

**South Berwick
Town Council Meeting
August 22, 2023**

Chair Mallory Cook called the meeting to order at 6:30pm. Councilors present included John James, Jeff Minihan, Jessica Cyr, and Melissa Costella. Town Manager Tim Pellerin and Assistant Town Manager Jennifer Janelle were also in attendance.

Approval of Minutes

1. Board of Assessors 08-08-23: On a motion by Mrs. Costella, seconded by Mr. Minihan, it was unanimously voted to adopt the minutes as written.
2. Town Council 08-08-23: On a motion by Mr. James, seconded by Mr. Minihan, it was unanimously voted to adopt the minutes as written.

Treasurer's Warrant

1. On a motion by Mr. James, seconded by Mr. Minihan, it was unanimously voted to sign the warrant dated August 17, 2023, in the amount of \$5,054.72 for FY 22/23.

On a motion by Mrs. Cook, seconded by Mrs. Costella, it was unanimously voted to sign the warrant dated August 17, 2023, in the amount of \$278,285.25 for FY 23/24.

Reports

The Council reviewed the information from the Great Works Regional Land Trust regarding the Salmon Falls Tidal Water Project. The Trust has raised 80% of the amount needed to make the land purchase. The Trust hopes to extend the purchase & sale contracts and close in the summer of 2024 provided the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant is awarded.

Public Comment

1. George Muller, Portland St, addressed the Council regarding the traffic on Portland St. He stated that speeding has always been an issue. He also stated that the noise from large trucks is annoying and disruptive. "Please do something."

Unfinished Business

1. The Council discussed the request to close Bittersweet Lane for a Saturday evening in September for a block party. 17 of the 22 homes on the road have responded that they are in favor of the closing.

On a motion by Mrs. Cook, seconded by Mr. James, it was unanimously voted to authorize the closure of Bittersweet Lane on September 9th from 3:00pm to 9:00pm for the neighborhood block party.

Mrs. Costella suggested that we consider a permit system for use of shared spaces. Unfortunately, we need to take safety and liability issues into consideration. Mr. Minihan agreed, adding that there is a difference between public use and private use. It was the consensus of the Council to authorize the Manager to draft a permit policy and design an event application form.

New Business

1. Denise Clavette, Economic Development Director, explained that the Downtown Façade Grant Program would reinvest 100% of the money back into the community. This is not a state program. This program is part of our TIF District requirements and is meant to help existing businesses make improvements to the exterior of their buildings. Applications are reviewed and scored by a committee. Mr. James volunteered to be the Council representative on the committee.

On a motion by Mr. James, seconded by Mrs. Cook, it was unanimously voted to authorize the establishment of a Downtown Façade Grant Program, and to allocate \$30,000 (from the Transit TIF) for FY 2024.

2. On a motion by Mr. James, seconded by Mr. Minihan, it was unanimously voted to approve the renewal of a liquor license and special amusement permit for The Link's Outlook Golf Club.

3. The Council acknowledged receipt of an application for the Planning Board from Elizabeth Ware. It was agreed to hold an executive session at the start of the next meeting to conduct an interview with Ms. Ware.

4. On a motion by Mrs. Cook, seconded by Mr. James, it was unanimously voted to accept Nora Irvine's resignation from the Board of Assessment Review.

5. On a motion by Mrs. Cook, seconded by Mr. James, it was unanimously voted to hold a public hearing on Tuesday, September 19, 2023, at 6:00pm to receive public comment on the recommendations for downtown traffic changes.

Town Manager's Report

-Highway: Still cleaning up brush. Ditching is ongoing. Waiting for pavement to complete several roads. Working on the parking lot at the food pantry.

-Fire: Been busy with 17 calls. Shout out to the Deputy and Assistant Chiefs for their efforts during the Maine-Iac Training at the red barn. Prepping for Fire Prevention week in October. Made note that the relief valve at the natural gas pipeline went off. Chief Hamel was surprised that with all the safety and monitoring devices; the relief valve is not monitored.

-Police: Made 3 Arrests, attended 5 accidents and made 58 traffic stops. One of the cruisers blew the engine; it's covered under the warranty. Continue to work short-staffed. The Department was awarded the FBI LEEDA Agency Award on the 17th. Will be holding oral boards with a potential new part-time officer. Working on a "Make a Wish" happen for a 10-year boy.

-Code/Planning: Have issued 3 building permits, 1 plumbing permit and 1 new road, Cardinal Way.

Have begun working on converting old addresses to the new E-911 system. The Planning Board passed the changes for LD2003 and will be forwarding its recommendations to the Council.

-Library: The 'make your own ice cream' social was well attended.

-Recreation: Senior trips have been successful. Have 240 sign-ups for fall soccer. Working on field prep. Working on after school programming. Have seen an increase in requests to use the rooms at the community center, creating some minor scheduling issues.

-Assessing: Starting to get calls about the tax bills. Have set up a reference binder on values. Working on map changes for GIS. Updated data will be online soon.

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-Town Clerk: Have issued almost 1600 transfer station permits. Working on election related activities. Have issued 3 sets of nomination papers for council and 2 sets for school board. Continue to work on step-by-step instructions for new clerk.

-Transfer Station: Has been a little quieter; stickers are working. Still getting a lot of brush. Just got the new supply of bags.

-Economic Development: Working on a grant application for library laptops. We may be able to get funds through KACTS for the downtown traffic improvement conceptual plan. The inventory piece of the Comp Plan Update should be done mid-September. The goal is to complete the entire project and submit it to the state by January 2024.

-Finance: Tax bills have hit the mail. Preparing for the audit. Continue to work with FEMA on the Christmas storm.

-Administration: Provided the Council with the website Google analytics. Have held numerous meetings with staff and residents. The air handling system at town hall has been fixed. Met with Firefly Media; waiting on a quote for a video of town hall. Will be erecting a town staff picture wall in the main entrance. This should help visitors better identify staff.

Mr. Pellerin informed the Council that due to better investments, spending controls, and increased revenues, South Berwick is in the best financial position it has ever been. Past management practices here (and unfortunately, common in the state) were to ignore various issues and leave them to the next administration. Tasked with making improvements, numerous projects have been started and some completed, including significant strides in improved economic and community development such as more and updated TIF Districts, overdue repair work at several town facilities, and forward movement on traffic issues.

Councilor Comments

1. Ms. Cyr:

- School starts August 30th.
- Need crossing guards for Central School.

2. Mrs. Costella:

- Asked if the Fire Dept. would be holding their boot drive on Labor Day. Haven't heard.
- Asked if Maggie, the traffic sign trailer, could be moved around more. Back roads are also experiencing high traffic and speeding.
- Asked if someone was insured, would they be able to reclaim the metal roof from the red barn before it is demolished. Mr. Pellerin will check on it.

3. Mr. James:

- Thanked the Manager and Assistant Manager for their work in generating informative reports.
- Made note that since we have had a new Police Chief and new Fire Chief our departments have been moving forward in the right direction. The new Chief's have been doing excellent work.

4. Mr. Minihan:

- Lantern Fest was a little soggy, but well attended. He appreciated the Fire Dept's participation, even though they had to attend 2 different calls.
- Made note that he doesn't get to interact with many of the town employees. He was able to spend some time with the highway crew; they were all friendly and welcoming.

5. Mrs. Cook:

- Reminded everyone that transfer station stickers will be enforced beginning September 1st.

Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. James, seconded by Mrs. Costella, it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 7:42pm.

Attest:

Barbara Bennett, CCM