MINUTES

LIBERTY SELECTBOARD

November 5, 2018 7:00 PM

**Selectboard Attendance:** Melinda Steeves, 1st Selectman

Carrie Peavey, 2nd Selectman

Henry Hall, 3rd Selectman

**Town Officials:** Administrator Kenn Ortmann, Road Commissioner Tammy Reynolds, Planning Board Chair Peter Mallow

**Guest(s):**  Betty-Lu Davis, RSU 3 School Board Representative Richard Frost and Superintendent Paul W. Austin Jr., Lisa Austin, Jordan Ray

1. **Open Public Meeting:** 7:00 PM
2. **Approve Minutes:** Pursuant to review Selectman Steeves moved and Selectman Hall seconded approval of the October 29, 2018 minutes. Unanimous.
3. **Discussion with RSU 3 School Board Representative Richard Frost and Superintendent Paul W. Austin Jr.:** Superintendent Austin began by noting the student numbers are now closer to 1,300 than the 1,500 historically. The reduced number of students reduces revenue and puts our rural district at even more of a disadvantage when competing with more urban districts.

The Selectboard noted their concern about the possibility of closing the Walker School. Superintendent Austin and School Board Representative Richard Frost discussed the newspaper article and Walker School challenges at length. Over past years there have been major investments in a new roof and a new fire protection system. The biggest capital and maintenance worries now include accessibility, the air-handling system, aging lighting, plumbing and electrical systems, with the boiler and septic systems topping the list. It is estimated that it will take 2-3 million dollars to resolve all major issues.

Grant applications have been submitted with the Walker School coming in 10 of 75, but there are very limited funds available from the State and only for some specific issues. One option to explore is collaborating with a private company where the company funds energy improvements up front and the school system pays off the cost over a period of years while benefiting from reduced energy costs.

The RSU funding formula created by the State requires the Town to contribute $1,100,000 toward the budget based upon the value of the Town. Liberty's share of costs exceeding the State's formula for "Essential Programs and Services" is $200,000, again based on Town value. Superintendent Austin noted that even though we contribute 8% of the students to the system we pay 16% of those costs. He noted, however, that this system does have the benefit of a fairly consistent contribution. If each Town's contribution were based upon their students, the contribution could fluctuate dramatically year to year based upon the number of students and the Special Education costs.

Superintendent Austin stressed the importance of the School budget meeting in May and encouraged interested parties to attend. He also stressed that the most significant driver of rural school district costs is the State formula that places us at a significant disadvantage. He encourages us to work with elected State legislators to try and refine the current school funding system.

1. **Officials/Public comments:** Planning Board Chair Peter Mallow provided the Selectboard with estimated annual Planning Board costs under five different scenarios assuming every Planning Board position is filled, there is 100% meeting attendance, and the Board Secretary averages 4 hours per month on minutes. Costs for mileage and other extraordinary expenses are not included.

Using current pay rates the cost is $3,120. The most expensive scenario costs $6,240. The past several years the Town has budgeted $3,000. Mr. Mallow noted that he will be discussing these scenarios with the Planning Board on Thursday.

1. **TA informational items**
   1. **Media stories:** None.
   2. **Revaluation project status report:** TA Ortmann reported that most of the listing work is expected to be finished by the end of the week with only a few stores and churches remaining. There has also been good progress on call backs.
2. **Old Business:** None.
3. **New Business**
   1. **Review Maine Revenue Service Sales Analysis spreadsheet:** TA Ortmann shared the transactions provided by the State to use in this year's sales analysis. He asked the Selectboard to review to see if there are any transactions that occurred under special circumstances not already listed.
   2. **Local Food and Community Self-Governance Ordinance of 2019:** TA Ortmann noted that Richard King has provided a copy of an updated ordinance incorporating changes at the State level since our original ordinance was adopted. The Selectboard supports this as a warrant article.
   3. **Other:** None.
4. **Other Business:** None.
5. **Adjournment:** 9:14 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Kenn Ortmann

Town Administrator