

REPORT ON THE SELECTBOARD MEETING OF JANUARY 12, 2021

Prepared by Rick Cliffe

Note: These are not official minutes -- -- just notes taken by me. Official minutes will be available from the Town Office and will be posted on the Town web site following Board approval at the next meeting. If anyone wishes to stop receiving these reports, they may simply hit "Reply" and request to be deleted from the list or say "Unsubscribe."

THE MEETING: The meeting was conducted on Zoom. SelectBoard members Rich Donaldson, Jon Collins, and Bronwen Tudor plus administrator Amanda Campbell were present. Jim Peavey and Carlos Barrionuevo attended in support of agenda items. There were 2 other members of the public in attendance.

The minutes of the meeting of December 8, 2020 were approved. They will be posted on the Town website.

MOST IMPORTANT/INTERESTING ITEMS: In my judgment, the following items were the most important things covered during the meeting.

- **Broadband:** Carlos Barrionuevo attended the meeting to answer questions and request Board approval to update and resubmit the Broadband ReConnect Second Chance Application to USDA by January 22, 2021.
 - Carlos provided an overview of the USDA's rejecting the grant application. It turns out that another Federal agency, FFC, auctioned off internet rights to selected areas across the country under the Rural Development Opportunity Fund (RDOF) program. Once bids were accepted, these selected areas are no longer eligible under the USDA program. In Georgetown approximately ¼ of our properties became ineligible. Carlos indicated that the Broadband team would still submit a network plan that would serve all homes, but funds to connect to those no longer eligible under the USDA program would require separate funding to be raised by the Town.
 - Carlos also described an alternative approach being investigated by the Broadband team, namely creation of a Private Investment Group, Georgetown Broadband LLC. This investment group would focus on getting fiber optic cable up on the poles in 2021. To date, the team has commitments for over 75% of the \$3.3 million project cost. Their plan is to ask the Town to participate as an investor at the same level contemplated in the USDA grant. There was minimal discussion of this alternative.
 - Carlos recommended that we proceed with both alternatives simultaneously; recognizing that we can back out of either/both if the Town elects to do so at the Town Meeting. Most of the Board discussion focused on the additional funding and risk associated with the revised USDA grant application. Bronwen recommended that the Board approve resubmittal of the revised USDA grant application with the caveat that, if the grant is awarded by USDA, the Selectboard will review it and can make recommendations at the Town Meeting. Rich said he has concern there are many residents who don't want internet and/or cannot afford additional taxes. The revised application would increase the risk to taxpayers. He is also concerned that a Special Town Meeting would be dominated by residents wanting the broadband upgrade. Jon expressed concern about the financial risk of the project. In the end the Board voted 2-1 to deny submittal of the USDA grant application.

- Carlos confirmed that the Broadband team would continue to work with the private investment group.
- **Assessing Items:** The Board reviewed an abatement application for a building based on the construction style (manufactured home) and agreed to forward it to Bill VanTuinen for review/comment. The same residents also asked that a now removed outbuilding be removed from their valuation. The Board approved this change.
The Board reviewed another abatement request for both land and building increases between 2019 and 2020 assessments. After reviewing the specifics the Board voted to deny this abatement.

CORRESPONDENCE:

Amanda reported on correspondence received. For a complete listing of this correspondence, see the Meeting Agenda on the Town website.

The most interesting items were:

- Senator Susan Collins, Senator Angus King and Representative Chellie Pingree each provided annual year-end summaries for inclusion in Georgetown’s Annual Report.
- Sagadahoc County Sheriff’s Department provided the December incident report which had 48 incidents, about twice the norm.
- AOS98 Central Office notified the Town of the AOS Budget Meeting. It was scheduled for January 19th but is going to be rescheduled.
- Maine Spirit of America notified they would like Georgetown’s selection by February 28th. If you have any recommendation, please contact one of the Selectboard or Amanda.
- Thank you (for donation) notes were received from Sweetser, Bath Food Bank, New Hope for Women, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Oasis Free Clinics, and Patten Free Library.

NEW BUSINESS:

- **Grant Request:** The Board reviewed a request from Age Friendly Georgetown (AFG) to approve a grant submission to Maine Community Foundation for “adaptive equipment.” Jim Peavey, chair of Age Friendly Georgetown, came to the meeting to answer questions. AFG wants to create a catalog and display board for small, inexpensive tools (adaptive equipment) that can be demonstrated by residents. The Board approved the request.
- **Alternate Animal Control Officer (ACO):** The Board approved hiring of a new alternate ACO.
- **Annual Budget Process:** Amanda advised that the 2021-2022 budget memo for Committee Chairs and FAC needs to be “worked back” from the Town Meeting schedule. This led to a discussion of when and where to hold the Town Meeting. As it currently stands, there is no state-wide election planned for June. The Board expects that the meeting will be held outside (like last year). They proposed June 15th for the Town election and June 26th for the Town Meeting. Amanda will coordinate with Woolwich because we want to borrow their large tents again.

The next meeting of the Selectboard will be at 7 PM on Tuesday, January 26th. The public is welcome to attend on ZOOM. Contact Amanda Campbell or Alex Neese at the Town Office to get the Meeting ID and Password.