

Town of Colrain
Select Board/MLP Board Meeting
Colrain Highway Garage
9 Jacksonville Road
4:30 PM

**MINUTES OF SELECT BOARD
January 9, 2024**

Present: Benjamin Eastman, Chair; W. Thomas Griffin; Emily Thurber

Others Present: Anna Lavarreda, Colrain Town Clerk; Brian McHugh, FCRHA; Ellen Weeks, Town Administrator Search Committee; Michael Shuipis, Town Administrator Search Committee; Peter Brooks, Energy Committee Chair; Nikolai Anzuoni; Kathy Phelps; Jane Johnson; Howard Phelps; Abby Gilbert; Marjorie Smith, Administrative Assistant; Kevin Fox, Town Administrator

Chair Ben Eastman called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm.

Appointments:

Anna Lavarreda – Town Clerk Request to Reconsider FY 25 ATM Date

Colrain Town Clerk, Anna Lavarreda, requested the Board change the priorly approved Annual Town Meeting date of June 5, 2024, to June 4, 2024, due to scheduling conflicts. All members of the Board agreed to the change.

MOVED: Emily Thurber moved to reschedule the Annual Town Meeting to Tuesday June 4, 2024, at Colrain Central School at 7:00 pm.

Thom Griffin seconded. **Approved unanimously.**

Brian McHugh – CDBG Informational Meeting

Brian McHugh presented an overview of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) history and that the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority (FCRHRA) is looking to have Colrain partner with Ashfield and Buckland in a joint application in the housing rehab program. The grant would be to the Town and the FCRHRA manages the funds through their loan program. FCRHRA markets to residents to apply for a loan for rehab work on their house, qualifies the residents based on eligibility requirements and funds the loan through the grant. Discussion on the terms of the loan and specifics of the program. Should the Board agree to participate, the FCRHRA will do a town-wide mailing about the program and hold a public hearing in the lead town, Buckland. Discussion on how applications are scored, and the Board can help dictate the priority of applications.

MOVED: Thom Griffin moved that the Town of Colrain participate in the Community Development Block Grant program.

Emily Thurber seconded.

Discussion:

Brian McHugh requested to amend the motion to include Buckland and Ashfield in the wording.

Thom Griffin amended the original motion and moved that we, along with the towns of Buckland and Ashfield participate in the Community Development Block Grant program.

Emily Thurber seconded. **Approved unanimously.**

New Business:

FY 25 Cost of Living (COLA) Adjustment Discussion

Kevin Fox gave the Select Board the current Consumer Price Index of 2.5% and the history of COLA increases over the last seven years. The Board agreed they are not ready to make a decision and would like to hold a joint meeting with the Finance Committee.

Old Business:

Organizational Chart and Town Administrator Job Description and Qualifications

Ellen Weeks explained that the proposed organizational chart recommended a change in the hiring process in that for a staff level position the Town Administrator and Department Head make the decision and for a Department Head position the Town Administrator and Select Board make the decision. Emily Thurber expressed her concerns regarding the hiring and firing authority of the Town Administrator as it was written. Kevin clarified that the Personnel Policy explains the Progressive Discipline procedure and to get to the point of termination, takes many steps and ultimately rests with the Select Board. Discussion on who has the final say in the hiring decision and how specific the job description should or shouldn't be regarding hiring. The Select Board tasked the Search Committee with revisiting the job description at their next meeting and presenting it again at the next Select Board meeting.

Unanticipated:

Town-Owned Sidewalks

Ben Eastman heard from a resident regarding the sidewalks and opened the floor to Abby Gilbert who explained that she walks her son to and from school every day and would like to know what is happening regarding clearing the sidewalks. Ben explained that it is a hot-topic issue, and the Board is working on a solution, however, won't happen tonight. Discussion regarding clearing sidewalks on private property and a piece of equipment that could be used. The Board asked Kevin to instruct Steve Daby to research a piece of equipment for sidewalk snow removal that can be used year-round, and the possibility of hiring part-time winter help. The Board thanked Abby for coming to the meeting and voicing her concerns.

Peter Brooks – Energy Committee

Peter Brooks briefly explained the energy audit conducted on the fire station recommended insulation and gave the Board a handout of the summary of the audit. Kevin Fox explained the three projects completed thus far using the Green Communities Grant. Emily and the rest of the Board requested Peter be added to the next meeting agenda to give time to read the summary and be prepared to discuss.

Nikolai Anzuoni – Weekend Winter Storm

Nikolai Anzuoni stated that through word of mouth that he heard that the contractors were nowhere to be found during the storm, specifically regarding Colrain Mountain. Kevin Fox explained that he communicated with the Highway Superintendent and the contractors were where they were supposed to be at the time they were supposed to be. He further explained that the Mountain was closed by the Police Department. Ben also stated that there were a few breakdowns with the Town equipment which caused some delays in clearing the snow. Emily and Kevin commented that they heard from several people that the roads were in the best condition that they've seen. Emily thanked Nikolai for stating his concerns and that he can also call the Highway Department or Town Administrator in the future.

Approve Select Board Meeting Minutes – (9/13/2022; 9/27/2022; 12/26/2023)

MOVED: Emily Thurber moved to approve the minutes of the Select Board with dates of 9/13/2022; 9/27/2022; 12/26/2023 as written.

Thom Griffin seconded. **Approved unanimously.**

Town Administrator Updates:

None


MOVED: Thom Griffin moved to dissolve the meeting at 6:18pm.
Emily Thurber seconded. **Approved unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

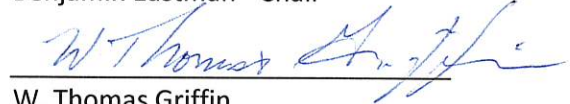


Marjorie Smith
Administrative Assistant

Accepted by the Select Board



Benjamin Eastman - Chair



W. Thomas Griffin



Emily Thurber

Documents Distributed to the Select Board Before the Meeting in a Packet or at the Meeting:

Select Board Meeting Notes

Email from Anna Lavarreda, Colrain Town Clerk, to Select Board Members dated 1/2/2024 re: Annual Town Meeting Date/Time

Email from Brian McHugh, FCRHRA, to Kevin Fox dated 1/2/2024 re: CDBG Informational Meeting with Select Board

Email from Sharon Pleasant, FCRHRA, to Kevin Fox dated 1/4/2024 re: Documents for CDBG Informational Meeting – Colrain Information Sheet, FY24 CDBG Overview, Housing Rehab Program Summary

Consumer Price Index (CPI) Northeast Region – November 2023 re: COLA Increase/Decrease since Nov. 2020

Town of Colrain COLA Increase History for last 6 Years

Draft Revised Town Administrator Job Description and Qualifications

Draft Town of Colrain Organizational Chart

Draft Select Board Meeting Minutes for 9/13/2022, 9/27/2022, 12/26/2023

Energy Efficiency Summary Report re: Colrain Fire Station Insulation Project with Energy Committee