



Town of Gorham New Hampshire

PUBLIC MEETING OF THE GORHAM BOARD OF SELECTMEN **Gorham Town Hall Public Meeting Room 2nd Floor** **Monday, October 25, 2021** **5:00 p.m.**

SELECTMEN PRESENT: Michael Waddell, Judy LeBlanc, and Adam White.

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Denise Vallee, Town Manager; and Jeff Stewart, Director, Parks and Recreation Department.

OTHERS PRESENT: Edith Tucker, Reporter, Berlin Sun; and Mike Welch, Northern Community Investment Corporation.

1) Non-Public Session - 5:00 p.m.

Nonpublic Session under RSA 91-A:3, II(a) *The dismissal, promotion, or compensation of any public employee or the disciplining of such employee, or the investigation of any charges against him or her, **unless** the employee affected (1) has a right to a public meeting, and (2) requests that the meeting be open, in which case the request shall be granted; (d) Consideration of the acquisition, sale, or lease of real or personal property which, if discussed in public, would likely benefit a party or parties whose interests are adverse to those of the general community; and (e) Consideration or negotiation of pending claims or litigation which has been threatened in writing or filed by or against the public body or any subdivision thereof, or by or against any member thereof because of his or her membership in such public body, until the claim or litigation has been fully adjudicated or otherwise settled. Any application filed for tax abatement, pursuant to law, with any body or board shall not constitute a threatened or filed litigation against any public body for the purposes of this subparagraph.*

2) Public Session Call to Order - 6:00 p.m.

Chairperson Waddell called the public session to order at 6:08 p.m.

3) New Business

a. Announce Action, if Any Taken in Non-Public Session

None.

b. LWCF Grant - Limitless Playground Public Hearing

Chairperson Waddell opened the public hearing at 6:09 p.m.

Mike Welch gave a presentation regarding the limitless playground and the grant. He provided a bit of background regarding the discussions about the grant. He indicated that the playground equipment would be approximately \$50,000, and explained the rationale of additional costs, including the materials to be

installed for it to be ADA compliant. Discussion was had regarding the necessity to add handicap parking to the area.

Denise Vallee commented regarding the addition of the bathrooms to the project. Jeff Stewart spoke about how much he's raised in fundraising to-date for the project, which is over \$20,000 and his current efforts to increase that amount. Edith Tucker suggested getting parents involved in donation efforts. Discussions were had regarding other potential fundraising activities.

MOTION: Selectman LeBlanc moved to approve pursuing the LWCF Grant and the construction of the limitless playground. It was seconded by Selectman White.

Selectman LeBlanc: Aye

Selectman White: Aye

Chairperson Waddell: Aye

The motion carried. (3-0-0).

c. COVID-19 - Mask Mandate

Ms. Vallee spoke about the fact that the City of Berlin is discussing this evening reimposing the mask mandate, and that she was proposing that the Board consider it for the Town of Gorham. She went over the parameters of the mandate, as well as the rationale for issuing it.

MOTION: Selectman LeBlanc moved to issue the mask mandate, with the amendment that rather than for 30 days, that it would be reviewed at the next meeting. It was seconded by Selectman White.

Discussion was had regarding the inconsistency of the mask mandate in the past, where it would be required for visitors to wear a mask, but those working within the building would be without a mask, including the need for commonsense decisions where socially distancing is possible. Further discussion was had regarding the imposition of masks on the residents.

Selectman LeBlanc: Aye

Selectman White: Aye

Chairperson Waddell: Aye

The motion carried. (3-0-0).

d. Tax Rate Setting

Chairperson Waddell indicated that the current tax rate is \$31.85. Ms. Vallee went over the change in the tax rate, not including any use of the unrestricted fund balance, which would reflect an increase of \$5.52, going to \$37.37. Discussion was had regarding the amount of the unrestricted fund balance that should be utilized to reduce that increased amount, as well as the rationale behind how much should be allotted and what steps should be taken to determine that amount.

The Board concluded that the tax rate is going to be reduced beyond the Town's impact, wherein the municipality will be subsidizing the school, the state, and the county taxes. Chairperson Waddell indicated they need a recommendation for Overlay from the Assessor.

e. Personnel Policy

Chairperson Waddell provided a background regarding the work on the Personnel Policy.

i. Juneteenth Federal Holiday

Chairperson Waddell stated that currently Town Employees receive 10 1/2 holidays. He noted that this holiday would make that 11 1/2 holidays. Discussion was had regarding what the 1/2 holiday reflects. The figure was amended to reflect 11 1/2 current holiday days. Discussion was had regarding adding another paid holiday, including substituting this holiday for a day that's already compensated for.

MOTION: Selectman LeBlanc moved to strike Juneteenth as a paid day off. It was seconded by Selectman White.

