

REPORT ON SELECTMEN'S MEETING OF July 13, 2010

Prepared by Rick Freeman

Note: (1). If anyone wishes to stop receiving these reports, they may simply hit "Reply" and request to be deleted from the list or say "Unsubscribe."

(2). 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 and at the Town Office and other places following Board approval at the next meeting.

There were about 15 members of the public present along with a reporter from the Times Record. See his article on the front page of the Wednesday, July 14 issue.

Geoff Birdsall opened the meeting by reading a statement of "Guidelines and Process" concerning comments from the public and conduct of the meeting. These will be included in the minutes.

The Board approved the minutes of the last public meeting (June 23) and an executive session to discuss personnel matters held on July 7.

SNOW PLOWING CONTRACT:

The first item on the agenda was a letter from the Financial Advisory Committee (FAC) regarding the selection of the snow plow contract. As noted in my report of the June 23 meeting of the selectmen, three bids were received: Savoie and Sons (Dale Savoie) totaling \$537,894 for the three years; Mainmoss (Charlie Collins) totaling \$454,700 for the three years; and Ed Skillin of Phippsburg totaling \$435,600 for the three years. By a 2 to 1 vote, the contract was awarded to the high bidder, Savoie and Sons. Pinette and Plummer voted in favor and Birdsall opposed.

I do not have a copy of the FAC letter. But it made the following points:

- The FAC is concerned that the award violates acceptable practices in awarding public contracts. Good practices dictate that the award be made to the lowest responsible bidder.
- Bidders' experience, prior dealing and reputation for satisfactory work do factor into bidder responsibility but on the surface it appears that all three bidders may meet the definition of responsible;
- the award is inconsistent with guidance from the Selectmen during the budget process for this fiscal year asking that Town committees and boards not allow any overall increase in the municipal budget.

There followed an extended discussion for about an hour with critical comments and questions from the public and responses from the Selectmen, mostly Pinette and Plummer. The Times Record article captures the flavor of the discussion. I can not hope to reproduce the discussion here. But I will try to summarize what I think were the key points made on both sides.

In opposition:

- The award was a “slap in the face” to committees and boards that were holding the line on spending (especially the School Committee) and to Town employees who are getting no wage increases this year.
- The decision appeared to have been made with little discussion or effort to justify the choice.
- The award would especially hurt those tax payers living on limited budgets.
- It was not clear that in past years there had been any clear difference in the quality of the work by Collins and Savoie (who plowed part of the Town as a subcontractor).

In support:

- It was the view of Plummer and Pinette that the two lowest bidders did not meet the definition of responsible for several reasons.
- It was important to have someone local (Georgetown or Arrowsic) who could get on the job quickly when needed and who would be easy to reach about problems.
- The Selectmen were not bound by either law or the terms of the request for bids to accept the lowest bid.
- It was argued that Collins had not done a good job with the contract during the past three years and had been hard to reach at times.
- Savoie argued that his bid, although much higher than the other two, was low on the basis of cost per mile plowed compared to other nearby Towns.
- The Selectmen thought that the higher quality job that they expected to get from Savoie was worth the extra money.

The Selectmen committed themselves to oversee the performance of the contractor and to make sure that the performance standards specified in the contract were met.

The Selectmen were asked if they would reconsider their decision. The answer was no.

One interesting idea emerged during the discussion. Pinette said that she would like to explore having the Town take on the task of plowing Town roads - buying the equipment and salt, hiring drivers and so forth. Apparently the Town of Phippsburg has done something like this.

Later in the meeting, the contract was signed by the Selectmen and Dale Savoie.

Under new business Mary reported the receipt of a letter from an attorney representing the low bidder, Ed Skillin, saying that they were challenging the award of the contract to the highest bidder. The letter had been forwarded to the office of the Town Attorney. Birdsall reported that the Town Attorney's office had advised that Skillin had no case.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Mary reported the receipt of one bid for the Aleada Pinkham house in Five Islands. This house had been acquired by the Town for back taxes. The bid was from Robbie Pinkham for \$3,900. The house has no land and no septic. The Selectmen voted to accept the bid and direct Mary

to have the Town Attorney draw up the necessary papers.

A number of routine administrative matters and correspondence were dealt with.

The positions of Animal Control Officer and Fire Chief were left vacant pending a recommendation from the Volunteer Fire department. Mary will follow up on this.

James (Jimbo) Lang was appointed to a one year term on the Town-owned Property Management Board to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Bruce Blessington.

John Evans' term on the Planning Board has expired. Although Evans was willing to serve another term, Jason Lang was appointed to fill the position.

David Fluharty was reappointed to the Board of Appeals.

Dale Smith was appointed to the Harbor Committee.

Mrs. Rheta Morgan was awarded the Boston Cane as the oldest resident of Georgetown.

The Selectmen then went into executive session to discuss personnel matters.

The next meeting of the Selectmen will be at 7 PM on Tuesday, July 27 at the Town Office.

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