

Selectmen's Meeting Monday, October 3, 2022

These minutes were transcribed by Angela Eldridge, Secretary. Matthew Sawyer Jr., Town Administrator, and T.J. Eldridge, Public Works Director, was also in attendance. The meeting was held in the Bub Avery Gymnasium at Town Hall.

Call to Order/Roll Call: Completed in the Work Session.

Smith reconvened the meeting at 4:15 PM.

Smith opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Smith made a motion to enter into a Non-Public Session#2 under RSA 91-A:3 II(c) at 4:15PM. Simpson seconded. Roll call. Martha Eldridge - yes, Susan Simpson - yes, and Jonathan Smith - yes.

Smith made a motion to re-enter the public meeting. M. Eldridge seconded. A unanimous vote was taken.

Smith made a motion to seal the Non-Public Session#2. Simpson seconded. A unanimous vote was taken.

Public Input:

Mr. Greg Howard referred to Daymond Steers' article in the Conway Daily Sun about the Whittier Covered Bridge. He asked how the Town came to the decision that there should be a change in use from vehicle traffic to non-vehicle traffic. Smith advised that it was discussed last month, and Sawyer Jr. advised that it was voted on at the last meeting. Smith advised that prior to that it was discussed with the engineers and Hoyle & Tanner. There was discussion over an email chain with DOT and Smith advised that the original application filed to rehab the bridge talked about an alternative goal to turn the bridge into a recreational system, including snow mobile traffic and as a focal point for information about the history of Ossipee and its current recreational assets. Smith advised that even with the original application going way back, this was always an option. The Bridge cost 2 million dollars. The Town invested \$330,000 in direct taxation. The other 1.7 million was received through Federal and State funds. This is a historic place and it's an asset to the Town. Smith advised that this was decided for the long-term prosperity of the Bridge. It can be made into a nice park with picnic tables on either side. There is a 50 foot Right of Way on both sides of the Bridge. Smith advised that it was not an easy decision. They could have put a utility bridge there for a fraction of the cost. Howard asked why previous boards did not highlight weight restrictions and the possibility of it not being opened to vehicles. He asked repeatedly during the design process where parking would be and was told that they didn't know where the property lines are. Mr. Howard also advised that boundary surveys can be done with Federal money to figure out parking. Provisions were made on the Nudd Roadside for 3-4 parking spaces. Smith advised it would be a project with surveyors to determine parking and a footprint for an idea of what we will do down there. The Board wants it to be a nice space for people to take pictures and picnic rather than just drive across. Howard asked about access for canoeing and swimming. Smith advised that is a great idea and that the goal is to make it more accessible for people to enjoy. Howard also mentioned maybe having a fence, so people do not infringe on private property in the area. T.J. advised that the issue is trying to figure out which Right

of Way it is. They know it is 50 feet, but it must be from the center of the road. They may need a surveyor to figure it out. Chris Elliot wondered if there is a communication issue and is curious if an engineering study has been done to assess if cars can be used over this bridge. Discussion ensued. Matt Sawyer Jr. advised that the bridge is rated for 6-ton so that is the study. The concern is that with the use of google maps and GPS, it will have more traffic. In phase 3, there was concern about the amount of people who were going to try to cut off corner of Rte 16 and Rte 25 to use the bridge, causing it to wear out faster. Smith advised that it was recommended to be cut to 3-ton limit if they were going to let cars drive over it to give a safety buffer. This bridge is one of the largest in existence at 132 feet. Sawyer Jr. also advised that per communication and documentation, it is indicated that they may not have gotten all this funding if the bridge wasn't kept original. The grant money was to preserve the original bridge. Chris Elliot advised that had people known, this may not be the reaction, so he went back to discussing communication. He discussed being reactive versus proactive. Smith advised that the Board agrees. Smith also mentioned that the current Board got the bridge across the water, and he sat on the other side of the table for 10 years listening to phrases like, "it's almost there". Thanks to Matt and T.J., who spearheaded the project, it has been done in a year and a half. Steer asked that in the spirit of compromise could the bridge be open for vehicle traffic a few months out of the year, in the warm season. Smith said it would be difficult to have vehicle traffic and a park type setting. Once the green space is set up, it will need to be blocked off and shut down during the summer when people will want to be in that space. Discussion ensued about compromise. Steer mentioned the use of the bridge to get to the transfer station and Smith said that all that traffic would not be good for the prosperity of the bridge. Steer asked if there was a formal vote. Smith and Sawyer Jr. advised that it was done in a non-public session last week. Steer asked why it was done in a non-public session and Smith advised that they had reputational risk involved regarding some people that were involved but is willing to take another vote now. Smith made a motion to follow the advice of the engineers regarding the construction of the Whittier Covered Bridge to keep it closed to vehicle traffic and open it to pedestrian or bike traffic and possible snow machines in the future. M. Eldridge seconded. A unanimous vote was taken. Bob Pustell mentioned that he was looking forward to using the bridge to bypass traffic. He also mentioned that he believes that the Town does not do a good job at taking care of their green spaces and asked for assurance that this space would not end up looking shabby like the rest of the green spaces have in the past, like Constitution Park for example. Smith said that Constitution Park looks great, thanks to Edwina Boose and her husband and Pustell advised that it was because of the FOCP, who take care of it. Discussion ensued. Smith said it takes everyone in the community to do their part and we hope that we can all keep it looking nice. Pustell said that it would be a shame if after millions of dollars spent, the space gets left to deteriorate. Steer asked if snowmobiles will be allowed. Smith knows there is some history of snowmobile activity there and T.J. advised that the trail has been closed. Smith said it would need to be worked out with the snowmobile club. Discussion ensued.

