

Town of Searsport, Maine
Select Board Meeting

January 21, 2025

1. Call to Order: 6:00pm
2. Pledge of Allegiance: Doug Norman, Chair led the Pledge of Allegiance
3. Roll Call: Doug Norman, Chair, Mark Bradstreet Vice Chair, Steve Tanguay, Sandra Otis-Anderson and Wes Norton are all present.
4. Announcements: None
5. Acceptance of Minutes: Motion: Steve made a motion to accept the minutes for the January 7, 2025 select board meeting as written. Second by Mark Vote : 4-0-1. Wes abstained from voting.
6. Acceptance of the agenda: James added the following 11th hour item to the agenda:
 - a. The information center.

Mark made a motion to accept the agenda with the additional item added as 11th hour. Seconded by Sandra. Vote: 5-0-0

7. Public Comment: Phyllis Sommers spoke regarding the Information Center located on her West Main Street property. She reconfirmed what her original desire regarding the information center continues to be. She would like to have it repaired, restored and used onsite on her property as an information center as a service to the town. There has been no compensation from the town for the past 5 years. In a recent correspondence to the select board she requested \$100.00 a month. There was a discussion regarding this request and it will be negotiated with her. She is not in favor of moving it to the location of the Old PMM Sein Loft because of lack of visibility and parking. She questioned the discussion at the recent HOBBA meeting regarding the building and expressed her feelings of being caught in the cross current of “we want to move it” , “we don’t want to move it” and the discussion of a 5 year contract “not being enough with her”. She has no knowledge of any contracts. The Historic Preservation Committee has voted to pay for the repairs and is actively fundraising for this purpose. Rolf Olsen addressed the Information Center and asked for there to be consideration by the town for three things: 1. Repairs, 2. Electrification and 3. A strategy for Organization and Management once the building is opened. Dennis Raleigh spoke regarding the Information Center. He asked if there was a timeline on the restoration. James set the first of June, 2025 to meet the requirements of the Town’s Liability Insurance Carrier. James will convey the timeline to Lynn Calista, Chair of the Historic Preservation Committee who has a general contractor they are working with for the repairs. Dennis inquired about having the building added to the Museum in the Streets project. This is under consideration.

8. Old Business:
 - a. Budget Votes: James Gillway, Town Manager presented a draft of the recent budget votes of both the Select Board and the Budget Advisory Committee. There are changes in the ambulance reserve account lines that have occurred since the BAC voted which will need to be communicated back to them for their votes. James will provide A.J. Koch, Jr, Chairman of the BAC with the figures along with the projection of the surplus. Last year the surplus was at \$400,000.00 and was used. This year James will recommend a \$600,000.00 surplus which will completely erase any increase over last year. He spoke about the Out of House Accounts. The 1% of the operating budget was distributed evenly between all applicants.

The Select Boards decision to do a market adjustment on the assessment was outlined. The Homestead exemption that dropped from \$25,000.00 to \$18,000.00 last year should recover somewhat with the market adjustment. The cost of the revaluation has been budgeted for. \$100,000.00 was transferred out of the reserves and back into the budget from monies that will no longer be expended on the downtown project. This money paid for the initiatives that were done for the 50 percentile increases for employees.

James requested that the board take separate votes on the ambulance reserve account and the out of house accounts separately because they have either changed or went to the BAC for their vote prior the select board 's considerations.

Motion: Mark made a motion on the ambulance equipment reserve fund that we change it from \$5,000.00 to \$26,000.00 because of the request to purchase a defibrillator. Seconded by Doug. Vote: 5-0-0.

Motion: Wes made a motion to accept the budget as presented, seconded by Doug. Vote: 5-0-0

Motion: Mark made a motion to vote for \$30,143.00 which reflects the decrease in the total budget amount of 1%. Seconded by Doug. Vote: 5-0-0

- b. Purchase of Ambulance Equipment: Life Pack Defibrillator. Doug made a motion to order and purchase the ambulance equipment not to exceed \$41,000.00 as soon as possible. Seconded by Mark. Vote: 5-0-0

9 New Business:

- a. Moore's Septic Contract: Wes made a motion to authorize the town manager to accept and sign the renewed contract with Moore's Septic for septage disposal within the town of Searsport. Seconded by Sandra Vote: 5-0-0
- b. Town Report Dedications: Steve made a motion to dedicate the 2025 Town Report to Dick Demaris, Joe Perry and Bill Shorey. Seconded by Sandra Vote: 5-0-0
- c. Spirit of America 2025: Sandra made a motion to nominate Priscilla King for the Spirit of America Award, seconded by Doug Vote: 5-0-0
- d. Town Meeting Refreshments: Mark made a motion to approve the Searsport Historical Society's request, submitted by James, to provide refreshments at the Annual Town Meeting in March. Seconded by Sandra. Vote: 5-0-0

