlay districts. The Committee discussed the issues around safely storing salt to avoid runoff. The Committee discussed the town-owned properties and identified the transfer station and safety complex properties as potential public works sites, though all sites would need to be evaluated for wetness. This would eliminate the necessity to purchase land, allowing the town to save money. Vice Chair Bickford expressed concerns about the stratified drift soil at the transfer station and concerns about how storage of salt on that property could impact the water table. Chair Avery brought in town maps showing the aquifer drift and wet areas. Most of the areas in town are zoned agricultural/residential. Vice Chair Bickford said the ideal location is one that has access to a State road.

- b. **Update on Contractor Outreach (Fiegenbaum)** - Administrator Fiegenbaum stated only one contractor responded to say he doesn't do the type of job Madbury needs done. There was one return-to-sender letter due to the address; Administrator Fiegenbaum found another address and sent out that letter again. Chair Avery said if there isn't a contractor willing to take on the job, it pretty much determines the Town's decision.
- c. **Update on Grant Opportunities (Steele)** - Member Steele reported grant opportunities depend on the fiscal year of appropriation by Congress and what Madbury can leverage from our representatives. He suggested getting together with Congressman Pappas and Senator Shaheen to find out what's available and if any money could be earmarked for Madbury's needs, especially as they relate to the Department of Agriculture for rural development and safety and security issues (emergency vehicle access and buses).

## **6. Begin Developing Possible Options**

Chair Avery asked if a small group wants to begin this work and bring it back to the larger group. If so, those meetings would need to be notified. He asked what else the Committee needs to know in order to be able to outline their findings and make a recommendation to the Select Board. He encouraged the citizen members of the Committee to take charge of that work. Member Steele volunteered to have a workshop and make a recommendation to the Committee. Member Ossoff volunteered to take the minutes at the workshop meeting. Members Steele, Bickford, and Ossaff will get together for a workshop. They will contact Alternate Lipari to see if he would like to attend as well. Member Osaff asked about the role of cost in terms of the Committee's charge, which led to further discussion. Chair Avery stated the workshop meeting can be held off site, but it may not be held at your own home.

## **7. Other New and Old Business**

No other new or old business was discussed.

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

**Meeting adjourned:** 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Daphne Chevalier.