

MINUTES
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING
May 6, 2020 5:30 pm
at the Damariscotta Town Hall

Members: Roberta Mayer, Chairperson; Louis Abbotoni, Mark Hagar, Daryl Fraser and Josh Pinkham

Members Absent : None

Staff Present: Matt Lutkus, Town Manager; Cheryl Pinkham, Treasurer; Lynda Letteney, recording secretary (via Zoom)

Others Present: Haas Tobey; Ron Smith, Karen Oliveri, and Evan Houk, Lincoln County News (via zoom)

Pledge of Allegiance: The Pledge was dispensed with as the meeting was conducted via Zoom.

I. Call to Order:

The Board of Selectmen's Meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. **by Chairperson Mayer.**

II. Minutes

On motion (Mayer/Abbotoni) to table the minutes of the April 15, 2020 meeting as not everyone received the email. **Vote: 5-0-0**

Lou Abbotoni said he couldn't find the DVD of last meeting only the printed minutes. He went to LCTV and they didn't have it. **Matt** said since it was a Zoom meeting there was no DVD only the printed minutes. **Lou Abbotoni** said he couldn't find the Street Light commission DVD. **Robin Mayer** said these committees were not recorded and minutes are all that is available. **Matt Lutkus** concurred with Robin.

III. Financial Reports

1. **On motion (Abbotoni/Pinkham) to approve Payroll Warrants #64** **Vote: 5-0-0**

2. **On motion (Abbotoni/Mayer) to approve Accounts Payable Warrants #65** **Vote: 5-0-0**

3. **On motion (Pinkham/Abbotoni) to approve Accounts Payable Warrants #66**
Josh Pinkham asked if this met the criteria for reimbursement. **Matt** said, "Yes" **Vote: 4-0-1**
(Hagar abstaining)

IV. Presentations: RHR Smith FY 2019 Financial Audit

Mr. Smith reported that overall the Town was well within their budget. Although collection on property taxes is down; there is a \$1.23 million carry over balance. He addressed items on pg. 15 and 37 regarding capital reserves. Accounting practices would say that for a Town Damariscotta's size and budget there should be 90 days worth of operating expenses in the capital reserve. For us, \$400K equals 30 days; \$800 equals 60 days and \$1.2 million equals 90 days, we are currently at the 70 day level which is a little above average in reserves. So the \$1.23 million is equal to what the Town should have for a 90 day reserve. There was an overassessment of 59K for education which should be used as tax relief in the next budget. (Page 15) The Town should decrease the budget by 59K to offset the overpayment of taxes.

Mr. Smith felt the Town was in excellent shape. He asked if there were any specific questions. Hearing none, he went on to say the pre/post pandemic should show no real economic impact. Realistically, the Town may need more time to set the budget (July/August).

Mr. Smith went on to apologize for the delay in getting this report to the Board. Initially he spent a lot of time with Cheryl, and many adjustments were made. He is confident that the next year's will go much smoother and more quickly. Unfortunately, he ran into a glut of other businesses in the middle of the Damariscotta audit. **Cheryl Pinkham** chimed in that she was comfortable with Trio. After the initial adjustments, the flow went very well. Initial delays were the result of email delays. **Robin Mayer** suggested the Board needed time to look at the report in detail. **Ron Smith** agreed and said a summary report would be forthcoming. **Matt Lutkus** asked if any Board member needed a bound copy and if so, how many. No one seemed to need a bound copy. **Lou Abbotoni** expressed pleasure that they were not cited regarding internal controls. **Robin Mayer** said she'd like to pick Ron's brain regarding State funding. **Ron** said that even the State doesn't know; different time lines keep coming up; they need money to stop the bleeding; and most likely the State will go after the excise tax. He expects more clarity after July 1st. The bigger question is "What is the federal government going to do for the local governments?" **Robin Mayer** stated that it was nice that Damariscotta has a bit of a cushion. **Ron Smith** said he could be on a soap box all day, but realistically nothing is going to be known until after the end of the fiscal year.