Meeting Minutes:

M. Eldridge made a motion to approve the Selectmen's Meeting Minutes on 9/12/2022. Simpson seconded. A unanimous vote was taken.

M. Eldridge made a motion to approve the Selectmen's Meeting Minutes on 9/16/2022. Simpson seconded. A unanimous vote was taken.

M. Eldridge made a motion to approve the Work Session Minutes on 9/26/2022. Simpson seconded. A unanimous vote was taken.

Accounts Payable & Payroll Manifest:

The Payroll Check Voucher total was submitted for the week ending 10/1/2022 with a pay date of 10/7/22 in the amount of \$41,908.33. The General Fund is \$28,337.30. Water accounts payable was \$130.00 and Sewer was \$154.46. Whittier Bridge accounts payable was \$20,484.86. The total was \$91,014.95. M. Eldridge made a motion to approve. Simpson seconded. A unanimous vote was taken.

Review of Red Folder:

The Board received a letter from Dan Karl of Water Village Road to be considered for the open position on the Zoning Board of Adjustment. The ZBA approved and appointed him as a member on September 27, 2022.

The Board received a Water & Sewer Warrant for \$160.00. Simpson made a motion to approve. Smith seconded. A unanimous vote was taken.

The Board received a Notice of Decision from the Zoning Board of Adjustment for case #22-07-V for Jeff Kelley. Tax Map 091, Lot 037 was granted a Variance from 34.5 Industrial Uses Section (d): Sawmill - to operate a sawmill business in the residential district.

Old Business:

None

New Business:

None

Second Public Input:

Steer asked if the Board anticipated a vote in March regarding the potential to purchase tables and chairs for the park. Smith advised that it was a possibility. They still need to figure out the Right of Way and it may need to be surveyed. Steer asked if there could be additional votes on how to make this turn into something. Smith said yes. Steer asked if the engineers made it clear way back that they didn't think cars to drive on the it because it sounds like it was a recent decision. Smith asked for clarification on how far back Steer is referring to. Steer answered, when they got money and the project looked doable, before the bridge was moved. He asked if the engineer told them to keep cars off the bridge. Smith advised that there was preliminary discussion, and they were under the assumption that vehicle use was a requirement as a part of keeping the bridge open. That was not true, and it was validated by DOT and through the original agreement. It was a conversation between Matt, T.J., and the engineers for months. Steer mentioned that he believed it should have been on them to make it clear that if they build it, then it will deteriorate in a short time if vehicles use it. Smith advised that they rebuilt an 1800 era design and that it is not a modern bridge. Modern vehicles are heavier and there are many moving parts. He asked if we want to preserve it or have to pay \$300,000 in 10 years to repair it. Steer said he just doesn't get why it wasn't discussed beforehand. T.J. advised that CPM was new to this just like us and the bridge was always supported with 50-60 cement blocks. When it was put back on the I-beam, it performed differently. So, they recommended to preserve it by limiting traffic. Discussion ensued. Sawyer Jr. said to Steer that the grant agreement was to keep the bridge original. He said the Town portion of the cost is \$230,000 as opposed to 2 million dollars as the newspaper would have people believe based on their headline. \$108,000 was in a capital reserve and ARPA fund will cover the rest so its an unfair picture you are trying to paint. Steer mentioned that if whoever is in charge wasn't being a stickler for making it look like it did previously then it could have

been done with more support for vehicle weight. Smith reiterated that it was for the preservation of the structure, and it had to be historically accurate. Discussion ensued.

Lynne Parker, representing Moultonville United Methodist Church, asked if it is allowed to have a bake sale at the upcoming election as they have done in previous years before COVID. Smith advised yes. Discussion ensued.

Dallas Emery had concerns about the cameras on Route 16 by the golf course. Smith asked if he was referring to the State cameras on the highway. Emery advised yes and he mentioned that cameras were never put on the plans. Smith advised that this would be a state issue. Smith spoke with someone from the State and the cameras are only used for traffic purposes and not for facial recognition or speed. Emery doesn't think we need a camera there. Emery also asked Smith if he found out anything about the 5,000 votes. Smith said no but the Secretary of State is looking into it. Discussion ensued.

Pustell asked when they will be discussing the dump fees. Smith advised that they are having a public meeting immediately following the Selectmen's Meeting.

No meeting on October 10, 2022, due to the Holiday.

The next meeting will be on October 17, 2022.

M. Eldridge advised that Budget process has begun. Smith advised that their next meeting is October 5, 2022 at 6:30PM.

Adjournment:

Being no further input, Smith made a motion to adjourn. Simpson seconded. A unanimous vote was taken.

Adjourned at 5:00 PM.

Jonathan H. Smith, Chairman

Martha B. Eldridge

Susan J. Simpson

To be approved 10/17/2022