

**Town of Pownal
Select Board Agenda
Monday, July 24, 2023,
6:00 pm Executive Session
6:30 pm Regular Meeting**

I. **Call to Order** at 6 pm by Chair Morris.

II. **Executive Session per 1 M.R.S.A 405 (6) (A) Personnel Matters**

Chair Morris motioned to enter the Executive Session. Selectperson O'Brien seconded.

Discussion: None

Vote: Yes 3; No 0

Chair Morris motioned to exit the Executive Session. Selectperson O'Brien seconded.

Discussion: None

Vote: Yes; No 0

Chair Morris called the regular meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

Members Present: Jon Morris, Andy O'Brien, Kate Day

Town Administrator: Becky Taylor-Chase

Road Commissioner: Matt Nielsen

Assessor: Donna Hays

III. **Pledge of Allegiance**

IV. **Accounts Payable & Payroll Warrant**

- **FY23 AP Warrant #3 in the amount of \$15,954.11.**

Selectperson O'Brien motioned to pay FY23 AP Warrant #3 in the amount of \$15,954.11.

Selectperson Day seconded.

Discussion: None

Vote: Yes 3; No 0

- **FY24 AP Warrant #4 in the amount of \$373,650.06.**

Selectperson O'Brien motioned to pay FY2 AP Warrant #4 in the amount of \$373,650.06.

Selectperson Day seconded.

Discussion: None

Vote: Yes 3; No 0

- **Payroll Journal #32 in the amount of \$7,596.88.**

Selectperson O'Brien motioned to pay Payroll Journal #32 in the amount of \$7,596.88.

Selectperson Day seconded.

Discussion: None

Vote: Yes 3; No 0

VII. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

- **July 10, 2023 Regular Meeting**

Selectperson O'Brien motioned to accept the minutes of the July 10, 2023 regular meeting as written. Selectperson Day seconded.

Discussion: None

Vote: Yes 3; No 0

VIII. Public Comment – Non-Agenda Items

Chair Morris welcomed Dick Hogue back. Russ Schmidt thanked the Road Commissioner, Matt Nielsen, for the work on the roads. They look good. Thank you to the road crew.

IX. Department Head Reports

(Department head reports can be viewed on their respective website page(s))

- **Select Board**

Selectperson O'Brien is working on generator estimates for the PCWA Infrastructure Grant.

X. New Business

- **Tax Commitment**

Assessing Agent, Donna Hays, stated we worked on 3 options and it comes down to how much overlay we want to have. Last year we had a \$13,000 overlay. The state law allows us to save 5% of the total commitment which is used for abatements, errors, supplemental bills etc. It is a safety net. The ratio dropped to 78% of market value. This is the relationship of sales to assessed value. We did a reevaluation in 2016 which had us at 100%. Every year there is an audit to establish where the market value is. Next year we will drop into the 60 percentile. She would like to meet with the Select Board to discuss a factor. Homestead Exemptions are affected by the ratio as well. CMP was \$55 million last year and is \$48 million this year. Paul Schumann asked if last year's mil rate was \$18. She replied yes. Chair Morris suggested that we eliminate the baseline option as the Town did authorize the use of up to \$300,000 from the Unassigned Fund Balance for use with the tax rate. This option uses none. Selectpersons Day and O'Brien agree. Chair Morris read through the other 3 options. The difference in mil rates is the amount of overlay. Mrs. Hays stated the Senior Property Tax Program has gone away but those that applied last year will get reimbursed this year. Homestead Exemption has gone down. She recommends option #1. Questions arose about how many abatements were done in the past which has been relatively low. Chair Morris stated a change in the mil rate will have people checking their tax cards online and most likely we could see an increase in questions regarding the assessed amount. Selectperson Day asked how \$300,000 was determined. Chair Morris answered that the Select Board meets earlier in the budget cycle and makes a guestimate based on the proposed budgets. This also goes before the Budget Committee. Mr. Schumann asked what the mil rate would be if no money was used from the Unassigned Fund Balance. Chair Morris stated \$20 per thousand. Mr. Schumann, we are fortunate to have a surplus but what happens when there is no reserve? Chair Morris stated it is hard to estimate each year. Excise tax has been over collected due to many factors. On the other side if we have a mild winter than expenses are less. Mr. Schumann agrees that budgeting is not an exact science. But at some point there may not be money so the mil rate will return to normal. Is anyone looking at that? Chair Morris answered no. Mr. Schumann stated that no one knows at town meeting how much the articles raise taxes so each taxpayer has to make a determination. Mrs. Hays stated other factors affect the mil rate like the value percentage to market value. You can keep the municipal budget flat but these other factors can change the mil rate. Chair Morris suggested that we come up with a summary of what the approval of the articles could possibly do. Russ Schmidt asked if it was an unrealistic expectation to state if all is approved this is what the tax rate would be? Chair Morris stated that we do not know what the valuation is at Town Meeting so that figure would not be accurate. Mr. Schumann commented that once we know every factor it's too late to change my vote. Chair Morris responded that at Town

Meeting this year once all the budget articles had passed he commented that this is your tax bill. The Select Board is not happy to raise taxes. Selectperson O'Brien stated we do not know the percentage of valuation or final valuation at the time of Town Meeting. Mrs. Hays stated CMP is the last to come in which has a large impact on our valuation. They have until June 30th each year to submit and they usually submit right at the deadline. Mr. Schumann commented that at the time of Town Meeting there are people in the room to make a judgement. All disclaimers can be made and this is the impact. So I should vote no on everything until I know all the factors and then have a special town meeting? Chair Morris stated he hears what is being said and will try to come up with an estimator. Selectperson O'Brien stated the municipal appropriation is \$2,245,398 and the education is \$3,427,608. Chair Morris reminded everyone that the budget meetings are open to the public. He will enlist their help with developing an estimator. Selectperson Day motioned to approve option 1. Selectperson O'Brien seconded. Discussion: Option 1 is \$18.85 mil rate, \$300,000 from Unassigned Fund Balance with an overlay of \$12,838.19.

