

Notes from the Select Board

The Select Board is taking the New Year as an opportunity for communicating Town of Pownal news and issues coming before the Board through Notes from the Select Board on the Town website with more frequency. To that end....

The Budget season is upon us. And, because the Town Meeting will more than likely be as last year, in a written ballot format, the budget calendar is accelerated to accommodate the absentee ballot deadline of mid-April. Therefore, to become informed, you should look to the Town website's calendar, where you will find meeting dates and Zoom links to those meetings. All board and committee meetings are public meetings. During this time of limited recreational opportunities, there is nothing like Zooming a Select Board meeting. Seriously, this is a good opportunity to listen to the proceedings of all committees to discover how the Town functions. There is always time for your questions and comments. Most important: there are always questions about warrant items at Town Meeting, how money is spent, or why the Select Board or Budget Committee are making recommendations. Rather than wait until you're looking at a paper ballot with little explanation, jump into the conversation during a meeting. Select Board meetings are on the 2nd and 4th Monday of the month @ 7 p.m. Other boards and committees meet regularly each month.

On this date The Select Board is anticipating a zero increase in the Town's budget due to the economics connected to the pandemic. However, there are issues that need to be addressed. The large culvert on the Poland Range Road, (Goddard Road) {dirt part of the Poland Range Road} needs replacing. The Select Board has kicked this can down the road for as long as we can (6 years). If we don't fix it, the State may close the road because of structural integrity issues. Last year, The Town deferred reconstruction. The Capital Projects committee, the group responsible for Pownal's financial planning, recommended bonding this expenditure for 2021-22. The Town is also looking at a replacement vehicle in the Road Department. These items, although planned, will require belt tightening in other areas. We always waited on baited breath for the RSU 5 budget.

Other issues the Board is debating are broadcasting/Zooming issues from Mallet Hall, Organization reform within committees and boards for streamlining communication and transparency, reviewing and repairing the Land Use Ordinances to ensure that the ordinances reflect clarity and the intent of the original framers of the ordinances, and a new financial committee to develop an economic development plan for the future.

Please consider 'attending' any/all of the town's committee meetings. Your opinions/suggestions are always welcome. Our next newsletter will be in 2 weeks.

Sincerely,
Jon Morris
Select Board Chair