

**SELECT BOARD MEETING**

**October 26, 2023 5:30PM**

**Town Hall/Hybrid**

**Quorum noted**

**5:30 PM:** Meeting called to order by Chairperson Donhauser.

**A. Roll Call:** Mr. Donhauser, Ms. Dow, Mr. Shapleigh, and Mr. Trott.

**Absent:** Mr. Widi (excused).

**B. Pledge of Allegiance recited**

At this time, a moment of silence was observed for those individuals that were injured or killed in Lewiston today.

**C. Public Comment:**

There was no public input.

**D. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting(s)**

**5:32 PM** Motion by Mr. Donhauser, second by Mr. Shapleigh, to approve the minutes of October 12, 2022, as amended.

**Roll Call Vote:**

**Mr. Donhauser – Yes**

**Ms. Dow – Yes**

**Mr. Shapleigh – Yes**

**Mr. Trott - Yes**

**Unanimous vote to approve motion.**

**5:34 PM** Mr. Trott said that I would like to get an update from the Town Manager on past due minutes and where we stand on getting them.

Mr. Sullivan said that, with the acceptance of today, online we will be six sets of minutes behind. Actually, we're only four sets of minutes behind. The secretary has been working on those. We've been making progress catching up. We apologize. We did talk briefly today about ways we can work quickly to get minutes up onto the website. There is actually a lag time from when you accept them. Then, a set of clean minutes will be sent to the Clerk, then the secretary signs them, then we put them up on the website. That takes a series of days. What Ms. Lemire and I have discussed when she is submitting minutes she will also give me the clean (draft) copy, we will print those and be able to sign those with

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the errors written in, then get them up on the website right after your meeting so there won't be that couple of weeks lag time now. Again, we apologize. We have to do a better job at it. Thank you for bringing it up. I know you have been hearing from constituents. It's important that we get those up.

Ms. Lemire added that, before Mr. Sullivan came on board, I was always sending minutes to Ms. Albert and she would get a hold of who needed to sign them and putting them up on the website, etc. I didn't realize that that had changed. So, that's one more piece that will go away.

Mr. Sullivan said that that speaks to other things we are trying to centralize. So, if everything comes to me, I can move them more expeditiously, especially if the Clerk is out, or the Assistant to the Town Manager, we have to wait for them to come back in.

**E. Public Hearing:**

There were none.

**F. Department Head/Committee Reports**

**5:36 PM 1. Town Manager's Report**

Mr. Sullivan said that it is on the Town website. Regarding the November election, we wanted to remind people that there are information packets in the Town Hall vestibule for each of the questions to give backgrounds. We're certainly available if you want to have any questions answered. And we have all that information online. We hope people get out and vote. The absentee ballots are available in the Town Clerk's office. In addition, we have started the budget process. We have met with most of the departments at least once and we are starting our second round of meetings to discuss the FY25 budget. Last week we had a meeting with some health care providers because that's one of the areas that we spent over half a million dollars on, and it continues to grow at a rate higher than inflation. So, we want to make sure we're doing everything we can to try to lower the cost not only to our employees but to the Town, as well. We also want to make sure to keep a plan that suits their needs. We don't want people to think that we're moving away from and going for a less benefit-rich plan because it is what retains people at a municipal level. At the next meeting, there will be a number of items but one of the items that is in the Town Manager's report is opening a conversation about the bio-degradable bags at the Transfer Station. Both the cost of those bags and the cost of the company that used to pick up the compost for free have gone up. I realize that this was first put in place to try and replace 25% of the tipping fee that was going to landfills by having people bring

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compostable items so we didn't have to deal with those from our trash. And that has helped but, now, our cost associated with that is going up. The savings, like with the recycling, is much less. So, we're going to propose to the SB that we start charging for those compostable bags. The cost of those bags is still going to be far less than what you would pay for the pay-as-you-throw bags. But, it's a case of where we are giving them away for free, now, and we're not even entirely sure that people are using them for bringing to the Transfer Station. It seems we're giving out a lot more of them than we're getting back. It's just one more thing that we're trying to tighten up and trying to make it fair and balanced. We really appreciate people who continue to compost and recycle. We're trying to work through those returns as costs increase to recycle. Three years ago we were getting about \$260/ton for cardboard and now we're getting \$32/ton for cardboard, and it's costing us more in gas to bring it to EcoMaine.

**5:40 PM** Mr. Donhauser said that we used to accept cardboard from York, I believe. And we no longer do that.

Mr. Sullivan said no, that we no longer do that. We've talked to Kittery about combining the transfer stations and that seems to be stalled. We have opened up talks with South Berwick about the possibility of trying to solve this issue together. What that looks like, it's really too early to tell but, if there is any savings going in with another town, we're very open to it. We're trying to find a solution, as is everyone else as costs are going up. I urge people to go online to take a look at the report and, if there are any comments or questions or want to discuss it further, please give me a call.