Selectman LeBlanc: Aye

Selectman White: Aye

Chairperson Waddell: Aye

The motion carried. (3-0-0).

ii. 75% Sick Leave Payout Upon Retirement

Selectman White went over the issues regarding this section. Discussion was had regarding notice that this would be included in the Policy. Chairperson Waddell went over what the section laid out. Discussion was had regarding the pros and the cons of this section.

MOTION: Chairperson Waddell moved to add the 75% Sick Leave Payout Upon Retirement section to the Policy. It was seconded by Selectman LeBlanc.

Selectman LeBlanc: Aye

Selectman White: No

Chairperson Waddell: Aye

The motion carried. (2-0-1).

iii. Bereavement Leave

Chairperson Waddell indicated that this Policy would increase bereavement compensation from 3 days to 5 days off for fulltime or part-time employee's immediate family or domestic partner. Discussion was had regarding including bereavement leave under sick leave, as well as the amendment that the current Policy reflects 3 to 5 days off. Further discussion was had with regards to increasing the days off to 5 days, specifically. The Board concluded that the bereavement paid time ends at 3 days but can be supplemented with paid time by using personal days, vacation days, or sick days, or with unpaid time, with the prior authorization of the Town Manager.

iv. Health Insurance Opt Out

Discussion was had that this is the current unwritten Policy that is now in black-and-white.

v. Reimbursable Expenses

Selectman White went over the Policy and what it covered. He noted that the wording indicated that the reimbursed rates would be whatever was dictated by the Federal Reimbursement

amounts, and that they should be clarified to state that reimbursement will be up to the amount listed on the Federal Guidelines, with the provision of the receipts of such disbursement.

vi. Personal Dress, Jewelry, Tattoos

Selectman White spoke about the amendment. Ms. Vallee indicated that this is being reviewed by Legal Counsel.

vii. Weapons Policy

Discussion was had regarding the Policy, which was removed, and how its wording caused issues in its enforcement. Further discussion was had regarding a proposed Policy and what it should entail. The Board concluded that there should be no Weapons Policy included in the Personnel Policies.

viii. Workplace Violence

Ms. Vallee went over the part of this section that spoke of weapons. Discussion was had regarding whether or not that should be stricken from the section. The Board concluded that the paragraph should be rewritten so that it flows better without the weapons verbiage, but to notify Employees that violence of any kind will not be tolerated.

ix. Workplace Searches

Selectman White indicated that the weapon verbiage should be removed, in order to conform with the removal of the weapons policy. Discussion was had regarding whether there should be a distinction between illegal and legal weapons. Chairperson Waddell suggested that this section be reviewed by Legal Counsel.

x. Other

Selectman White inquired regarding the drug testing for commercial licenses. Discussion was had regarding what the verbiage should include and whether it should be located in the Personnel Policy or in a separate document that is referenced within the Personnel Policy.

xi. Alcohol and Drug Testing

Discussion was had regarding the triggers for when testing should occur.

xii. Crime

Ms. Vallee indicated there is no definition of crime. Discussion was had regarding what crimes should be included in this section. It was decided to leave the definition as is as there is some language in the policy that provides for the administration to use their discretion as to whether a criminal offense is cause for discipline, administrative leave or termination.

f. Town Code Recodification - Revised Figures, Quote from Municode

Ms. Vallee stated that during the time between receiving the last code and today, Municode was bought out by Civic Plus, which is the Town's website provider. She went on to state that, due to that change, Civic Plus has provided a new quote which is lower than the initial one. She went over the difference between the quotes with the Board. Chairperson Waddell indicated he would like to take the matter under

consideration for the time being. Discussion was had regarding what the work entails and who would be responsible for completing the work.

g. Assessing Contract Revision

Ms. Vallee distributed the amendment to the Board for their review.

MOTION: Selectman White moved to approve the Assessing Contract, as presented. It was seconded by Selectman LeBlanc.

Selectman LeBlanc: Aye

Selectman White: Aye

Chairperson Waddell: Aye

The motion carried. (3-0-0).

h. Application to Merge Lots - 27 & 33 Exchange Streets

Chairperson Waddell reminded the Board that they had approved the sale of a sliver of Town land off of the Recreation Department's lot on Exchange Street. He went over the process that was undertaken with the lots.

MOTION: Selectman White moved to merge Tax Map Number U5 Lots Parcels 10 and 11, 27 and 33 Exchange Street. It was seconded by Selectman LeBlanc.

Selectman LeBlanc: Aye

Selectman White: Aye

Chairperson Waddell: Aye

The motion carried. (3-0-0).

i. Review of Parks & Recreation Department Website Page, Upcoming Projects

Director Stewart spoke about the Facebook pages and the Parks and Recreation Department Website page. He indicated he updates the website multiple times a week. Discussion was had regarding the ease of editing the website. Discussion was had regarding the different attributes of the website.