10. 11th Hour: Ground Lease for the Information Center with Phyllis Sommers: Mark made a motion to table this item to the next meeting to allow for negotiations to take place. Seconded by Doug. Vote: 5-0-0

11. Correspondence:

- a. A letter from Efficiency Maine outlining the funding opportunities for Maine Towns.
- b. Charter Communications sent a letter outlining upcoming programming changes.
- c. A flyer from the Community Resilience Committee advertising a public workshop. The original date chosen was February 3rd but this date is in conflict with the planning board meeting. A new date for the public workshop will be chosen.
- d. A document outlining the 10 actions identified by the Resiliency Committee for the public's consideration.
- e. A Letter from CEO advising of an address change. 398 East Main Street is now 400 East Main Street
- e. An Informational flyer from Zero Energy Homes. One is being built in town in the Osprey Lane Sub Division.

12. Treasurer's Warrant: Mark made a motion to accept the Treasurer's warrant pending signatures by the Select Board. Seconded by Doug Vote 5-0-0

13. Department Head Reports: Fire, Police and Ambulance were provided. Motion: Wes made a motion to approve the department head reports for Fire, Police and Ambulance as presented. Seconded by Mark. Vote: 5-0-0

14. Select Board Report:

Mark had no report but asked if Gordon Contracting will be returning. He inquired about the speed signs and when they would be installed.

Sandra had no report but hopes everyone can stay warm. She encouraged folks to check on their neighbors. Steve announced the Grand Reopening of the new Annodyne Book Store on West Main Street. It will be this Saturday from 10-5.

Wes reported on the Cruise Port Committee's work and talked about the survey. The committee received 227 responses. The committee anticipates drafting a Cruise Ship Ordinance to be presented to the voters at the 2026 annual town meeting. The Community Resiliency Committee also met to define some of the possible focuses of grant monies. There will be a public workshop to discuss the \$75,000.00 grant money that is available. The topics range from funds to help establish a solar farm on a town site to purchasing heat pumps for community buildings.

Doug thanked Phyllis Sommers and Dennis Raleigh for attending and for their continued support of the information center. He asked about the status of the 2023 Audit. James reported that he has been in contact with the auditors for an update. They will schedule within the next couple of weeks.

15. Public Comment and the Viewing Public Comment: Phyllis Sommers suggested opening the information building in April each year. Kim Yesis inquired about the date and time of the Annual Town Meeting. It is scheduled for Saturday March 8th at 9:00 in Union Hall.

Wes inquired when the warrant would be ready and posted. James has a draft warrant with 21 articles. It will be continually updated. The tax interest for next year will be addressed at the next meeting. The date taxes are due will also be determined. The amount of surplus needing to be expended is currently at up to \$500,000.00. If the auditors say more can be expended it will be. The Out of House Accounts need to be corrected. Ordinance changes will be considered. Article 20 is to see if the Town will vote to approve a local food and community self governance ordinance. There are two language changes not zoning changes to the Land Use Ordinance. One identifies Home Occupations which is being proposed at 30% or less of the residence not to exceed 600 sq ft total. The second language change authorizes the CEO to submit to the planning board applications for review at his discretion. Doug inquired what the surplus looks like.

James estimates it will be approximately 1.5 million. There will be an article regarding the ambulance as well asking for coverage from surplus regarding revenue and expenses so it is not a tax issue. James estimates it to be \$500,000.00. Wes inquired about Spruce Knoll and Trout Brook Lane being on the warrant for consideration as town roads. James stated they will use the same petition they had last year.

16. 16. Executive Session M.R.S.A. 1 § 405 (6) (F) Confidential – (General Assistance Matters and Poverty abatement requests) Mark made a motion at 7:05 pm to leave regular session and enter into executive session under M.R.S.A 1 § 405 (6) (F) Confidential – (General Assistance Matters and Poverty Abatement requests). Seconded by Doug Vote: 5-0-0.

Motion; Mark made a motion to leave executive session and reenter public session at 7:12 pm, seconded by Doug Vote: 5-0-0

17. Decisions from Executive Session : Mark made a motion in the case of WP25-01 to approve the expenditure of up to \$500.00 for heating fuel, seconded by Sandra. Vote: 5-0-0
18. Adjournment: Steve made a motion to adjourn at 7:12 pm. Seconded by Doug Vote: 5-0-0

Respectfully Submitted



Janine F. Laveway
Board Recorder

APPROVED: 2/4/2025