

Town of Pownal
Select Board Minutes
Monday, February 26, 2024
5:30 Workshop with Town Planner
6:00 pm Executive Sessions, 6:30 pm Regular Meeting

I. **Call to Order** the regular meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm by Chair Morris.
Members Present: Jon Morris, Andy O'Brien, Kate Day
Town Administrator: Becky Taylor-Chase
Road Commissioner: Matt Nielsen
Fire Chief: Jesse Peters

II. **Enter Executive Session per 1 M.R.S.A 406 (6)(A) Personnel Matters**

Chair Morris motioned to enter into the Executive Session per 1 M.R.S.A 406 (6)(A) at 6:03 pm. Selectperson O'Brien seconded the motion.

Discussion: None

Vote: Yes 3; No 0

III. **Exit Executive Session**

Chair Morris motioned to exit the Executive Session at 6:25 pm. Selectperson O'Brien seconded the motion.

Discussion: None

Vote: Yes 3; No 0

IV. **Pledge of Allegiance**

V. **Accounts Payable Warrant & Payroll Journal**

- FY24 AP Warrant #19 in the amount of \$324,314.96.

Selectperson O'Brien motioned to approve FY24 AP Warrant #19 in the amount of \$324,314.96. Selectperson Day seconded the motion.

Discussion: None

Vote: Yes 3; No 0

- Payroll Journal #332 in the amount of \$9,846.98.

Selectperson O'Brien motioned to approve Payroll Journal #332 in the amount of \$9,846.98.

Selectperson Day seconded the motion.

Discussion: None

Vote: Yes 3; No 0

VI. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- February 12, 2024, Regular Meeting

Selectperson O'Brien motioned to approve the minutes of the February 12, 2024, as written. Selectperson Day seconded the motion.

Discussion: None

Vote: Yes 3; No 0

VII. Public Comment – Non- Agenda Items

Heidi Richards, representing the Solid Waste and Recycling Committee, has some questions about the changes coming to the service and moving to automation. Our current Pay As You Throw (PAYT) program covers the tipping fees. Other towns charge more for their town bags. They use the program to generate revenue. She attended a webinar on how to keep the PAYT program with automation. The PAYT program reduces trash and encourages recycling. Selectperson O'Brien asked how we enforce the use of the bag if there is not going to be oversight with the automation. Ms. Richards stated the webinar talked about cameras being installed and pictures taken of each trash receptacle and the pictures would be analyzed by AI. This information brings concern to her as a resident. In North Yarmouth it cost \$13,000 to install the cameras and then there is a fee to maintain the operation of the system (\$.85 per bag additional charge in their case). As Chair of the Solid Waste Committee, she feels we should not keep the bags. We might possibly look at getting out of the contract and/or look at partnering with neighboring towns for use of a transfer station. Chair Morris asked her to schedule meetings in the afternoon so the Select Board can attend.

Chair Morris gave a brief description of the Brown Tail Moth Clipping Day on March 2.

VIII. Department Head Reports

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

- Select Board

Nothing new to report.

IX. New Business

- **Budget Presentations: Public Works, PCWA, Debt Service, Recreation Committee**

The meeting moved to the Freeport Scholarship agenda item.

Both committees received budget spreadsheets in advance for planned presentations. The spreadsheet was shared on the video screen for all attendees to view and as part of the recorded meeting. The budget presentation portion of the meeting began at approximately 6:52 pm.

Public Works

Matt Nielsen presented each line of the budget by category and explained variances for the 2025 requested budget compared to 2024 budget and YTD actual. In summary, again this year, impacts of expected increases in product, supplier, and deliver costs were significantly mitigated by savings coming

from a detailed line-by-line budget analysis that factored in past usage trends, current stockpiles, and future needs. This judicious approach resulted in a 2025 Public Works budget request that is just 2% above the 2024 budget.

