

**Five-Town Selectboard Meeting
Walpole Town Hall
Friday, April 21, 2023**

Present: Alstead: Joel McCarty, Gordon Kemp, Walpole: Steve Dalessio, Cheryl Mayberry
Visitors: Lou Beam (representing Langdon), Joseph Levesque, John Tuthill, Bonnie Remick, Sharon Francis

CALL TO ORDER: Steve Dalessio called the meeting to order at 4:40 p.m. in Walpole Town Hall. Those attending introduced themselves. This meeting was recorded.

MINUTES: Mr. Beam moved to accept the January 27, 2023, minutes as presented. Mr. McCarty seconded, and all voted in favor. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

Class VI Road: Mr. Beam said Charlestown and Acworth were supposed to get together to discuss this issue. Mr. McCarty pointed out that, since no one from either town was present to speak to that issue, they could move on with the agenda.

Fall Mountain Regional Fuel Bid: Mr. Beam said he wants to have a bid ready in May but needs to contact people from each of the towns. He needs information from them about delivery, fuel usage, and types of fuel used. He was given the names of Rich Kreissle from Walpole, Charlotte Como from Acworth, and Mary Schoppmeyer from Alstead. He said he would reach out to Charlestown for a contact. After he collects that data, he plans to arrange meetings with interested fuel companies.

Community Power: Mr. Dalessio reported that Walpole signed an agreement with Community Power, CPCNH, for \$.18/kilowatt. May 1 is the switchover date; it is an opt-out program. Everyone who currently has a meter with Liberty Utilities will automatically switch over except those with solar. Customers will need to opt out if they do not want to be a part of this program. Liberty will still do the billing.

NEW BUSINESS

K-8 School Board: A petition warrant appeared on the school district ballot in March requesting a study of whether Walpole should withdraw from the school district. Mr. Dalessio explained that it should have been on the Town, rather than school ballot, so it was declared advisory and was defeated.

The people who created the petition appeared before the Walpole Selectboard to request the study. First, they were advised to get an attorney to find out what they legally can and cannot do. Second, no money has been appropriated for the study so that takes it off the table. He explained that a Town cannot pay for anything above what the townspeople already pay in school taxes.

Those who appeared before the school board want financial independence to fund their schools as they see fit. They would like to see the K-8 and High School budgets split so they would have greater management of their town's schools. Claremont and Keene schools were cited as examples. Mr. Dalessio said he has been told splitting the budget is not legal. Then there is the question of whether the Articles of Agreement need to be revised. Mr. Levesque also raised the issue of who pays for the requirements of the special needs students who move into the towns.

In summary, the Walpole Selectboard told the study group to first seek legal counsel on what they can and cannot do in this process. Then they should create a detailed plan for this study. Once this is completed, they can bring a petition back to the Selectboard next year to be put on the Town ballot.

Modifying the FMRSD Articles of Agreement Regarding Voting for Town Representatives to the School Board: Mr. McCarty stated he has been approached by some angry townspeople who can't understand the sense in electing all of our school board members at large. They feel the five towns in our district have the power to change that and elect their own representatives. Mr. McCarty suggested that each town think about this and in ninety days, if all five towns have representation at this meeting, they can discuss whether they can and want to change the election process. Mr. Dalessio said he would contact the Municipal Association to ask about changing procedure. He said he asked once before and was told no, they could not.

Mr. Kemp stated he thinks people are upset by this because they don't understand that everyone votes for all school board representatives, not just for those for their own town. Once again, Mr. McCarty asked everyone to think about this for ninety days, talk about it in their towns, and come to the next meeting to discuss whether they want to advocate for a change in the voting procedure.

OTHER BUSINESS

Records Committees: Mr. Kemp asked if the other towns have Records Committees according to RSA: 33A. Mr. Dalessio said Walpole does not but explained Walpole's record-keeping procedures. He described how documents are stored or electronically kept. They also discussed how minutes are kept and electronic recordings are not. Mr. Kemp asked for a copy of Walpole's policies, and Mr. Dalessio told him to contact Sarah Downing in the Walpole Town Offices.

Mr. Beam stated once again that he hopes to have fuel bids in May. He will send all the data to the town Selectboard so they can make their choice by June. It was stated that, if a town does not wish to participate in the fuel cooperative, they are not obligated to do so.

Ms. Remick had two final questions for the Selectboard representatives. First, she wanted to know how often each Board conducts non-public sessions and if minutes thereof are always sealed. Then she asked if public comment is encouraged in Selectboard meetings. The Walpole and Alstead Representatives discussed their procedures for both and agreed that public input is extremely important and welcomed at their meetings.

The next meeting will be held in Acworth Town Hall on Friday, July 21, 2023, at 4:30 p.m.

Mr. Dalessio motioned to adjourn at 5:33 p.m. Mr. McCarty seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jean Kobeski

These minutes are in draft form until approved at the July 21, 2023, meeting.