MINUTES

LIBERTY SELECTBOARD

December 2, 2019 6:00 PM

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

Carrie Peavey, 2nd Selectman

Henry Hall, 3rd Selectman

**Town Officials:** Administrator Kenn Ortmann

**Guest(s):**  RSU#3 School Board Representative Richard Frost, RSU 3 Superintendent Charles Brown and State Representative Stanley Paige Zeigler, Jr.

1. **Open Public Meeting:** 6:00 PM
2. **Approve Minutes:** Pursuant to review Selectman Steeves moved and Selectman Peavey seconded approval of the November 25, 2019 minutes. Unanimous.
3. **Meeting with Richard Frost, RSU 3 Superintendent Charles Brown and Representative Zeigler to discuss how State laws influence and impact how education costs are apportioned among municipalities:** The discussion highlighted two aspects of the school funding issue; aspects where the State is involved and aspects controlled by the communities making up the RSU. Representative Zeigler shared his concern about burdens placed on local taxpayers and noted State efforts to increase Revenue Sharing, increase the Homestead Exemption, and increase State support for education to the 55% approved by Maine voters. He noted the importance of the State recognizing the differing challenges faced by rural school districts. He shared his belief that a regressive property tax is not the best way to fund education. He also noted that how communities in a RSU decide to apportion financial responsibility is a "local control" issue over which the State legislature has no responsibility.

RSU#3 School Board Representative Frost noted that educational costs borne by local communities are determined by how certain costs are categorized, what the State has determined are "Essential Programs and Services", and nuances in the formula. He is continuing his research in an effort to better understand the various components.

RSU 3 Superintendent Brown surmised that the current formula used by RSU#3 may have been developed in the 1960's and not revised since then. He stated his commitment to keep budget increases to a minimum, but when the State enacts a law increasing the minimum teacher salary to an amount significantly above the current beginning salary, that will drive up the bottom line, especially when fixed costs outside of the District's control continue to rise as well. He also noted the amount of revenue diverted from the RSU due to the 150 children in the district homeschooled. He reviewed a handout showing the State calculation for funding public education. He pointed out how rural districts with multiple grade schools spread out geographically are harmed by some "urban assumptions" used to determine how much the State says it "should cost" to educate children.

Second Selectman Peavey noted that there are several communities in RSU#3 who recognize that Liberty is contributing an amount disproportionate to the number of students in the system.

RSU 3 Superintendent Brown pledged to continue to research when the current funding formula was developed and to see what types of funding formulas are used in other districts. TA Ortmann will ask for a progress report two weeks from today.

1. **Warrant Review and Approval:** Done.
2. **Officials/Public comments:** None.
3. **TA informational items**
   1. **Media stories:** TA Ortmann shared the story in the Republican Journal about his second part-time position as Co-director of the Belfast airport.
4. **Old Business** 
   1. **Snow shoveling:** First Selectman Steeves will take care of shoveling around the Community Hall during the storm forecast for tonight and tomorrow.
   2. **Other:** None.
5. **New Business**
   1. **Liberty Volunteer Ambulance Service FAQ suggestions:** TA Ortmann shared a request from Assistant Chief Jason Earl for "frequently asked questions" they should address on their WEB page. One suggestion is to include information about their billing process. If the Selectboard thinks of additional questions they will forward them to TA Ortmann or contact Assistant Chief Earl directly.
   2. **Town forest harvest revenue:** TA Ortmann stated that we are receiving another progress payment of $6,502.87.
   3. **Digital Tax Map update:** TA Ortmann shared his progress in putting together hard copies of deeds and plans of splits or subdivisions between 2012 and 2019.
   4. **Other:** None.
6. **"11th hour" items:** None.
7. **Adjournment:** 7:45 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Kenn Ortmann

Town Administrator