Matt Lutkus asked if there were any more questions or comments. He suggested that if there were, to email either Cheryl Pinkham or him.

On motion (Abbotoni/Pinkham) to accept receipt of the audit report.

Vote: 5-0-0

VI. Citizen Comments and General Correspondence

Haas Tobey commented that it was nice to see everyone in their natural habitat.

V. Town Manager's Items

1. Covid-19 and Related Matters

a.) Governor's Order

The Governor's order is "Stay safer at home" which is still pretty strict with businesses closed. She is taking a conservative approach.

b.) Town Office Reopening

Matt said the Town office scaled back office hours with everyone working from home and alternating someone in the office daily. Cheryl has a computer set up at home to manage accounts. (Cost about \$700). The reopening plan is as follows: Closed (as is) until June 1st. Individuals can be seen by appointment. Most Town services can be done by email, mail or phone. The aim is to accommodate everyone. The office will remain closed to the public until safety measures are in place. Safety measures: Plexiglas installation at reception windows (\$1000); one time use face masks for all; mark out 6' distancing for lines; disinfecting everything; one time ink pen use. **Cheryl** asked if the masks were mandatory or optional. **Robin** said everyone should have one when they come in. **Lou** suggested enforcing the use of masks; at a stop at Roundtop this week, 95% of people in line had no mask. **Robin** reminded everyone that mandatory masks is hard because some have medical conditions were they

can't wear a mask. **Cheryl** said the Plexiglas should help. **Lou** reiterated he is most concerned about the staff. **Robin** reminded the Board they are a government agency and can't mandate ("no mask, no service") like a restaurant can. **Hass Tobey** suggested that if government officials all wear masks; it sets a good example. **Robin** suggested compiling a "Things to Consider" list before reopening – perhaps with 30 items and seek comments. **Cheryl** volunteered to draft the list if people call her with suggestions. **Robin** asked if the plan was to have meetings back at the Town Office. **Haas** suggested waiting to make that call. **Matt** said he was tentatively planning meeting back at the Town Office June 3rd. **Robin** said the Governor's Advisory Council is continually changing what can and cannot open.

c.) Election Day Changes

Matt said the plan is to close the administrative offices that day. Strict guidelines will be followed. One entrance (through main office) and one exit (by bathroom); no use of front entrance stairs so all have access; 6' apart while waiting; entire building will be used to ensure social distancing. They have already seen an increase in requests for absentee ballots. **Robin** asked if they will continue to encourage absentee ballots. **Cheryl** said the line will go through the entire main office; also, volunteers are reluctant to work out of fear. **Mark Hagar** asked if the school gym could be used. **Cheryl** said there are deadlines to the Secretary of State to change venues for voting. Again, staffing is the issue. **Matt** said there is also an issue of having access to files/copy machines, calls to Secretary of State's office, etc. This makes the gym a tough place to do voting. **Robin** stated that because it is a primary election, they expect quite a crowd. **Cheryl** agreed based on the absentee requests. **Matt** agreed to look into a venue change.

d.) Town Budget Impacts

Matt stated that Ron Smith is correct. We don't know our budget because it depends on state/federal assistance. **Matt** attended an MMA presentation and as a result wants to follow their recommendations: 1) Go forth with budget as is and get it approved; 2) there is concern about revenue sharing- projection is 10-20% less than it is now; State revenues are going to be down; legislature could raid the revenue sharing account; 3) we need to tighten our belts in each department; 4) current budget is pretty tight without much flexibility; 5) we have already eliminated one secretarial position and one police position- any more cuts hurt everyone. **Matt** asked the Board what they see as next steps.

