

**Town of North Yarmouth
Select Board
Meeting Minutes January 2, 2024, 6:30 PM**

Select Board Members

Amy Haile, Chairperson
Karl Cyr, Board Member

Andrea Berry, Vice Chairperson
Paul Hodgetts, Board Member

Katherine Maloney, Board Member

Paul Hodgetts, Board Member, was excused by the Chair.

Call to Order (17:30-18:19:10)

Pledge of Allegiance

Special Presentations (None)

Public Comment-Non-Agenda Items (None)

New Business (19:11-30:30)

Committee Forum

Chairperson Haile stated she likes the idea of highlighting the committees and giving them the opportunity to share their goals. They could align different activities within the committee with the Select Board goals. She would like to schedule during February or March. Vice Chairperson Berry is in favor of meeting together. She offered to help with the organization of the meeting.

Selectperson Maloney stated she has been to two of these meetings. It was nice to meet and connect with new people.

Selectperson Cyr stated he did not have much to add, but thought it was a great idea.

Chairperson Haile suggested setting a date, but the Town Manager, Diane Barnes stated she will have a budget schedule for the next meeting and suggested the Board wait until the next meeting to select dates.

Old Business (30:31-1:15:19)

North Yarmouth Open Space & Planning Committee-Establish AD Hoc Committee & Review Charge



North Yarmouth
Open Space Plannin

Public Comments

Bob Wood, Milliken Road, stated we live in a community of 4000 people. When he moved here there was 2000. The best time to have an open space committee was 20 years ago and the next best time is now. If we wait another 20 years, there will be no need for an open space committee. He applauds the effort. He hopes we get good committee members and hopes the town gives resources to the committee.

Mike Mallory, Walnut Hill Road, agreed that open space is important. Is there a target amount of property we want to convert from taxed to tax exempt and how does that spread out over the residence tax bill.

Chairperson Haile advised she has not done an open space committee before. What type of budget and expenses will the committee need?

Vice Chairperson Berry advised she would like to see access to mapping and GIS work. She does not know exactly how much will be needed.

Alan Stearns, Executive Director of the Royal River Conservation Trust, stated resources for the study or task force and resources for implementation are two different things. We can find money for good open space acquisition if there is cohesion, energy, and a plan would make it easier to find resources for conservation. He urged the board to have a discussion with municipal staff. They are a valuable resource to the success of the committee.

Chairperson Haile, seconded by Selectperson Maloney, moved to establish an Ad Hoc Committee known as “North Yarmouth Open Space and Planning” and approve committee charge as presented and appoint Andrea Berry and Karl Cyr as Select Board liaisons. Vote 4 Yes/0 No.

Senior Tax Program-Update

Katherine Maloney, Board Member advised that she and Paul Hodgetts had not met to discuss the program.

Highlights from Community Engagement Activities

Andrea Berry, Vice Chairperson provided the following notes from the November 18, 2023 Tax Group Open House:

Housing

- Desire for a housing study for North Yarmouth to compare to Cumberland's study
- One person felt that the housing caps were too high (especially in Cumberland) because we never reach them.
- We need real “low income” housing or workforce housing for people in our community. What kind of housing subsidies can we offer to help people locate in our town centers so they can be close to needed services? How can we also work to bring transportation opportunities to our town centers to help people get to where they need to go when they live in these new subsidized housing complexes?
- Cumberland 55+ housing built a few years ago was affordable. The new Drowne Rd project will not be affordable for folks, despite the name of the state formula. The people who actually need the place to live cannot afford the “affordable” price point.
- Some of the Cumberland affordable housing properties have 100 person wait lists.
- We need more affordable housing for people UNDER 55
- Wondering about the RV/mobile home regulations in town
- The existing senior housing (Hawthorne Court) has a waitlist and only one-unit bedrooms (and “most” seniors want 2 bedrooms)

Taxes

- Many people have confusion about how our property taxes break down between Town, County, and MSAD

- “Retired people don’t have a business background and so don’t understand how budgets work. They don’t see things how business people see things.”
- People want lower taxes
- One resident felt that the school percentage was much closer to 80% of our tax base
- Suggestion that people should pay a progressive tax based on how many kids they currently have in our school system

Community Engagement

- People don’t have time to attend all the town and school meetings
- People don’t like the format of town and school meetings
- People want more social events to get folks together, with particular focus on non-family-focused events (literally said “where kids are not invited”). Examples were a softball game like “we used to have” (I believe this is in reference to the yearly NY softball game—where only the men were invited to play while the women and girls cooked the meal) or “a kegger”. Any event we do should include “beer and no kids.”

School

- People want a cheaper school
- The group felt the school issue was too big to include in this open house so are considering planning a second gathering centered around that issue.
- Some people really regret not having an elementary school in North Yarmouth.
- One NY resident said that she was less willing to volunteer because the schools are currently all in Cumberland. She felt that NY residents would have more ownership over the schools if one was in our town.
- The on-campus option is intriguing, but concern we will grow out of it too quickly
- Dislike of the Performing Arts Center
- Suggestion to shift graduations to Portland’s Merrill Auditorium
- Dislike that the MSAD participates in the school ranking process
- Disappointment that MIW is ranked 53 in state for elementary schools
- Desire for shop classes at Greely so kids don’t need to go to PATHS

Government Format

- There are challenges with the three-year term model for elected leaders. With this model, often people in elected positions set a path and move the town in a direction that then isn’t carried on with a new set of leaders. One person indicated that this tax group formed to help hold people to a commitment to the town direction. The individual did not have a response when asked how the town’s Comprehensive Plans fit into this issue.
- People don’t like going to Town Meeting, especially on Saturdays.

