

Stockton Springs Select Board Minutes

January 27, 2025

Attendees:

Select Board Members Present	Elizabeth Lenharr (Liz Lenharr) Marsha Shute Betsy Bradley Loren Cole – Interim Town Manager
Select Board Members Absent	
Recording Secretary	Sarah Hardy
Community members	Approximately 13 community members were in attendance for some or all of the meeting. Speaker names were captured in the notes as best as possible. No attendance list was captured.

Yellow Highlight indicates NEW or not-yet-completed action items.

Green Highlight indicates COMPLETED action items.

Blue Highlight indicates incomplete notes, based on in-person note taking where something was missed. Need to go to tape backup.

#	Agenda	Notes
1.	Roll Call: Call to Order	Liz Lenharr called meeting to order 8:01 am roll call – see attendance above
2.	Adjustments to the Agenda	Need to talk about moving the EMA antennae Need to discuss a change in ambulance fees for 911 calls Discuss those at the first part of the meeting. Sign warrants for Accounts payable Sign appointment of John Bellino effective 1/29/25
3.	Ambulance Billing	Amy Drinkwater – Medicare has sent a list of what they will reimburse. There is a range of rates, we are in the middle, don't want to be the highest. The reimbursement rate will increase across all insurances. A rate approval changes has been submitted at 5%. Note to town residents, this results in a revenue increase for the town. Liz Lenharr motion to accept, seconded by Marsha Shute, vote to accept was unanimous.
4.	Certificates of Settlement	This paperwork turns the tax commitment responsibility over to the new tax collector (the town manager). This is removing Mac Smith from the requirement to collect taxes for years 2022, 2023, and 2024

		<p>and adding Loren Cole. This paperwork will need to be repeated when the new interim town manager is sworn in.</p> <p>Liz – motion to accept the settlement, removing Mac Smith, and adding Loren Cole – covering 2022, 2023 and 2024. Seconded by Marsha and vote to accept was unanimous.</p> <p>Select board signed the paperwork.</p>
5.	Treasurer’s Report	<p>Loren provided a copy of the report using the same format as used by the previous town manager but recommends a more detailed report going forward, with the new interim and permanent managers. It should include revenue and expense figures and balance sheet info, not just the checking account balance.</p>
6.	Approval of Minutes	<p>Meeting minutes from the following dates were reviewed/discussed: January 20, 2025 December 23, 2024 December 16, 2024 December 9, 2024</p> <p>Motion to accept the notes from 12/9 and 12/16 from Liz, seconded by Marsha and vote to accept was unanimous.</p> <p>There are no discernable notes from 12/23 – select board thinks there is a recording that needs to be retrieved. Not yet approved</p> <p>Motion to accept notes from 1/20/25, Marsha seconded, the vote to accept was unanimous.</p>
7.	UniTel/Direct Communications Support Letter	<p>A form letter was provided by Unitel, all towns are supposed to sign and submit back. Loren identified one sentence that is not applicable so shouldn’t be included.</p> <p>The letter talks about how the community will support the project and fund it. The sentence in question indicates that the town approved the deal at a town meeting, to use AARPA funds, but that wasn’t the case. The other partners in the agreement, Prospect, Winterport, and Frankfort did do that. While the whole timeline and involvement can’t be reconstructed b/c it was done by the previous town manager, nonetheless, the town is committed to the project. Another \$52,000 is required from our town to complete the “1A backbone”. This amount will have to be appropriated at the next town meeting, the payoff time may be beyond 2025.</p> <p>There is another phase of the project, which will need separate funding, to bring the cables to each house.</p> <p>The board agreed to remove that sentence, Loren will have that taken out and will await signatures from the select board.</p>
8	Town Manager Advertising	<p>The permanent town manager ad has been posted on the town website, the MMA website and Maine Coast Villager. There have already been several contacts from interested parties.</p> <p>Loren did send MMA \$500 to do the legwork for hiring – they are not doing the interviews. This fee covers a 90-day period</p>

