

## 03/15/2023 Sorrento Select Board Meeting Minutes

Attending in person at the Sorrento Community Building were Selectman Jon Mickel, Selectwoman Diana Gazis, Town Clerk Kathi Moore, Harbor Master Lou Sutherland Jr, Tom Bailey, Susan Clancy-Dougherty, Ann Hoffner, Terry Noyes and Hilly Welch Crary. Attending via Zoom were Select Board Chair Rob Wilpan, Ann Blood, Darla Crocker, Dan Dougherty, Pat Dougherty, Dwight Freeman, Ronna Freiberg, Amanda Mickel, Bill & Lensa Neleski, Daphne & Ted Preuss, Dean Potashner, Andy Richter, Henri Van Sluys, Trina Wellman and Wendy Worrell.

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 pm by Rob Wilpan.

**1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Rob made a motion to approve the 3/01/2023 meeting minutes as written, seconded by Diana. Vote: Gazis yes, Mickel yes, Wilpan yes. Motion passed.

**2. HARBOR POWER UPDATE:** Lou recommended skipping replacing the pole and getting the panel upgraded now. Jon proposed that we just move ahead with the panel replacement and we will try to get the pole replaced when it's possible. Rob asked Jon to look into scheduling an electrician.

**3. HARBOR RAILING UPDATE:** Lou spoke with Superior Docks and they referred him to Greg Barry of Tight Fit Welding. Rob received a quote from DC welding for \$5800. The quote from Custom Float Services is \$9800. Henri will be installing whatever railing purchased for \$1500. Rob is to contact Greg Barry for a quote. Rob made a motion that we accept DC Welding's quote for the harbor railings providing Greg Barry does not offer a quote that's less than \$5800 and DC Welding can deliver by the beginning of May, seconded by Jon. Vote: Gazis yes, Mickel yes, Wilpan yes.

**4. CYBER AGREEMENT WITH MMA UPDATE:** Rob worked on the agreement with Roy Gott and Kathi is to email it to MMA Risk Management for approval.

**5. KEARSARGE AVE/WEST SHORE ROAD VEGETATION CLEARING UPDATE:** Tabled until Joey is in attendance.

**6. CB BOILER WATER FEED REPAIR UPDATE:** Jon has not heard back from Steve Flaherty as to the status of the repair.

**7. SCANNING MINUTES BOOKS UPDATE:** No reply from Greg at Fogler Library. The town would own the digital copy. Rob wants to get this process started.

**8. SORRENTO EMS UPDATE:** Regarding Tracy Painter getting paid mileage reimbursement for EMS training, Rob said it brought up a bigger question, should Sorrento be re-establishing its own EMS without an emergency vehicle. Does the Board want to restart EMS with the thought of having EMTs responding directly from their homes? Jon said it is not sustainable for a community of our size with 6 or less members on the fire department; the program was discontinued because nobody would do it, people weren't able to volunteer the hours to maintain their license and most of the licensed EMTs weren't residents of Sorrento. If we want to provide EMS coverage and better protect our community it would be wise to talk with the Town of Sullivan and Sullivan Fire Department about how we can merge the fire departments effectively to get the best quality from both fire departments. Jon also said since the last meeting he found out Tracy is working for Schoodic Ambulance Service and they should be paying for her licensing. The Town of Sorrento should not be on the hook for providing a license for

somebody who is working for an EMS service covering the Town of Sorrento and does not live in Sorrento. Resident Tom Bailey spoke, he agrees with the concern about response times, with an aging community there may be a benefit combining with Sullivan, enough to merit adding an article to warrant with a vote or start a conversation with Sullivan Fire Department. Tabled until the next meeting when Fire Chief Clark is in attendance.

#### NEW BUSINESS:

**JOANNE COWEN SCHOLARSHIP FUND:** The current fund administrator, Connie Dedam, is looking to retire as admin since she moved out of Sorrento. She contacted Jim Cowen and he approved donating the fund balance of \$1300 to the Sorrento Mural Fund so she can close out the scholarship account. Diana made a motion to accept the \$1300 from the Joanne Cowen Scholarship Fund for deposit into the Sorrento Mural Fund, seconded by Rob. Vote: Gazis yes, Mickel yes, Wilpan yes, motion passed.

**IMPROVING HYBRID MEETING OPTION:** Rob asked for suggestions on what would be the best way to improve the sound quality so it carries over onto the ZOOM audience. The suggestions were eliminating zoom meetings entirely and purchasing an OWL using community building funds with the CB Committee's approval. A resident asked Rob "being the first selectman shouldn't you be at there in person? Why spend town money on equipment instead of having just in person town meetings. Rob said he needs to use his computer and there is an issue using multiple computers in the CB. After a discussion it was determined that we need a better microphone. Rob is to look into a microphone situation that automatically switches.

#### TREASURER'S REPORT:

**Meeting Date Conflict:** The Sullivan-Sorrento Historical Society also meets on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month. Several residents have suggested changing the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday Select Board meeting to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday or Thursday and changing the start time earlier to 5 pm or 6 pm. After a discussion it was decided to leave it the way it is. Not in favor of moving the day or time.