Robin Mayer said she was concerned, after the MMA presentation, especially regarding revenue sharing and excise tax. Biddeford and Brunswick are expecting 12%-18% reduction in revenue. She asked, "What is the County responsibility?" "What if taxpayers can't pay and cut the budget themselves?" **Cheryl** told the Board that Matt Murphy told her valuations were up \$1 million; excise tax was projected at an increase and real estate taxes are up \$50K compared to April when they were down \$300K. Expect May to see an increase in these revenues. **Daryl Fraser** said that he felt the budget was done. It is a responsible budget; present it as is; the Board has a reputation of fiscal responsibility. **Lou Abbotoni** felt it was too early to make any big decisions or changes. He felt we had to know what the state and federal levels were doing first. **Josh Pinkham** would like to see the budget proceed as is; but, go into frugal mode. **Robin** agreed the budget is a good one; it covers what we need, while reducing taxes. It is based on revenue sharing and Homestead Act staying at a set percentage. If that changes because the legislature takes some back, we'll deal with it. Reminder: it is not a short-term thing; we have to look at

it in its totality. **Josh Pinkham** said we have to remember people need work; are there places more cuts could be made? Some suggestions: Freeze salaries for a year; cut \$50K from Capital Reserves; library has been closed, can some savings be realized; can we give up Board stipends; he has long term concerns. Question for Matt: "I don't know the process; can anything be done at this point." **Matt** said changes can be made up to ten days before on a warrant. **Robin** asked the Board to remember when Waldoboro voted down the budget and how adversarial it became. **Haas Tobey** comment that they need to talk to people about their concerns. Tell the story of the uncertainty of what's ahead. **Mark Hagar** commented that the legislature was looking at the gas tax. People are using less so the excise tax is the only other revenue related to vehicles. If there is no federal help, state will come after excise tax to make up the difference. Looking at the current tax bill, 60% schools; 20% Town and 20% County, maybe the County can give back to towns. He felt putting aside \$50K from capital reserves might be a good idea. **Lou** said again all decisions are premature until we have the needed information. **Cheryl** volunteered to find out timelines and what the process is. **Robin** stated she was concerned about the unemployed; who needs help; are we able to assist; most likely we will see people unable to pay property taxes. **Matt** asked again, "What's next with the budget?" He asked Board members to let him know what they think after they get the information that Cheryl is requesting. **Josh Pinkham** suggested the Board "go for it and let it get talked out during Town Meeting." **Mark Hagar** agreed with Josh stating that "down the road, I'm worried." **Matt** stated that Stage II of the Reopening Order only allows 50 people in a gathering. He will wait and see what transpires. MMA has asked the governor for more latitude.

2. Bristol Road Sidewalk Project Update

The project is over half way completed. While there have been some inconveniences and some minor headaches, overall it is going very well and the product is of good quality.

3. Waterfront Improvement Project Update

Bob and George are seeking engineering services for flood resiliency. **Wright-Pierce** has been responsible for restrooms and scanning sewer lines. Currently they are revising the RFP and it will be ready ASAP. Easements and right-of-ways are being done. It is good for citizens to see what their contributions have wrought. The upside in the delay is that we are probably going to get more bid on the RFP's.

4. LED Street Lights Conversation/Municipal Ownership

Matt related that this has been a time-consuming process. He has interviewed with the two finalists and checked references. Both had great interviews and references. Damariscotta, Newcastle and Bristol are doing this as a combined project and decided on **Real Term**. During the public process one concern was the brightness of the LED lights. **Matt** said there were many options with significant savings. The Smart Controls are a good idea; the extra cost can be offset by the savings with the ability to change lighting options in different locations. There is flexibility of remote control by phone, and you can monitor and adjust by neighborhood. There is no budget impact as it is a lease/purchase agreement. The next step is to get a contract drawn up with **Real Term**.

On motion (Abbotoni/Mayer) to go ahead with the contract with Real Term.

Vote: 5-0-0

5. Change Order #1 from Miles Street Project

A new RFP has been drawn up with a "scope of services" change for the RFP. The 10' elevation is acceptable as representing the highest tide in 100 years. Given climate change, the elevation is being changed to 12' as it is a safer proposal. Cost will be between \$8800 and \$11,500) Estimate of project cost goes from \$28,642 to \$36,342. **Robin** asked if Lincoln Health was okay with this. **Matt** said they wanted to defer to the Town and will be responsible for 50% of the total cost.