		<p>Q: Angie Porter – is there a deadline? A: Loren – no, just until a suitable candidate is found</p>
9.	Deputy Harbor Master Advertising	<p>Advertised on the town website and the MMA site. This ad also doesn't have a deadline.</p> <p>Q: Skeet Wyman – has Allen reached out about the job. He is interested in the job, had previously applied for harbor master. A: Loren – he has reached out, and Loren asked him to reapply formally because his resume from the harbor master application can't be found.</p>
10.	Solar Equipment Purchase	<p>Loren spoke to Mr. Piper about it, he's very cooperative. Mr. Piper said he would send the information about the purchase price so negotiations can begin.</p> <p>Liz asked if he was ok with our timeline, that it would be on the next budget. A warrant will have to be created for the amount (in March) and a good narrative about the savings/costs of the buyout should be prepared for the town meeting to help residents understand why this is being pursued.</p> <p>May have a special town meeting if necessary to meet deadlines.</p>
11.	High Speed Internet	<p>The police especially need more bandwidth to upload body camera files, our current bandwidth is insufficient.</p> <p>Loren asked the incoming interim manager to do this.</p>
12.	5 Person Select Board	<p>Loren provided a copy of an email from Maine Municipal legal services.</p> <p>In the process section, it can take effect at the annual town meeting but needs to be approved by voters at a special town meeting at least 90 days before the annual. This would be about Feb 24th. Nomination papers would need to be available by March 6. This would mean there were 4 open positions. Loren confirmed that the vote would be via plurality not rank choice.</p> <p>Q: Keirsten Wyman – for a quorum, how does that work if someone is not available and if all positions aren't filled in an election? If it's a 5-member board, 3 people would need to be present to do town business. If all of the places aren't filled via election, would business not happen if less than 3 people are available? A: Betsy, if a special town meeting is held to approve the move to 5, the bigger quorum wouldn't be till after the official town meeting. Then yes, a quorum would be 3 people (vs the 2 it is now).</p> <p>The select board would like to go forward to see what the residents feel at a town meeting.</p> <p>Liz Motion to call a special town meeting on 2/24/25, seconded by Marsha and vote to accept was unanimous. This will be at night, 6pm.</p> <p>Other items for that meeting: solar panel buy out and broadband to come out of the unassigned fund (no tax increase needed). Action item to create warrants and plan for meeting.</p>

13.	Ambulance Bond	<p>The bond for the ambulance is \$275,000 as approved at the town meeting. The application deadline for submission from the state bond bank is 2/5/25. The application is essentially complete, Amber is providing some of the financial data to complete the requirements. Tim Pease from Redman Winchel is charging a \$3500 fee to submit the application to the Maine Municipal bond bank. The bond amount cannot be increased so a new source for the legal fee needs to be raised.</p> <p>Per Amy Drinkwater there is some money left from the ambulance fund to cover this.</p> <p>Loren will submit this week.</p> <p>No motion required because the ambulance fund will be the source of the fee.</p>
14.	Warrants/Signatures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select board signed warrants for Accounts Payable • Signed paperwork for the appointment of new interim town manager John Bellino 1/29/25 through 6/30/25. • Keirsten Wyman – brought the paperwork to extend the house closing to 3/3/25. The select board signed the extension.
15.	Public Comment – any topic	<p>Public:</p> <p>Q: Susan Henkel – she has been asked by folks around town if any town employee can be fired without cause.</p> <p>A: per select board and town manager, it goes by state law. We are an “at will” state. The only exceptions are if there is a contract. The previous town manager had a contract which gives the select board the right to terminate without cause.</p> <p>Q: Scott Pace – He has seen lots of ignorant comments on social media about the firing. Is the town manager’s contract public? Would his contract show terms of hiring/firing/payout etc.</p> <p>A: Select board: it is public and yes it would show those things.</p> <p>Q: Daren Shute – Bangor daily news and social media can fuel attacks. Suggest the contract be made public because then folks would know the truth.</p> <p>Suggestions from many folks in the attendance agreeing that the contract be made public.</p> <p>Also suggest that folks come to the meetings to find out the truth vs stirring up trouble on social media. Folks keep focusing on negativity on social media.</p> <p>Suggestion that the town website hold the contract so that it won’t be contorted like it might be on social media. It would fit with the other legal documents/ordinances etc. on the town website.</p> <p>Town Manager/including routine updates:</p>

		<p>Update on bank accounts – we have about \$3 Million in accounts at Bangor savings, they increased interest rate to 2.6%. This is about an extra \$30,000 per year. This was handled in a phone call.</p> <p>Suggestion from Keirsten – include this (pursuit of favorable interest rates) in the duties of the new town manager.</p> <p>Q: Susan Henkel – asked about the 1/6/25 meeting minutes, were they approved. Also thanked the recording secretary and the select board/town manager for putting meeting notes online for review in a timely fashion.</p> <p>A: Recording secretary confirmed those meeting minutes were approved the previous week.</p> <p>Q: Daren Shute – asked if the select board agenda could be handed out at meetings.</p> <p>Susan Henkel noted that the library posts the agenda, also the post office.</p> <p>A: Yes, hard copies will be provided.</p> <p>~~~~~</p> <p>Antennae update: At the last meeting Betsy took the action item to determine what was needed to reinstall the antennae. If we buy a bracket for \$50, her brother would volunteer to install it using the existing cable to mount it at the side of the town office building. To install it at the peak, more cable would need to be obtained. She also found out that the emergency command runs out of the emergency building – emergency operation center (the EOC) and has been in past emergencies like the ice storm. Suggest moving the antennae to the roof of the fire station.</p> <p>The ham radio antennae is currently on the library and needs to be removed.</p> <p>There is not a good location for the radio equipment in the town office, right now it’s in the corner of the town manager’s office, and the new permanent town manager may not want it in his office. Everything needed is in the EOC already to hook up the radio.</p> <p>There was some discussion about why it was originally in the town office, probably because it was determined the town office would always be open. But it was the consensus of attendees that moving it to the EOC wouldn’t be a communication issue (due to cell phone, two-way radios in use, and proximity to the town office).</p> <p>Angie: Suggestion to run the solution of moving the antennae past Tom Moore before committing to a solution.</p>
16.	Executive session pursuant to 1MRSA ss 405(6)(A) Personnel Matters	<p>Liz Lenharr – motion to go into executive session at 9:28am. Seconded by Marsha, vote to approve was unanimous.</p> <p>Select board exited executive committee at 10:28am.</p>