**Union Church:** In reviewing the upcoming Property & Casualty insurance policy renewal, Kathi noted that the tax commitment book shows the church on the East Side Road as owned by the town, but it is not listed on the town's insurance policy. There is also a tax card and folder on file. Rob said it's not owned by the Town; it is a community church built with non-town money. The Parker's help maintain it so they could help shed some light on it. Jon said his issue is the liability, if it shows that its town owned on paper we should have it insured or listed on the insurance policy; there seems to be a lot of discrepancies around town property. Resident Terry Noyes said he was told by years ago by Sturgis Haskins that the Town owns the land but the community built the church. Jon said we should have a contract for usage and liability policy or sell property outright, it's a liability nightmare. Rob suggested gifting land to the owners of the building, which is not the town. Jon said the town should not be gifting it to anyone other a nonprofit. It is not an active church with active services so it's probably not a nonprofit. Rob is to report back with the info he received from the Parkers.

**Budget Committee:** Kathi reported there is a need for a budget committee. The warrant and a budget are two different things. Budget Committee chief goals are to create internal controls, complete transparency and accountability. The people need to understand that the typical budget involves a budget committee, the involvement of the town treasurer working cooperatively with all the selectmen, before it goes to the town vote. Currently that is not the practice. On April 28 there is an MMA budget class via Zoom that Kathi will be attending and she emailed the material to the Select board in case

anyone is interested. Rob said he thinks a Budget Committee is great if people were interested but in the past no one was interested.

**AUDITOR:** As directed by Rob in the Feb 15 Select Board meeting, Kathi sent the auditor an email requesting a meeting; the email:

- requested a quote on what it will cost to fix the accounting errors and to get help with journal entries for the appropriations that have not been made for the last 8 years
- asked for advice on cash flow planning as we seem to be running out of money before the end of the year
- Asked if it is legal for the Fire Department to continually go over their 25% budget allowed in the warrant without consequences, they are over their budget now
- We have real estate taxes on the books that go back to 2005-2006, how do we collect those
- There are outstanding items that date back to 2017 on the checking account statement that I need help with

Rob said he spoke with the auditor, this is his busy season and they cannot get to us until the third week of April. Jon questioned Rob about the fact that he asked Kathi to reach out to the auditor for help in the last meeting, they have not contacted her but Rob has spoken with them? Rob responded it wasn't the last meeting it was a while ago when I asked Kathi about Trio.

Rob said we need to be prepared to push the audit through and let them have an opportunity to answer the questions that Kathi has. This led to a discussion about the beginning and ending account balances in the annual town report being off. Rob said they are adjusted with the help of the auditor. Jon said he was contacted by email from a member of the community concerned enough about town accounts, they think it might be wise to have a forensic audit done, the more we discuss the issues of the past and problems that seem pretty apparent in the budget, he is inclined to support a forensic audit. Rob said Kathi needs to put together a detailed list of concerns from the past older than June 30, 2020. He is going to take the day off next Tuesday and work with Kathi on things that need to be adjusted and brought to the auditor.

**MUNICIPAL SEWER BILLING:**

Kathi reported that there is \$22, 456 over due from sewer balances and she would like to have permission from the Select Board to put liens on the properties. Rob asked what the properties and balances are due:

11 Bayview Ave.	\$1137.70
20 Main St.	1137.70
29 Main St.	4740.45
9 Preble St.	4740.45
8 Short lane	3413.10
52 Waukeag Ave.	3413.10
66 Waukeag Ave.	776.68 current owner
66 Waukeag Ave.	1724.97 previous owner

Jon made a motion that we have Kathi put liens on the properties that are in arrears for the sewer. Rob seconded the motion providing you can legally put liens on the properties since its sewer fees, not property taxes. Vote: Gazis yes, Mickel yes, Wilpan yes.

Jon followed up on **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

Looking for the information surrounding the Sullivan Fire Chief operating one of Sorrento's trucks on a

mutual aid call. TABLED until Joey is in attendance.

Have inspection results from the Maine Department of Labor on the recent review of the Fire Department been received? Tabled until Joey is in attendance.

Has Rob received any advice from Town Attorney Dan Pileggi and Auditor Jim Wadman or progress made on moving forward with separating the SVFD Auxiliary from the Fire Department? Rob said they were not very helpful. The auxiliary has to establish as a non-profit and he was wondering how do other towns handle it? Jon said most don't have a separate auxiliary; they have a separate fund for events, like the Sullivan Daze fund. Our fire department is a municipal fire department so really there is no way we can support an auxiliary. Rob said there is an expense of establishing the auxiliary as a non-profit. Jon said it is not the town's expense to bear. At this point we should have Joey reach out to MMA for guidance. The Auxiliary is not the town's financial responsibility. It's a separate entity from the municipal Fire Department. Tabled until Joey is in attendance.

At 8:40 Rob made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Jon. Vote: Gazis yes, Mickel yes, Wilpan yes. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted on 4/03/2023 by Kathi Moore, Town Clerk