On motion (Mayer/Abbotoni) to accept change order #1

Vote: 5-0-0

VI. Official Action Items

1. Annual Town Meeting Warrant

Town vote and Town meeting had previously been moved to July 14 and 15, 2020. The change in dates allows for some flexibility to change that part of the warrant that's not on the secret ballot. The capital reserve change does not change the total budget already approved.

On motion (Mayer/Abbotoni) to approve the 2020-2021 Warrant as revised and to accept Ron Orenstein's resignation from the budget committee.

Vote: 5-0-0

2. Contingency Transfer for Traffic Light Repair

Due to two traffic light repairs, the budgeted \$2000 for this has been depleted. The most recent repair at Biscay Road and Main Street puts the amount over budget at \$1237. This needs to be transferred from contingency.

On motion (Abbotoni/Fraser) to authorize a contingency transfer of \$1237 to cover the cost of repairs to the traffic signal at Main Street and Biscay Road.

Vote: 5-0-0

3. Contract for Administrative Services Related to the Economic Development Administration (EDA) Grant

Given the complexity and time consuming nature required for the administration of such a large grant, using the grant managements services available through MCEDD is well justified. Neither grant money nor local match money can be used for these purposes. However, the Town has money in the waterfront project that was not committed to the local match. The cost of these services through the two year plus duration of the grant-funded project will be \$8,750.

On motion (Mayer/Abbotoni) to approve an administrative services contract with MidCoast Economic Development District for grant reporting, and other services related to the administration of the Town's Economic Development Administration Waterfront Improvement Grant.

Vote: 5-0-0

Matt will be asking the Board to approve an agreement with architect George Parker and Town Planner Bob Faunce to assist him in overall project management. As of this meeting he has not received a draft of an agreement.

IX. Selectmen's Discussion Items

Lou Abbotoni - Asked how the gift cards from the Poor Fund were going. **Matt** said two people have used them and they have about 15 cards left. **Robin Mayer** suggested that maybe Evan Houk could do an article for the paper. **Lou** also asked about the intern. **Matt** replied that the intern was excited to be here and has located a place to stay nearby for the summer. He starts May 26th and says he is looking

forward to it.

Daryl Fraser - is concerned that the Board needs to support businesses as well as citizens, to avoid creating long term issues. I see our role as a general responsibility; we need to support cooperation and solidarity. **Robin** said she saw in the Bangor Daily News that they plan to close Main Street to traffic on weekends and make it a "mall" for downtown businesses. Maybe, for the next phase, we could be planning something like that.

Josh Pinkham – wanted to comment on the on-line learning and how much teachers have stepped up to the plate. "Things have really taken off and it's been pretty amazing to watch." He's been impressed with the kids' reactions (GSB AND LA) to zoom meetings, etc. "I'm just floored"

Daryl Fraser said it showed a big amount of dedication. **Josh** responded that it took a lot of coordination with administration, and with each department. "Thank you!" **Mark Hagar** equated the task to building a plane and trying to fly it at the same time.

Mark Hagar - was also in support of Daryl's idea and thought it was great. **Robin** suggested using the Heart & Soul Facebook page to have a "What's going on" section with gift suggestions. It could be used to remind people business can be done curbside and/or long distance, even with small hometown businesses. **Lou** commented that he and his wife ordered a take-out from King Eider's and it was excellent; the service was great, **Robin** echoed everyone's sentiments.

Daryl Fraser - asked if Matt would be sure to clarify on where we are at as far as the budget. **Matt** said he would.

X. Adjournment

On motion (Abbotoni/Pinkham) to adjourn the meeting at 7:27 p.m.

Vote: 5-0-0

Respectfully submitted,

Lynda L. Letteney
Recording Secretary

We, the undersigned, do hereby approve as written, or with corrections as noted, the minutes of the above-designated Board of Selectmen meeting (May 6, 2020).

Roberta Mayer, Chairperson

Louis Abbotoni

Daryl Fraser

Mark Hagar

Joshua Pinkham

*Approved unanimously
via Zoom
Mark J. Blum*

Town of Damariscotta, Board of Selectmen, signed this date: 5-20-2020