

# TOWN OF MONSON

*"A town where friendliness is more than just a word"*

## **February 28, 2019 – Select Board Meeting**

Present select board members: Buddy Martin, Eric Vainio, Brita Cronkite Town Manager, Daniel Swain.

Townspople – Jim Greenleaf, David Bjork, Bobbi Crockett, Brian Turner, Lucas Butler, Tyler Adkins, Gerald Nessman

- 1) Meeting opened at 7:00 PM
- 2) Select board reviews warrants and unapproved meeting minutes.
- 3) Buddy Martin officially opens meeting to public comment

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Lucas Butler informed the group that there has been a series of meetings concerning the ice rink in Dover. He also stated the he will be speaking with area town managers and encouraged everyone to stop in for a tour. Lucas also provided an update on the conversion of the Community Center into a dental and medical center. Libra is working with Northwoods and Northern Lights to expand the clinic.

At this point about 6 people from Mayo Clinic arrived at the meeting, including CEO Marie Venue and consultant Jim Wiley. Daniel explained the Town had met with Gerald Nessman regarding the Mayo merger with Northern Lights and that he had invited Mayo to the meeting to present the other side.

Buddy Martin stated that he had heard on the evening news that Mayo had decided to move forward with the merger. Marie Venue explained that the Mayo Board had voted 15 – 3 in favor of moving forward on the path to the merger but that there is still quite a process to go through before the merger would take place. The Board also voted to enable the CEO and CFO to advise towns on what their tax would be if indeed there would be a tax. She stated that it may be a way to obtain much needed cash, however the tax would not be implemented until after October 1.

Buddy then asked if there is an example of a hospital implementing a tax. Marie gave the example of HAD #1 in Lincoln implementing a tax for ambulance service.

Brita Cronkite asked if it would go to a vote of the people and Jim Wiley, Mayo consultant, stated that, no, it would not go to a vote as the towns are represented by their town representatives. Bobbi Crockett, being Monson's representative would bring the information back to the people.

Marie Venue then explained that C.A. Dean has been partnered with Northern Lights for a decade and has been supported through operating losses. She also explained that Mayo is already very clinically integrated with Northern Lights.

Buddy Martin asked how many other hospitals are under the Northern Lights umbrella and was told 9. He then asked if they were all failing when they merged. Marie Venue stated that not all of them had been in rough financial shape. Some of them had joined a long time ago. She stated that C.A. Dean, Maine Coast and Mercy were all struggling financially when they merged with Northern Lights and that Mayo is also becoming financially unsustainable. She explained that if Mayo's financial continues to deteriorate then Northern Lights may want to back out of the merger.

Brita then asked if there had been any history of hospitals cutting services after the acquisitions. Jim Wiley explained that the hospitals services were modified to be the right size for the communities. For example, if for safety and financial reasons it would make sense to move the services to another location, then they would be moved. He also stated that Northern Lights had committed to leaving all services in place at Mayo for the first 5 years following the merger.

Daniel, having attended a meeting in Cambridge, told the group that Jim Wiley had done a good job explaining how information is not being withheld from the people. Jim proceeded to explain that the process had begun back in January of 2017. The board was informed that they were doing okay financially but were "treading water". Mayo then sent out 4 RFPs to 4 different entities and decided that Eastern Maine was their best option. Mayo decided to continue their talks with Eastern Maine. All the meetings took place in executive session, so the board was informed but the public was not, until a tentative agreement was reached. Marie Venue then went on to explain that there are community forums being formed, including 4 large ones, which the communities will be invited to attend. She stated that the merger is not done yet and there is still plenty of time for community involvement. Jim Wiley then informed the group that Northern Lights would also be going before the legislature to ensure that quality healthcare will be provided.

Tyler Adkins mentioned that Monson would be in a unique position of being part of Northern Lights as well as having a Northern Lights clinic in town. He asked how that would affect the clinic. Marie Venue stated that the clinic would remain in town.

At this point the Mayo representatives left the meeting. Bobbi Crockett informed the audience that she had spoken with Paul Davis who told her that the Attorney General's interpretation is that the subject should be brought before the towns to vote. He said that all representatives agree that it should go to the voters to decide whether or not to dissolve Mayo. Paul assured Bobbi that none of the Reps. Will support any legislation that takes votes away from the towns.

Buddy Martin then asked Gerald if, in his opinion, Mayo could continue to operate without merging. Gerald stated that he feels that the losses that Mayo speaks of are exaggerated, however, the ambulance service and specialty services are strained. In the long run, if communities decide to keep Mayo the way it is, they will also have to support it through taxes. He feels that the impact would be about \$80.00 on a \$100k house.

Bobbi then asked the selectboard how they would like to proceed. Buddy Martin told her that it depends on the outcomes of town meetings and what the legislature and Attorney General have to say.

## **TOWN COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Recreation Committee** – Bobbi Crockett stated that there will be a meeting next Wednesday.

**Festival Committee** – Bobbi said that Snowroller went well and that there will be a dinner served before the annual Town Meeting.

**Bicentennial Committee** – Daniel Swain stated that there will be a meeting held next week.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

No old Business to discuss.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**2019 Annual Town Meeting Warrant:** Daniel read through the warrant.

Brian Turner stated that at the February 14 meeting, the Budget Committee was led to believe that they are not a valid committee. He noted that there is nothing in the warrant about appointing a Budget Committee. Brita asked if it was something that needs to be in the warrant. Jim Greenleaf suggested that perhaps interested citizens can sign up prior to the first budget meeting and then get the selectboard's "blessing". Then only the official budget committee will have a voice, but anyone can attend.