- Facilities – Negotiating a better cable/internet plan helped offset the cost of upgrading the office phone. Based on recent trends, propane usage is also expected to cost less. All other lines are held flat. *No changes were recommended.*
- Winter Roads – Salt prices are projected to increase. Equipment maintenance expense will increase in order to cover additional equipment purchased. There was a question from the audience asking if the Town contracts a company to administer a protective spray on equipment. Mr. Nielsen said that we did use a well-known service provided and also coordinated the timing of the spraying to include fire department equipment. Plow blades expense is projected to be less in 2025 because the Town has purchased better quality blades. Although Delcer is showing no YTD expense, bills are expected in March and the full budget is expected to be spent. *No changes were recommended.*
- Fleet Maintenance – State Vehicle Inspection budget line is now included in the Vehicle/Equipment Maintenance line. Non-winter equipment maintenance will be needed less often, however the cost of parts and service is going up. Tire expense is down \$15,000 compared to 2024 when the Town purchased grader tires, however, in comparison to prior years it is up slightly due to normal cost increases. Chair Chesney asked if we expect to use the full 2024 budget for Shop Supplies and Oil & Fluids lines which appear underspent vs budget in 2024. Mr. Nielsen said they did expect to spend the budget and in some cases will be purchasing less frequently and in bulk to keep overall cost down. *No changes were recommended.*
- Fuel – Gas cost will be up overall in 2025 because the Town now have two vehicles that use gas, and prices are up overall. Expecting a small mark up on diesel cost. Chair Chesney asked about the source for gas purchases. Mr. Nielsen explained that the Town has been buying gas through a partnership with the Town of Freeport which has kept the cost down compared to purchasing at a public service station. He further explained that he is working to set up an on-site gas tank which is being loaned to us by a neighboring Town – this will be more convenient and may further reduce the per-gallon price. Ms. Giuliano asked if there was any rental expense related to the borrowed tank, and Mr. Nielsen said there would not be. *No changes were recommended.*
- Road Maintenance – Overall budget request is up by 8% or \$22,950. *No changes were recommended.*
 - Paving/Rehab is the largest expense within the road maintenance budget. The budget request for 2025 is up over the 2024 budget because certain projects originally planned for 2024 will shift to 2025. Plus, product costs have gone up. Chair Chesney asked if there is a Town-wide plan for rotation of road paving – and if so does that plan work well. Mr. Nielsen said that there is a paving rotation schedule that works well and they do make small adjustments where needed. Chair Chesney also reminded all that there is

a high level of public interest in the details of planned road work, especially paving, and that Mr. Nielsen should be prepared to share that information as he has in past years.

- Tree Work - expense is going up a little due to the price of rentals.
 - Crack/Chip Seal and Dust Control - are seasonal and will both be expensed prior the end of the budget cycle
 - Survey/Engineer – will be lower again this year based on the limited need for these services. Mr. Nielsen said that there may be a spring 2024 item that will carry-over. He further explained that this line exclusively covers surveying that might need to be done before beginning road work and does not include other surveying projects that Town might be planning. *(Mr. Chesney pointed out that there are few places on the spreadsheet where the D/I % may not be calculating correctly – a few other lines were also impacted and will be corrected.)*
 - Line Painting - expense request is up over last year to ensure the striping on roads can be well maintained. Mr. Nielsen commented that this is a frequent request from residents and that keeping the roads well marked also helps his crew when snow plowing. Ms. Giuliano asked if we contract out for the service, and Mr. Nielsen said that we did. Chair Chesney asked about we take advantage of GPCOG, and Mr. Nielsen said that they do use that as a point of reference.
 - Roadside Mowing – expense for contracting is projected to be down slightly. Mr. Nielsen also commented that in future years if we continue to modernize equipment, we may be able to eliminate this cost.
 - Culverts – up a little over 2024.
 - Patch – There was no expense in 2024 because the crew worked through the existing stockpile but more supplies will be needed for 2025
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- Supplies – Proposed budget is up slightly. *No changes were recommended.*
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- Administration – Will be adding a cell phone to reduce the use of personal cell phone. Uniform cost (t-shirts, boots, etc.) is up slightly. Drug Testing will likely be expensed before the end of the budget cycle – testing is on random selection and Pownal has not yet been selected. *No changes were recommended.*

Chair Chesney acknowledged that the Public works budget is a large portion of the overall budget and thanked Mr. Nielsen for presenting so much supporting detail and offering such a well thought out budget. All agreed.

PCWA

Selectperson Andy O'Brien presented the budget with the only increase on the Town Expense line coming from propane to fill the new tanks the Town purchased as part of the grant received from Cumberland County. PCWA Sinking Fund - Chair Chesney suggested that it might be helpful to add detail showing monies moving into and out of this fund. Mr. Nielsen also suggested that it might make sense to add a Fuel line to this budget now that there will be a propane expense each year.