**5:42 PM** Mr. Donhauser said that health insurance is going up.

Mr. Sullivan said that Allegiant is going up 4%. Blue Cross Blue Shield has not announced their increase but we're thinking they may probably be going up 6% to 7%. Inflation of 3.7% and that's going up 6%. We just have to sharpen our pencils and see if there are any other options. If not for this year, maybe next year. We'll move on as carefully as we can but we want to do the right thing and, hopefully, we can find some solutions.

Mr. Trott said, on the Murray Rowe Park, it is my understanding that we're looking to make and add a softball diamond out there. Where is that going to go.

Mr. Sullivan said that our primary focus has always been to re-establish the field from the Fernandez Family that they bequeathed to the Town and that is where the bulk of the investment is initially. We have had groups that have reached out to us and said that we need a softball field in the Town and we're happy to incorporate that but we know, right now, that Murray Rowe needs an investment.

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What that looks like in the end, we're going to do as much as we can for \$500,000. There's really no plan right now to have a softball field but we're willing to discuss it. That's used for soccer, also la crosse, other sports, and we don't want to lose them, either. One of the things that I've said when I've met with either the baseball or softball group is that this Town can't add by using subtraction. We can't add and become a more robust community by taking baseball away because you need softball. It's obvious we need softball and we need to figure out a way to do it but, at the same time, you don't want to have baseball be the one that gets less.

**5:44 PM**

Mr. Trott said that I understand that. The reason I brought it up, with the add and subtraction, is that there used to be a softball diamond down at Frost Tufts and we put soccer fields on top of that. It wasn't just the Fernandez family. My family and multiple others built those buildings at no cost to the Town. So, their concern when they're looking at this is that all their hard work getting out there raking and seeding the field and actually putting the money out to build those buildings is all going to go away.

Mr. Sullivan said that we intend to have the buildings painted, put roofs on. The soffits are all rotted away. There are bees' nests on them. Those need some tender loving care. The fences. Some of the other members may remember that I brought pictures the foul pole that was leaning to almost center field. We'd love to have enough money to put pickleball there. It's too early to tell. When I was asked by a member of the Budget Committee, if we have this money, is this enough for Murray Rowe and really, in fairness, I couldn't say that. We're going to be judicious and try and make the investment, again, not to subtract anything, not take buildings down. But, if the fencing needs improving, we'll improve the fence. If the baseball field needs improving. The dugouts are in pretty good shape. There was a structure behind home plate that was falling over. The DPW has already taken that out. There are some backstop repairs that need to be made. The mound has got to be replaced. We'll try to make the investments as far as we can. I appreciate that the SB has been supportive. The Budget Committee has been supportive. The Town, I think, really understands that we're going to make an investment. Whether that, at the end of the day is enough, it still waits to be completed. We could hire a consultant to do a study and have a design but you're going to spend \$50,000 to \$60,000 on that so let's see how far we can get with our own people.

**5:47 PM**

Mr. Trott said that I think the people who brought it up to me will be glad to hear it's by adding and not by subtraction, that we are looking at all possibilities.

**Mr. Donhauser moved, second by Mr. Trott, that the Eliot Select Board accept the Town Manager's Report and that it be posted online.**

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**Roll Call Vote:**

**Mr. Donhauser – Yes**  
**Ms. Dow – Yes**  
**Mr. Shapleigh – Yes**  
**Mr. Trott - Yes**

**Unanimous vote to approve motion.**

**G. Board and Committee Appointments/Resignations**

There were none.

**H. New Business:**

**5:48 PM 1. York Woods Liquor License Two-Day Event Request (November 25, 26)**

**Mr. Donhauser moved, second by Mr. Trott, that the Eliot Select Board approve a permit to allow Cruisin' Infusions Catering to serve alcohol at York Woods Products (Tree Festival) 300 Harold L. Dow Highway on November 25 and 26, 2023 from 10AM to 4PM.**

**Roll Call Vote:**

**Mr. Donhauser – Yes**  
**Ms. Dow – Yes**  
**Mr. Shapleigh – Yes**  
**Mr. Trott - Yes**

**Unanimous vote to approve motion.**

**5:49 PM 2. November – January Select Board Schedule**

Mr. Donhauser said that we need to discuss what our meeting schedule is going to be in the next months. The next meeting would be November 9<sup>th</sup> (only November meeting) and then in December, we would meet December 14<sup>th</sup>. Then, in January, it would be the 11<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 25<sup>th</sup>. We would resume our regular schedule in February. He asked if anyone had any issues with that.

**Mr. Donhauser moved, second by Mr. Trott, that the Eliot Select Board approve the change to the Select Board meeting schedule as follows:**

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**November 9, December 14, 2023, and January 11, 18, 25, 2024. The Select Board will resume regular schedule in February 2024.**

**DISCUSSION**

Mr. Sullivan said that I just want to let you know that I did send this to Chairman Leathe on the Budget Committee and we're going to meet and discuss it next week. But, as you can see, I think having that joint meeting after everyone receives their packet on the budget and becomes familiar with the initial request is beneficial for everyone. So, hopefully, this schedule will work out for both the Budget Committee and the SB.