Ms. Tucker inquired whether Director Stewart receives less phone calls due to having such an accessible website. Discussion was had regarding the benefits of the website.

4) Old Business/Updates

None.

5) Public Comment: Those in attendance will have the opportunity for public comment of two (2) minutes or less.

None.

6) Other Business

a. Approve Minutes of October 13, 2021 (Regular & Nonpublic Meeting).

MOTION: Selectman White moved to approve the Minutes of October 13, 2021, regular meeting and nonpublic meeting, as presented. It was seconded by Selectman LeBlanc.

Selectman LeBlanc: Aye
Selectman White: Aye
Chairperson Waddell: Aye

The motion carried. (3-0-0).

b. Abatements, if needed

None.

c. Town Manager's Report

- **New Brand Guide**

Ms. Vallee distributed the brand guide and went over what was created by Meag Poirier of Wild Roots Branding. Board approved of the new brand guide.

- **Thank You Lunch**

Ms. Vallee indicated that after the Lumberjack Festival there was a lunch at the Fire Department with food provided by the Parks & Recreation Department to thank the other department members for their assistance with the event. She went over who participated in the lunch.

- **Libby Recreation Complex Ice Rink Donation**

Director Stewart indicated that Toby Reichert had contacted them regarding alleviating the leaking and flooding issues at the rink. Discussion was had regarding who would be donating time and materials in order to get the paving done, as well as the benefits that this work would provide for the ice rink. Further discussion was had regarding the ability to utilize the complex during the evening, as well as plans for future hockey tournaments.

Selectman LeBlanc asked whether Libby's temporary fix has been working. Discussion was had regarding the inlet flow, and what steps need to be taken to make the temporary fix permanent.

- **Workforce Housing**

Ms. Vallee spoke about a meeting that she attended regarding the need for workforce housing and where they could potentially create 20 to 30 units. Discussion was had regarding the current state of affairs in terms of lack of workforce, which stems mainly from a lack of housing, in the region and what steps need to take place in order to respond to the situation.

- Ms. Vallee indicated that the Town's electricity contract is good until 2022. She noted that other Towns are locking their rates in for 2023 and 2024, due to the uncertainty of energy costs in the future. She stated that the Town has an opportunity to lock in their rates for about \$0.01 more than what the \$7.4 rate is right now for 2023 and 2024. Discussion was had regarding what company would be locking in the rates of the Town and whether they could wait to make a decision, including what type of impact that may have on their electricity rates. The Board decided to hold off for a bit before they make a decision.

- Ms. Vallee spoke about House Bill 315 and what impact it would have if the Town participated in the rebates/energy credits. Discussion was had regarding the different programs that are available for the Town.

MOTION: Selectman LeBlanc moved to approve pursuing the rebate program outlined by Denise Vallee. It was seconded by Selectman White.

Selectman LeBlanc: Aye
Selectman White: Aye
Chairperson Waddell: Aye

The motion carried. (3-0-0).

- Ms. Vallee distributed a letter to the Board which would change the Municipal Agent from Carol Porter to Cindy Cole.

MOTION: Selectman White moved to approve the appointment of Cindy Cole, Tax Collector, as Municipal Agent. It was seconded by Selectman LeBlanc.

Selectman LeBlanc: Aye
Selectman White: Aye
Chairperson Waddell: Aye

The motion carried. (3-0-0).

- Ms. Vallee distributed a Deed that had previously been signed that has now been amended to remove the limitation on the headstone size.

MOTION: Selectman LeBlanc moved to approve the revised Deed for Rodney and Debbie Degreenia. It was seconded by Selectman White.

Selectman LeBlanc: Aye
Selectman White: Aye
Chairperson Waddell: Aye

The motion carried. (3-0-0).

- Ms. Vallee indicated that the Town has had in its possession for a number of years an original charcoal drawing of Harry Potter that was donated to the high school students that organized the Harry Potter night in 2006. She went on to state that there is an online auction house in Texas where the drawing was sent and it was auctioned off at \$6,875, which netted the theater \$5,500. She described what the funds are planned to be spent on.

d. Other

Selectman White inquired as to Halloween. Ms. Vallee went over the proposed date/time and COVID-19 precautions to be taken for the event.

7) Adjournment

MOTION: Selectman White moved to adjourn at 8:31 p.m. It was seconded by Selectman LeBlanc.


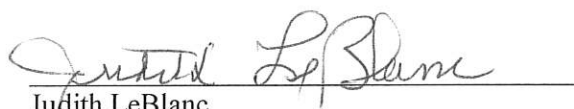
Selectman LeBlanc: Aye
Selectman White: Aye
Chairperson Waddell: Aye

The motion carried. (3-0-0).

Respectfully Submitted,

Victoria O'Connor, Recording Secretary
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Approved on November 8, 2021 by:


Michael Waddell
Judith LeBlanc
Adam White