Debt Service

Becky Taylor-Chase presented the budget. Annual decreases reflect the impact of interest payments as the bonds are paid down. Chair Chesney asked of the Town is anticipating a need to issue additional bonds in 2025, and Ms. Taylor-Chase said there was not a need. *No changes were recommended.*

Recreation

Representing the Recreation Committee, Kathy Hogue presented a request for the Town to support a \$500 expense to help with the purchase of supplies and supporting equipment for planned events in 2025. The request was accompanied by a detailed summary of the events held to date in 2024, and the revenue and expense budget summary for the Pownal Pumpkin Festival. Mrs. Hogue commented that the committee was very happy that the festival had raised enough money to cover costs - as planned. Thanks were extended to Kathy and Recreation Committee for their hard work planning a growing number of events throughout the year, and especially on the great success of the return of the festival.

- **Freeport Scholarship – Stephanie Paine**

Stephanie Paine gave a brief history and summary of the program. They give two kids scholarship money each year. Students receiving money are paired with a mentor to help guide them and they meet monthly. She stated seven students are currently receiving funds. They are continuing to fundraise and are requesting \$10,000 for consideration. She encouraged Pownal residents to serve on the Board of Directors and/or become a mentor. Bo Chesney asked if any recipients have been Pownal residents? She answered not so far but hoping more kids will apply. It is available for junior and seniors to apply. The meeting moved back to the budget presentations.

- **Real Estate Requests Forms, Shane Brady: M6, L2; M9, L43**

Chair Morris stated we have two Real Estate Request Forms. He asked for the location of each. The Town Administrator stated Map 9, Lot 43 is on Elmwood Road. This is the same property that was requested last fall in October/November and Map 6, Lot 2 is on Elmwood Road more towards Freeport. She is still researching this property and will meet with the assessor the next day. Chair Morris clarified that Map 9, Lot 43 is the one we will be voting on this June. The Town Administrator stated yes, it is the lot that the Conservation Commission has been working with the Royal River Land Trust on an easement agreement. Chair Morris asked Matt Welch, Chair of the Conservation Commission, for an update. He stated the committee was meeting the next evening and expected to have a final agreement ready to send for attorney review later this week. Chair Morris stated until that process is finished which was why it was denied the first time, we will return the application fee and deny this request. On Map 6, Lot 2, it's a new request so we will start the process unless there is any dispute on the Select Board. Selectperson O'Brien has no issue. Selectperson Day asked how many acres. Selectperson O'Brien stated we need to get some input from Donna. Chair Morris suggested we table it pending more information. Mr. Welch stated he did not have the property on his list of Town owned land. Tabled to next meeting.

- **North Pownal Community Club transfer of property**

Chair Morris stated the community club would like to transfer the property of the hall over to the Town for \$1, I'm not sure we can do the legal work in order to get it on the June town meeting warrant but should discuss and decide if the Town would like to acquire the property. Selectperson Day stated it is in the Town's interest to acquire the property because it is historic and relevant to the Town. Selectperson O'Brien agreed. We are currently contemplating Sexton for Mallett Hall where we may be able to include some work up there. We will reach out to the town attorney and put a placeholder on the warrant. Chair Morris motioned we put on the town warrant a warrant item to acquire the North Pownal Community Club property for \$1. Selectperson O'Brien seconded.

Discussion: None

Vote: Yes 3; No 0

Bill Schmidt asked if it would be possible to get a list of the pros and cons, what can we expect to fix etc. Chair Morris stated he was welcome to inspect. Mr. Schmidt felt it would be questions that are asked at Town Meeting. Chair Morris stated there will be public hearings for residents and there will be a general inspection of the building.

- **Town Office Closure on Presidential Primary**

The Town Administrator requested the counter be closed on the Presidential Primary. We had some gaps in coverage during the morning so both myself and Pascale need to cover those times. We expect it to be a busy turnout. No objections from the Select Board. It will be posted.

