

**South Berwick
Town Council Meeting
September 26, 2023**

Chair Mallory Cook called the meeting to order at 6:38pm. Councilors present included John James, Jeffrey Minihan, Jessica Cyr, and Melissa Costella. Town Manager Tim Pellerin and Assistant Town Manager Jennifer Janelle were also in attendance.

Approval of Minutes

1. Town Council 09-12-23: On a motion by Mrs. Cook, seconded by Ms. Cyr, it was unanimously voted to adopt the minutes as written.
2. Public Hearing 09-19-23: On a motion by Mrs. Cook, seconded by Mr. James, it was unanimously voted to adopt the minutes as written.

Treasurer's Warrant

1. On a motion by Mrs. Cook, seconded by Mr. James, it was unanimously voted to sign the warrant dated September 20, 2023, in the amount of \$340,859.20.

Reports & Presentations

1. Jeff Preble of Wright Pierce gave the Council an overview of the proposed Downtown Revitalization & Action Plan. Key issues to be addressed include funding opportunities, preserving the historic character of downtown, pedestrian safety, ADA accessibility, downtown parking, and building facades.
2. The Manager gave a brief overview of the status of several road projects. Park St and Winding Brook Ln are complete for a total of \$144,000. One mile of mill & fill on Boyd's Corner Rd will be about \$116,000. To Shim and overlay Railroad Ave and Front St will be \$45,000. To shim & overlay Demers Ln will be \$22,000.
3. Mr. Pellerin informed the Council that after the last heavy rainstorm, multiple places in the town hall were found wet. The main lobby has crumbling plaster at the bottom of the entry doors and a new leak in the ceiling above the doors. The front entrance and Code Office both have water leaks. The Clerk & Finance Offices both have leaks. And the water-stained tile in the auditorium is getting worse and has a black substance growing around it.

Public Comment

None.

Unfinished Business

1. The Council discussed the pending appointments to the Planning Board.

On a motion by Mrs. Cook, seconded by Mr. Minihan, it was unanimously voted to appoint Aaron Rouse to the regular voting member seat on the Planning Board with a term to expire June 30, 2026.

Mrs. Cook made a motion to appoint Elizabeth Ware to the Planning Board with a term to expire June 30, 2024. Mr. Minihan seconded the motion. Motion failed unanimously.

2. Mrs. Cook made note that the Council has received about 70 comments on the proposed traffic changes. Survey results indicate that over 80% of residents consider traffic a significant issue. It has been suggested that a temporary light be installed as a trial. Mrs. Cook explained that for more accurate results and cost savings, the MDOT does not use temporary lights, it uses software simulations. Sebago Technics did run a simulation during its process and the MDOT will accept that data. Also, we have been unable to keep traffic officers and our Police Department is too busy to take on that task. We have been able to secure funding for most of the \$520,000 project cost; our share would be about \$52,000. This would have no impact on property taxes. Mrs. Cook also noted that this project is about more than just traffic lights. It's about vehicle and pedestrian safety.

-Cliff Cleary, Spillane's Hill, commented that he is in favor of moving forward, but is concerned with the loss of any downtown parking for businesses.

-Tiffany Roberts, State Rep & resident, commended the Council on its work. She offered her assistance as a liaison with the MDOT.

-David Bradley, Emery's Bridge Rd, stated that after conducting his own informal survey, which was a 50/50 split for lights, he has changed his mind and hopes that "lights may bring some civility back to downtown.

Each Councilor expressed their desire to move forward and must keep in mind what is best for the future of the whole town. Councilor Costella expressed some concerns about moving too fast and stated that she believed there should be more discussion.

On a motion by Mr. Minihan, seconded by Mrs. Cook, it was voted 4-1 (Mrs. Costella opposed) to authorize the Town Manager to proceed with the Route 236/Downtown Traffic Signals and Improvements Project Preliminary Design Report, to be funded by SMPDC/KACTS; and to accept the funding amount of up to \$520,000; and to commit to a 10% match from the Town in an amount up to \$52,000 to be funded out of the Punkintown TIF.

New Business

1. On a motion by Mr. James, seconded by Mr. Minihan, it was unanimously voted to adopt the annual updates to the General Assistance Ordinance Appendices A-H and the housing maximums from October 1, 2023, to September 30, 2024.

2. On a motion by Mr. James, seconded by Mr. Minihan, it was unanimously voted to approve the renewal of the Stage House Inn's liquor license and special amusement permit.

3. On a motion by Mr. James, seconded by Mrs. Cook, it was unanimously voted to award the Downtown Revitalization Plan contract to Wright Pierce in the amount of \$29,970, funds to be expended from the Punkintown TIF account.

4. On a motion by Mrs. Cook, seconded by Mr. James, it was unanimously voted to sign the warrant calling the municipal election for November 7, 2023.

Town Manager's Report

-HR: Working on taxes.

-Town Clerk: Have issued almost 2800 transfer stickers. Continue to work on 'how to's' for next clerk. Office will close early on October 5th so staff can attend the York County Clerk's Association semi-annual dinner training.

-Code/Planning: Issued 4 building permits, 3 plumbing permits and conducted 16 inspections. Working on lot splits and ordinance amendments for combining I1 & I2 zones.

-Fire: 24 calls/394 YTD. Had live burn training at the red barn. Installing new software that will help track specific issues. Attended an EMA meeting; being more proactive.

-Police: Two officers are in training. Have been conducting wellness exams. Officers will be attending firearms training.

-Library: Has been slow since school started. The new lights are working great. Porch dumping has stopped. Will be starting a Wednesday adult movie night program.

-Recreation/Seniors: Thanked the Chief for monitoring of the ball fields. New lights at the Community Center are working great. Fall soccer began with over 240 kids. Work at Powderhouse is progressing so everything will be ready for the season. A new rope must be installed.

-Highway: Still some issues to fix on Pleasant Street. Took down the old salt shed. Ditching and mowing continue. Starting to prep for winter. Will be setting up the new truck for use.

-Economic Development: Working on the downtown revitalization plan, comp plan, and helping with the formation of the downtown alliance. Working with the farmer's market to find a better location. Was able to work with KACTS and MDOT to help secure funding for traffic changes in the downtown area. We will have to pay a small portion of the projected \$520,000 project cost.

-Finance: Working with Firefly Media to finalize the videos of town hall. The audit begins tomorrow. The chimney was relined on Friday. Our Workers' Comp has increased by 27%.
-Administration: Town Hall has a lot of water leaks causing damage in several areas of the building. Will be getting the air quality tested. Preliminary assessment shows significant problems with lack of maintenance and suggested the old police station be closed off due to mold. Mr. Pellerin also distributed a booklet from Jensen Baird regarding the new law changes that will affect municipalities.

Councilor Comments

1. Mr. Minihan:

-Commented that although attendance is down, the Comp Plan Update Committee is still doing good work.

-Thanked the public and encouraged increased participation in municipal affairs.

2. Ms. Cyr:

-Reminded everyone that it is Marshwood Homecoming

-Made note of available training for shelter volunteers.

-Happy to see that we have increased our public outreach.

3. Mrs. Costella:

-Asked if we could create short surveys on our website or Facebook page. Staff will check into it.

4. Mrs. Cook:

-Made note that moving forward with the new traffic lights will make traffic worse before it gets better. Construction will take time.

Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. James, seconded by Mrs. Cook, it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:02pm.

Attest:

Barbara Bennett, CCM