Yes: 3; No 0

- **Future Facilities Committee Contract**

The Town Administrator stated that the 3 requirements our attorney asked for were met and she is satisfied with the contract. Chair Morris motioned to approve the contract with Port City Architect for the Future Facilities Needs Assessment. Selectperson O'Brien seconded.

Discussion: None

Vote: Yes 3; No 0

The Town Administrator asked if they needed to motion for her to sign as the contract was in her name? Chair Morris motioned to approve the Town Administrator to sign the contract. Selectperson O'Brien seconded.

Discussion: None

Vote: Yes 3; No 0

- **Pole Permit – Chadsey Road & Merrill Road**

The Road Commissioner has inspected both areas and everything looks good. These are for power to new structures. Chair Morris motioned to approve both pole permits for Chadsey Road and Merrill Road. Selectperson O'Brien seconded.

Discussion: None

Vote: Yes 3; No 0

- **Volunteer Form – Paul Oppenheim**

Chair Morris spoke with Mr. Oppenheim and he is committed to the committee. He motioned to appoint Paul Oppenheim to the Economic Development & Sustainability Committee. Selectperson O'Brien seconded.

Discussion: None

Vote: Yes 3; No 0

- **Federal ARPA Grant**

The Town Administrator stated we received \$163,788.95 in 2022 for Federal ARPA funds. We have dedicated \$50,000 for the Future Facilities Needs Assessment which leaves \$113,788.45 to dedicate by the end of 2024. The Communication Center is scheduled to start in August or September. The PCWA Infrastructure Grant was approved. We currently have one estimate and are awaiting the other 2 estimates that are required by the terms of the grant. Chair Morris stated he would be attending the Conservation Commission regarding managing the Browntail Moth Mitigation Grant.

- **TIF Discussion- Estabrook's Meeting**

We received the breakdown in cost and timeline from IOV Planning. Chair Morris asked if this information answers Selectperson Day's questions. She stated yes. Selectperson O'Brien motioned to use IOV Planning for our TIF needs and to include Estabrooks in the meeting. Chair Morris motioned to approve IOV Planning for our TIF planning. Selectperson Day seconded.

Discussion: None

Vote: Yes 3; No 0

Estabrooks has requested a meeting with the Select Board and Economic Development & Sustainability Committee. Chair Morris asked what the committee's role would be? He suggested we meet first with the town attorney and then schedule the meeting with Estabrooks. A quick summary is Estabrooks is starting a large project on Route 9 and we are considering a TIF district around that project.

- **August Meeting Dates**

Chair Morris historically we have taken the last meeting off in August. Selectperson O'Brien motioned to table the August 28th meeting. Selectperson Day seconded.

Discussion: None

Vote: Yes 3; No 0

- **Supervision of Future Facilities RFP**

Selectperson O'Brien stated it came up in the Future Facilities Committee meeting about overseeing the work. How do we facilitate requests from Port City? He feels that most of the communication will be direct with the Fire Chief and Road Commissioner but they wanted a "gate keeper" for all requests to go through. The Town Administrator will be the point of contact.

- **Planning Board Charge**

Chair Morris attended the Planning Board meeting and asked the Town Administrator for a copy of their charge but one cannot be found. With the Select Board's permission he would like to ask North Star to write a charge. It is unfair to have volunteers working without guidelines. The Select Board agreed.

- **North Pownal Community Club Building/Recreation Community**

Chair Morris wanted to bring to the Board's attention there is a building that members are trying to figure out what to do with. It is on town owned land. He thought it might be time to consider accepting the building as head quarters for the Recreation Committee or Department should we develop one in the future. This is an opportunity for the Town. Selectperson O'Brien suggested we poll the Recreation Committee and Conservation Commission members to see if they are interested in it. Chair Morris stated there were several comments in the latest Comprehensive Plan to improve recreation events. Kathy Hogue asked what was meant by having the Recreation Committee there? Chair Morris stated at some point in time the Town may have a Recreation Department. They would need some room. There were questions in the past from the Recreation Committee about where to store items. This could be a possibility. Selectperson Day stated that being the liaison to both committees she would bring this idea to them.

XI. Old Business

None

XII. Correspondence

Selectperson O'Brien stated he received calls about missed trash pickup. Chair Morris stated he had received 17 calls for various topics in the last two weeks.

XIII. Any Other Business

None

XIV. Adjournment

Chair Morris motioned to adjourn the meeting. Selectperson O'Brien seconded.

Discussion: None

Vote: Yes 3; No 0

The meeting adjourned at 7:42 pm.


Respectfully submitted,

Becky Taylor-Chase

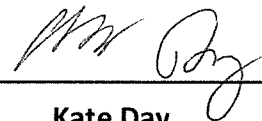
Town Administrator



Jon Morris



Andy O'Brien



Kate Day