Buddy asked Brian if the town had previously appointed a Budget Committee and Brian said Yes. The consensus was to keep the process that is already in place but have people sign up by a certain date and then be appointed by the selectboard. Daniel stated that another article will have to be added to the warrant and will need to be signed by the selectboard by next Friday. The article will be added, and the warrant will be signed by the board.

**Town Report Dedication:** Daniel suggested dedicating the Town Report to Susan Deloia and Nancy Putnam for all that they have done and continue to do for the town. Everyone agreed.

**Snow Plow Bid/Contract:** Daniel stated he should be ready by the next meeting to put the snow plow contract out to bid. He also mentioned that there has been some discussion about the town taking care of its own plowing, splitting the contract or keeping it the same. Buddy Martin said that the contract should say that the plows must have a cutting edge after the roads are frozen. Pads should only be used for the first couple of storms and in the Spring. Eric Vainio asked how much snow needs to be on the ground before the plow trucks are dispatched. Daniel said that the current contract says 1 inch and not to exceed 3.5 inches.

There was a short discussion about whether the plow contractor should provide the sand and salt. Lucas stated that another town had done that and had ended up getting shorted on the salt. He also feels that the sand use is excessive. Herrick had told Daniel that they use 40 yards per storm. Per Lucas and Brian, they should only use 1 yard per mile, which works out to about 28 yards. Buddy Martin mentioned that Arvo has been taking sand from the shed to take care of Libra properties. Lucas said that they would reimburse the town for the sand because “fair is fair”. Buddy then stated that Arvo has done an excellent job and that he has no complaints. Jim Greenleaf asked if Herricks is the only option for plowing. Buddy said that the town pays Herrick \$3,800.00 per mile whereas other contractors charge \$6,000.00. He stated that the town taking care of its own plowing would be an option to consider but we’ll wait to see what the bids are.

Daniel asked Brian and Lucas how much it would cost the town to buy a sander. The reply was about \$15,000 and that it would cost approximately \$1,000 per mile for the town to sand. Buddy Martin stated that he feels this would be too much money for the town to take on right now as the cost to the town would be \$34,000 and Herricks is charging \$21,000. The concensus was that everything will remain status quo. Daniel will prepare the bid.

**Final Review of Personnel Policy:** Eric Vainio expressed the following concerns regarding the new personnel policy:

P.4 In the “Town Manager” section the wording needs to be changed to say that the town manager must inform the selectboard regarding any removals or appointments.

P.6 Eric stated that no other town in Piscataquis county pays any health benefits for employees working less than 40 hours per week. Eric made a motion to change full time status to 40 hours and less than 40 hours be considered part time, and also to consider making the Town Manager position full time. Buddy Martin seconded. Change will be made.

P.8 Second paragraph: Eric would like the policy to state that salary ranges may be set by the Town Manager upon approval by the selectboard. Daniel stated that as long as the Town Manager stays within the budget then that's what matters. Brita Cronkite also stated that the Town Manager already must stay within the parameters set by the selectboard. No change will be made.

Comp Time: Daniel explained that comp time cannot be taken away if it's not used by the end of the year. Policy will be changed to say that any unused comp time will be paid out at the end of the fiscal year.

Expense reimbursement: Eric would like the policy to state that all anticipated travel expensed be approved prior to travel. Change will be made.

Eric asked if all town positions have a job description. Daniel stated that yes, all employees did sign a job description but that the descriptions do need to be cleaned up.

P.11 Attendance: Eric would like the policy to state that a person must call out by the beginning of the work day instead of as soon as practical. After a short discussion it was decided that the wording will remain the same.

P.18 Grievance Policy: Step 1 and 2 are okay but Eric would like to change step 3 to state that if a grievant is dissatisfied with their supervisor's decision, they may appeal to the Town Manager and the Town Manager and the selectboard will make the final decision.

Time Off: Eric stated that according to the old policy, sick time was accrued at 1 day per month or 12 days per year and was considered an entitlement and couldn't be used for any other purpose. He would like to keep the policy the way it was before but change it from 12 days to 5 days. Daniel explained that the town employees liked the idea of having the paid time off combined so there will be more flexibility. The new policy will stay the same, 15 days for years 2 – 10.

### **ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA**

Eric then stated that he has received lots of calls about plowing. A few days ago, he had seen the Herricks plow and asked the driver about the about the grader. The driver explained that the grader was in the woods. Herricks then requested that Eric stop following his driver. Eric

stated that it's his job to keep an eye on things. Buddy Martin agreed. Eric wants to get away from road duty and asked Daniel to check on all the roads at least once per week. Daniel said that he usually does. Eric then noted that there are lots of blind spots due to snowbanks and that the dump gate is still open a lot. Daniel will speak to Chris and Zack about the gate. It was also mentioned that Jim Bohrer is concerned that Transfer Station revenue is down due to the fact that people are throwing trash in Libra's dumpsters rather than bringing it to the transfer station. Eric then informed the group that he will not be present at the March 14 meeting.

Bobbi Crockett asked if the town has a disaster plan. Daniel stated that it does not but that the reorganization of the Fire Department will include an Emergency Management person. Bobbi offered to help with the plan if needed as she had helped devise the plan for the hospital.

Meeting adjourned at 10:30 PM