Climate/Sustainability

- Cumberland is also done with the goals set out in their Climate Action Plan!
- Cumberland goal of 50% households shifting to heat pumps looks possible in 7 years (about 200 shifting each year so far)- no town subsidies
- Important to ask what each household can do for the climate. Focus on carbon emissions, landscape practices
- How do our towns match up with the state’s 30 by 30 plan?
- Landscaping shifts- what practices can we encourage in our community to reduce the environmental impacts of our landscaping practices? Enthusiasm for a pesticide ban.

- In Cumberland there is a conservation subdivision ordinance that allows developers to cut the lot size requirements if 50% of property is turned into conservation land.
- Goals should include reduction in tree loss in developments and regular home ownership through LUO

General Comments

- One person mentioned a talk by Dr. Shaw and the info she learned: There will continue to be an influx of people coming to the state of Maine as environmental refugees. How do we get ourselves (and our towns) in a position where we're re-focusing on what is coming and how we can support those people? How can we build up our housing stock and expand our schools to be ready for the coming new wave of residents?
- One resident particularly called out Cumberland for not being "community-focused". They thought Cumberland approached issues with a NIMBY attitude.
- Desire for the sidewalk plan in NY to progress more quickly
- Feeling that the new people who move to Cumberland or North Yarmouth are not engaged in the community, are only there until their children graduate, and leave the people who have lived there for their entire lives to do all the work (i.e. take care of trails, take care of neighbors, etc.)
- Perception that the rails vs trails project is potentially illegal because of a supreme court decision that said any property abutting abandoned train lines go back to the initial abutting landowner - why haven't abutters in NY and Cumberland been notified?
- NY and Cumberland do not have anything in common except the school; the school is a failure, and the library is struggling.

Amy Haile, Chairperson provided the following comments: stated she and Selectperson Cyr noted residents talked about a directory of businesses. How does one attract town business? Some residents suggested an economic consultant. More business will reduce resident taxes. She encouraged the board to look at dates for future public comment meetings.

Katherine Maloney, Selectboard provided the following comments: She stated it went well and it is always good to hear from people. There was a lot of overlap with Vice Chairperson Berry's notes. There were the same concerns about increased taxes, having kids in school versus no kids, having meetings during the week and not on Saturday, and concerns with transparency. A majority of the Select Boards work happens in these meetings. Selectperson Hodgetts and Selectperson Maloney are open to these meetings on a regular basis.

Karl Cyr, Selectboard provided the following comments: stated it was a good discussion around public comment. Residents asked about snowmobile access. He will bring it to the parks committee for a discussion. It was time well spent and he looks forward to making those connections.

Charter Commission Information Forum-Scheduling

Diane Barnes, Town Manager stated that she spoke to a former Town Manager who recently spoke to the Town of Kennebunk on the same topic and asked him if he would be interested in presenting to the Town of North Yarmouth on January 30, 2024, at 6pm. By consensus, the Select Board agreed on the date and time.

Public Comment

Mike Mallory, Walnut Hill Road, stated he did some research and gave it to Selectperson Maloney and Selectperson Hodgetts. Stated whatever we come up with for a change, it will be the cheapest way to deal with this and make it more affordable for seniors to stay in their homes.

Consent Agenda (1:15:20-1:15:45)

A. Municipal Accounts Payable Warrants

49 \$ 3,258.92

51 \$ 1,891.75

52 \$845,425.27

B. Municipal Payroll Warrants

50 \$ 45,102.86

C. Select Board Minutes-11/21/2023

Chairperson Haile, seconded by Vice Chairperson Berry, moved to approve the consent agenda as presented. Vote 4 Yes/0 No.

Management Reports & Communications (1:15:46-1:15:47)

Town Manager Report: (None)

Any Other Business (1:15:48-1:17)

Selectperson Cyr stated he left the last meeting in the middle of the broadcasting issue conversation. He went back and watched the rest of the meeting. He wanted to clarify that he will meet with his committee and report back to the Select Board, but he will not be at the next meeting.

Adjournment

Chairperson Haile, seconded by Vice Chairperson Berry moved to adjourn at 7:35 PM. Vote 4 Yes/0 No.


Karen Casale, Recording Secretary

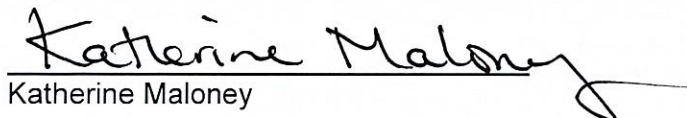

Amy Haile, Chairperson

Select Board


Andrea Berry, Vice Chairperson

Paul Hodgetts


Karl Cyr


Katherine Maloney