17.	Adjourn	<p>After executive session, Liz Lenharr made a motion to approve the hardship real estate abatement for Ron Jackson in the amount of \$1649.60 for the tax years of 2022, 2023, and 2024. Seconded by Marsha Shute. Vote to approve was unanimous.</p> <p>Motion to adjourn at 10:29am by Liz Lenharr, Marsha Shute seconded. Vote to approve was unanimous.</p>
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Open Action item list:

Date raised	Action	Assignment	Status
1/13/25	<p>Regarding the buy-out of the existing solar panels on the town garage. Per Linda Meadows, who has examined the contract and raised her findings in public comment, if we are to initiate the purchase we must indicate our intent before February 7, 2025, or we will have to wait another year.</p> <p>a. The select board decided to initiate the negotiations.</p> <p>b. Per Betsy – it would have to be raised as a budget item on the budget, thinks we should initiate the negotiations. No motion is needed</p> <p>c. Skeet – is this sundog solar? Danny Piper (gave his number to Loren) is a neighbor and thinks they’d work with the town, and thinks he’d be sure to come to a good deal.</p>	a. Loren Cole	In process, see notes from 1/27/25 meeting notes.
1/13/25	<p>In public comment Tom Moore mentioned an emergency communication antenna which hasn’t been mounted since the new roof. It couldn’t be reattached because it would require puncture of the new roof. Betsy asked for the paperwork on what needs to be done, it had previously been provided to Mac. Tom will provide the estimate. The company is Atlantic Communications.</p> <p>a. Select board to decide on how to handle the antennae installation</p>	a. Betsy Bradley	In process, see notes from the 1/27/25 meeting.
1/20/25	Research new high-speed internet for Town facilities – town office, town garage, harbor master building	John Bellino	Assigned to new interim town manager in 1/27/25 meeting
1/20/25	Create the warrant for a 5 member select board for the next town meeting	Loren Cole	In process, discussed

			next steps in 1/27/25 meeting
1/20/25	Contact Tim Pease (town lawyer) for next steps in acquiring funds and paying for the ambulance approved at the 12/30/24 town meeting	Loren Cole	In process, discussed next steps in 1/27/25 meeting
1/27/25	Ambulance Bond – to be submitted before 2/5/25 deadline	Loren Cole	
1/27/25	Create warrants and plan for special town meeting or June town meeting: 1. Buyout of solar panels on town garage, 2. Create a 5 person select board 3. Broadband, next phase	Loren Cole or new Interim town manager John Bellino	

Completed Action items:

Date raised	Action	Assignment	Status
1/13/25	Related to unpaid portion of the Harbor breakwater design. a. check balance to make sure it gets paid. b. Place on future agenda for follow-up	a. Loren Cole b. Betsy Bradley	Completed 1/20/25
1/13/25	Related to the increase of select board members from 3 members to 5 members. As raised during public comment by Sarah Hardy a. Talk to MMA and get guidance on how this could be done, before the next select board meeting.	a. Loren Cole	Completed 1/20/25
1/13/25	Related to the Town's bank account which was raised originally in October 2024 during public comment by Sarah Hardy, and again on this date. Need to get the majority of town funds into high interest accounts, and to make sure we have no money that is not properly protected by FDIC. a. Loren is taking this as an action item.	a. Loren Cole	Completed 1/20/25
1/13/25	Related to the Tally-Ho purchase contract, Jerry Huntoon asked for details about stipulations that might have been in the contract. Loren mentioned there was a Freedom of Information Act request for the contract	a. Loren Cole	This has been released. Completed 1/20/25

	a. In accordance with MMA guidance, the contract will be released (or not), after which it can be discussed at a select board meeting.		
1/20/25	Notify David Estes about his renewed contract for Harbor Master	Loren Cole	Per Skeet, David was contacted and accepted the position. Complete 1/27/25 meeting.
1/20/25	Place ad for Assistant Harbor Master	Loren Cole	Completed see notes 1/27/25
1/20/25	Place ad for Town Manager	Loren Cole	Completed see notes 1/27/25
1/20/25	Contact Rich Cromwell for assistance on hiring Town Manager	Loren Cole	Completed see notes 1/27/25