- **Trek Across Maine rest stop at Town Hall Sunday, June 16th**

They reached out the previous week asking if they could use the town office parking lot on Sunday, June 16 for a rest stop for the bikers. She spoke with the Road Commissioner and the only concern she had was if there was a weather event and they needed to get equipment out to repair a road for public safety that would be a bottle neck area, but I would bring it before the Select Board. Jesse Peters also said typically on Sunday mornings the church parks vehicles in the town parking lot. The Town Administrator stated they had been using the school in the past but were told they could not use it this year. Ms. Richards stated that with the church as long as they are notified ahead of time so they can make arrangements for parking. Selectperson O'Brien is fine with them using the parking lot as long as they let the church know ahead of time.

- **Town Owned Land Assessment – Impact Fees**

Chair Morris stated it has been recommended we have the town owned land assessed as to what the possibilities are for use and using the comprehensive plan as a lens. This would be done by someone that the Town Planner would recommend. It was recommended that we use some impact fees to accomplish this. Selectperson O'Brien stated we would need to put a placeholder on the June town warrant. Chair Morris stated we would recommend a certain amount of impact fees to be used for assessment. Chair Morris recommends we start this process due to the recent amounts of real estate requests. Selectperson Day asked if we should be surveying the land first or is that is secondary to this assessment. Chair Morris stated that the Conservation Commission has been doing a good job at getting surveys done. This is more so we have some legitimacy when we discuss each town owned property. We have not had an independent analysis done in the past. Selectperson

O'Brien stated we would be looking at hiring a land use consultant to do this work. This is a good idea. Chair Morris motioned that we put a warrant item on the town warrant to hire a land use consultant from Recreation fund impact fees up to \$15,000 in the next fiscal year. Selectperson O'Brien seconded the motion.

Discussion: None

Vote: Yes 3; No 0

- **Affordable Housing: RE Conservation Subdivision Ordinance**

Chair Morris stated this is an item that the Town Planner and he have been discussing. We are soon to be "under the gun" from a state mandate to have affordable housing. I am proposing we authorize the Town Planner to investigate language and an amendment to allow the opportunity for affordable housing to be part of the discussion in the new Conservation Subdivision Ordinance. Selectperson O'Brien stated he would move that. Chair Morris recapped that you move to allow the Town Planner to explore language and feasibility of including affordable housing in the new approved Conservation Subdivision Ordinance. Selectperson Day seconded the motion.

Discussion: None

Vote: Yes 3; No 0

- **ARPA: Renovations**

The Town Administrator stated we have \$72,788.95 left in ARPA funds to allocate. Back at the beginning of January the Fire Chief asked about getting quotes for a backup generator to be used at the North Station for the repeater tower. He has gotten 3 estimates. The second piece is renovating offices out front. We have received the estimate for the floor and estimates for additional electrical work and heat pumps are being worked on. Selectperson O'Brien motioned via town meeting warrant the funds to purchase and install a backup generator automatic stand by for the North Station to run the repeater tower. Chair Morris asked for a total of \$17,252, is that what you are recommending? Selectperson O'Brien stated he is recommending up to \$17,252 from ARPA funds. Chief Peters stated that was the highest quote. He recommends the \$11,200 quote. Selectperson O'Brien amended his motion to be up to \$11,200. Selectperson Day seconded the motion.

Discussion: None

Vote: Yes 3; No 0

Chair Morris stated we need to put a warrant item for renovations. He asked when the money needed to be spent. The Town Administrator stated we have to allocate it by the end of 2024 and spend it by the end of 2026. He asked for the amount prior to the generation allocation. That amount is \$72,788.95. Chair Morris motioned that we appropriate from ARPA or designate from ARPA \$60,000 for renovations to the Road Commissioner/Old Selectmen's office. Selectperson O'Brien seconded the motion.

Discussion: Chair Morris stated we will need to figure out the internet. The Town Administrator stated that was part of what Googin's will be quoting. To run a cat5 cable etc. so we had stable internet and to look at any power sources we might need for printers and computers. Chair Morris stated before we approve this motion it was brought to his attention that the website is full and needs to be addressed. The Town Administrator stated we would need to do an RFP. Gov office owned the site and sold it to Catalis. The

price has quadrupled from last year to this year. She is not sure what the cost would be to increase the website. It would require someone with web design knowledge to do the work that has been requested. Chair Morris stated we have a motion on the floor to designate ARPA funds for the renovations and asked if there was any further discussion.

