

**Town of West Bath
Select Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday, October 5, 2023**

Town of West Bath Kathleen Lavallee, Chair - Present
Select Board: Suzanne Andresen - Present
Madelyn Hennessey - Present

Town Staff Present: Kristine Poland, Town Administrator
Karly Perry, Town Clerk

Investment Committee: Paul Coombs, Chair
Robert Weir

Public: Nancy Hamlin, Nick Hamlin David Hennessey, Jane Weir, Steve Winter

A meeting of the Select Board was held at the West Bath Fire Hall on **Thursday, September 21, 2023, at 6:55 pm.**

- I. CALL TO ORDER at **6:55 pm**
- II. ATTENDANCE AND ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM – **Yes**
- III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE WAS SAID.
- IV. CONSENT AGENDA
 1. Approval of Minutes:
 - a. September 21, 2023
 2. Approval of Warrant(s):
 - a. Municipal
 - b. School
 3. Upcoming Board of Selectmen Meeting(s):
 - a. October 19, 2023, at 5:30 pm at the West Bath Town Hall
Municipal Officer Hennessey moved to approve the warrants as presented, seconded by Municipal Officer Andresen. Select Board unanimously approved.

V. BUSINESS ITEMS Acting as the Select Board

1. Investment Committee Recommendation

Paul Coombs, Investment Committee Chair, introduced himself and noted that one of the Town’s investments has matured and the Committee has met and agreed upon a recommendation to the Select Board. He added that the Committee is aware of upcoming expenditures and is recommending a short-term investment. The Committee recommends investing \$150,000 in a US Treasury Note at 5% to mature on August 31, 2025. **Municipal Officer Andresen moved to approve the recommendation as presented. Municipal Officer Hennessey amended the motion to authorize the Town Treasurer to initiate the transaction, seconded by Municipal Officer Lavallee. Select Board unanimously approved.**

Bob Weir of the Investment Committee noted that the Town has three additional investments which will mature prior to the newly authorized investment, which may be held for upcoming expenses. Discussion followed on the budget and scheduling for repairs to the roof at the West Bath School.

2. West Bath Municipal Election and State of Maine Referendum Election

Town Clerk Karly Perry presented the election warrant which must be sign by the Select Board to alert the Town of the upcoming Municipal Election. **Municipal Officer Hennessey moved, seconded by Municipal Officer Lavallee, to approve the warrant as presented. Select Board unanimously approved.**

3. Discussion, Conduct Guidelines for Elected and Appointed Officials, and Town Staff, and Related Policies

Town Administrator, Kristine Poland, presented the Select Board with correspondence and receipts from the Town Attorney regarding the Code of Conduct. Municipal Officer Andresen asked Ms. Poland to provide the redlined notes from the attorney and expressed concern that the Board did not see the guidelines after the attorney revisions.

Ms. Poland clarified that the Human Resources Policy was not reviewed by the Town Attorney. Municipal Officer Andresen expressed her preference that all policies be reviewed by counsel. Ms. Poland agreed that Municipal Officer Andresen had been clear about her preference, however the Board as a whole did not direct the Town Administrator to have the document reviewed by the Town Attorney.

Municipal Officer Hennessey stated that the Human Resources Policy has been adopted by vote of the Board, and she had read the guidelines very carefully with many years of experience reviewing similar policies and was satisfied with the document, citing the cost of legal review. Municipal Officer Andresen stressed the importance of having all legally binding documents reviewed by counsel to protect the community.

Municipal Officer Andresen moved to authorize the Town Attorney to review the HR Manual.

Municipal Officer Lavallee, seconded by Municipal Officer Hennessey, moved to table HR Manual review by the Town Attorney. Motion passed with two in favor, one opposed (Andresen)

4. Town Administrators Report

None

5. Future Agenda Items

Ms. Poland asked that the Select Board address the Casella contract and recommended the Board meet with a representative at the November 9, 2023, Select Board Meeting. Municipal Officer Lavallee agreed that there are issues she would like to discuss with Casella in addition to the contract negotiation.

VI. BUSINESS ITEMS

Acting as the Board of Assessors

1. Discussion, Proposed Training on Revaluation and Abatement Processes

Municipal Officer Andresen recommended a community hearing to answer questions and educate the public on how to file for a tax abatement. Ms. Poland asked what that meeting would look like and who would be administering the training. Municipal Officer Andresen stated that it was her expectation that a contracted assessor would hold office hours a suggested having a local assessor conduct the training.

Municipal Officer Lavallee spoke to the difficulty of hosting a meeting without Parker Appraisal. Town Clerk, Karly Perry, expressed concern that residents would come to the meeting with an expectation of discussing specific issues with their properties. Discussion followed on how to move forward. Municipal Officer Hennessey stated her preference that residents follow the process already in place, adding her opinion that a public meeting is not necessary.

Municipal Officer Lavallee spoke to the benefit of generally holding informational meetings to hear public comment throughout the year, to which the Board agreed.

Ms. Poland asked the Board for direction in order to end further discussion. Municipal Officer Hennessey asked that any meeting be postponed and suggested extended office hours to allow staff to be present for those who cannot come in during regular business hours. Municipal Officer Lavallee agreed, and questioned whether a meeting is necessary moving forward.

Paul Coombs spoke to his experience service on Town committees and stated that he was unaware of what a property card was and agreed with the importance of public education.

Municipal Officer Hennessey spoke to the benefits of discussing taxation during the budget process.

Municipal Officer Andresen moved to hold a Town meeting to educate taxpayers on how to look at their property cards. Municipal Officer Lavallee asked if a property owner does not apply for an abatement this year if they will be able to apply in the future, which Ms. Poland confirmed that they would.

Steve Winter testified regarding issues with his property card and his meeting with the assessors, after which not all of the issues had been corrected. Municipal Officer Andresen expressed concern that other residents may be under the false impression that changes were made to their valuation which were not.

Municipal Officer Lavallee moved, seconded by Municipal Officer Hennessey, to table. Select Board unanimously agreed.

Jane Weir expressed interest in how to encourage residents to attend meetings, noting the informational value of participation. She suggested a letter be sent to each taxpayer. Mr. Weir spoke to his lack of understanding that the assessor would no longer be holding office hours and spoke to the disadvantages of not being able to come in and speak with someone.

Ms. Poland asked the Select Board to sign the tax commitment previously approved. The Board signed the 2023 tax commitment.

Ms. Poland announced that Parker Appraisal will be in West Bath the week of October 16th to review abatements. She recommended moving the next regular meeting from October 19th to the 23rd in order to review abatement requests. The Select Board agreed to move the meeting to Monday, October 23rd at 5:00pm.

VII. SELECT BOARD COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

IX. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Municipal Officer Lavallee moved, seconded by Municipal Officer Hennessey, to enter into Executive Session pursuant to 1 M.R.S. Chapter 13 §405 (6)(A) to discuss a personnel matter. Select Board unanimously approved. Select Board entered into Executive Session at 7:50 pm. Executive Session ended at 8:25pm.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Select Board adjourned by unanimous acclamation at 8:25 pm.

A true attested copy,

Karly A. Perry, Town Clerk