Vote: Yes 3; No 0

- **Pole Permit - Merrill Road**

The Road Commissioner commented that this is for new construction. Selectperson O'Brien motioned to approve the pole permit on the Merrill Road per the Road Commissioner's inspection. Selectperson Day seconded the motion.

Discussion: None

Vote: Yes 3; No 0

- **Solid Waste**

Chair Morris stated we need to discuss the state of the PAYT bags. If we rescind it, we will have to charge the Solid Waste Committee to revise their tipping fees. Selectperson O'Brien stated that will also require a town meeting vote as it was a town meeting vote to approve the ordinance to cover the tipping fees. Chair Morris stated that is what will happen if we rescind it. Selectperson O'Brien feels his personal opinion is the PAYT bags will not work with the new system unless you use the cameras. Selectperson Day asked if residents purchase the bins. Ms. Richards explained we had signed a contract with Casella. It is a 5-year contract, and the cost of bins has been worked into the contract. If residents lose or damage bins they will have to pay for the replacement. That goes directly through Casella, so town employees do not manage that. If other surrounding towns opt in for the AI, we may be forced into it at a cost. There is no proof that the automated system will work on dirt roads. It's only been tested in cities on paved roads with curbs. Chair Morris stated that residents are paying for the bins through taxation so it would be "silly" to ask for them to pay again to purchase special bags. If we stop ordering from Waste Zero, there is no fee to restart should we decide to bring back the PAYT bags. We can do our own data collection to see if there is any change in tonnage. Selectperson O'Brien asked about talks for a transfer station with Durham. Chair Morris stated that is down the road. Ms. Richards is going to ask what the cost is to break the contract and reach out to neighboring towns about transfer stations, so we have a plan before signing another contract. She also stated that Chair Morris suggested adding a budget line to buy back bags from residents when we make the switch. Bo Chesney stated as a resident it feels like we are being forced into this by Casella. We have an opportunity to absorb the cost of bags and take that burden away from the residents and give this new system a try. We also need to rescind the PAYT article and feel it's warranted at this time. It gives us a chance to give it a try and reduce the burden on the taxpayer in terms of the bags and make adjustments going forward. Selectperson Day suggested composting and Chair Morris stated this is part of the Solid Waste Committee's purview. He suggests we consider this and discuss it at the next meeting.

Chair Morris stated he needed to have a conversation about the Chadsey Road with the Road Commissioner and asked if the roads were going to be posted. The Road Commissioner stated the roads have been posted. They did them on February 20th.

X. Old Business

None

XI. Correspondence

Selectperson O'Brien stated he wrote the letter to OSHA. Chair Morris stated it was a well written letter and is asking for permission to send it. The Select Board agreed to send the letter.

The Town Administrator stated most of the correspondence has been missed pick-ups and felt it was relevant to mention. Brown Road, two Fridays in a row. There was a sub driver one day. There was an email sent that there were late put out. In another area of town, they said they weren't using the PAYT bags. The driver puts in notes, and they copy the notes in the email, so they are a bit cryptic and use internal slang. I had several calls from residents. Casella offered to send another truck back but it's hard to notify the residents if we don't have their phone number and they may be at work and unable to put the trash out. I received an email from Casella during one of the days it was storming asking the road crew to salt. They had been out and had finished. The sun was coming out at this point. Chair Morris wonders where we are in terms of breach of contract. They have consistently underperformed. Not very optimistic about this 5-year deal. They have not inspired confidence. He traveled down Brown Road after four phone calls. It looked like they never went down that road. The Town Administrator stated the rep had reached out about having a meeting with the Road Commissioner and myself to come up with a back-up plan. I sent her a couple of dates/times but didn't hear back. Chair Morris will contact MMA legal to see how we can push back against some of this.

XII. Any Other Business

None


XIII. Adjournment

Selectperson O'Brien motioned to adjourn the meeting. Selectperson Day seconded the motion.

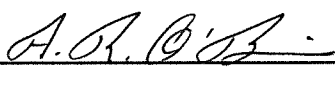
Discussion: None

Vote: Yes 3; No 0

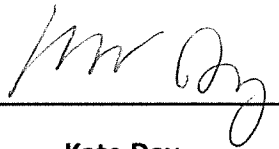
The meeting adjourned at 8:52 pm.



Jon Morris



Andy O'Brien



Kate Day