**DISCUSSION ENDED**

**Roll Call Vote:**

**Mr. Donhauser – Yes**

**Ms. Dow – Yes**

**Mr. Shapleigh – Yes**

**Mr. Trott - Yes**

**Unanimous vote to approve motion.**

**I. Old Business:**

**5:50 PM 1. Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Update**

Mr. Sullivan said that this is the time of year I normally start the putting the budget on almost every single meeting. In case people have questions/discussions, more information is put online for them to review it. I did put in the packet some of the steps we're taking for the FY25 budget. Insurance, fuel providers, IT services are all likely to increase. We've reached out to those providers to try to give us an indication of where their industries are at and what the trends are. We also know that the cost of living is around 3.7% so I expect and hope for their support that they know we are doing the best we can for employees. I don't know what that will be at the end but we'll talk more about that. Then, I encourage people to read that letter that is in your packet, the residents and other officials. We're hoping to have that workshop on the 18<sup>th</sup> of January and the budget process is going forward even though some of those costs are 20 months away from when we're setting the costs.

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**5:52 PM      2. Manager's Contract**

Mr. Donhauser said that I would personally like to say that, in my view, Mr. Sullivan has exceeded all expectations that I had for a new Town Manager. He's done an excellent job and had an excellent review the first year. He hasn't had a second review and perhaps we could start that in the next week or so. In looking around at all the surrounding communities, you're significantly underpaid, as far as I'm concerned, when you look at other compensation of other town managers. And looking out into the future, for example, if we don't retain your services in the future, it's going to cost us more money, anyway. So, we ought to get ready for that. So, there is a proposal that we extend your contract in the short term for one more year. I think your contract ends in November 2024, I think, so we're in the last year of your contract. It makes sense to be proactive and engage your services for at least another year and, hopefully, even more in the future. I have discussed this with Mr. Sullivan, personally, and urged him to tell me what would make him happy. Let me say that most of this is my encouragement. I think Mr. Widi and other Board members have also encouraged Mr. Sullivan to talk about compensation. So, we have a proposal and we have a very minor change to his original contract to extend it one year. The current contract is until October 31, 2024. This agreement would replace the present term and extend it to October 31, 2025.

**5:54 PM**      Mr. Sullivan said that it's actually 2026. Essentially what you're doing is adding two years to the contract but you're replacing it with a three-year contract.

Mr. Donhauser read the language change: "All parties to this agreement will work to the best of their ability and within all applicable laws and ordinances to create an environment which allows all employees the opportunity to grow and advance within the municipal organization. This includes, but is not limited to, training, reasonable compensation, and advancement." The significant change in our proposal is that your current compensation is \$108,000/year. We're going to increase that to \$122,000 in the period ending October 31, 2024, October of 2025 would be \$124,000 and October 31, 2026 would be \$126,000. I don't know if you have engaged any of the other Board members but do you have anything you'd like to say with respect to this.

Mr. Shapleigh said that the first increase starts next week. Then the second starts a year from next week. The written dates are wrong. Okay.

**5:56 PM**      Ms. Dow said that I think it's clear that Mr. Sullivan has been an asset to the community and it would be foolish of us to not retain him as long as we could. If we don't raise our compensation for this position, once he does leave, we will be

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in a bad position to get a candidate as strong as Mr. Sullivan. So, I think it's important to do this now.

**5:57 PM** Mr. Trott said that, as I discussed with Mr. Sullivan, even if we go ahead, at that last step, we're still going to be behind with the \$126,000; that a lot of that is because he's not looking for any more money and he's being very generous to us on that end of it. We're probably going to be looking at somebody else coming in and adding another \$20,000 to \$30,000 on that final number, as it is. From what I went through on the search committee, and what we saw for prices when he came to us in 2021, we were already upwards of \$7,000 behind what local towns were paying.

Ms. Dow said that is is going to start us in the right direction.

Mr. Trott agreed and I think it's well-worth the investment.

Mr. Shapleigh agreed.

**5:28 PM** Mr. Sullivan said that I just wanted to thank you for the kind words. I do enjoy working here very much. I get to work with a lot of really good people. I know Select Board member Trott and I have discussed, and each one of you members I've discussed with, the fact that we really need to create an environment where people can move up in the organization. I don't want to get too far into that because I know that the next meeting we're going to talk about the Charter and how the Charter might be amended, might be revised. Really, that's why I asked for that language to be put in, which is really unenforceable by the way, because it sends a message that we need to allow people to move up within the system. There's a lot of talented people here that are doing more training than they've ever done before and their abilities are increasing on a regular basis. It's a great investment and I really appreciate it. The SB has been so supportive in getting that training and allowing people to grow and allow me to try to create a place that people want to work and be retained in. So thank you for that. It may seem to you like natural but, from a lot of my experience here, what I here from staff is that it wasn't always the case.

**6:00 PM** Mr. Donhauser added that employee morale has 150% improved over our previous situation. The other thing I enjoy about you, Mr. Sullivan, is that you are not afraid to tell somebody no. There are many times when it's not easy to say no but you will stand right up and say either it doesn't make sense or here's the reason why it doesn't make sense or why we can't do it.

**Mr. Donhauser moved, second by Mr. Shapleigh, that the Eliot Select Board agree to the terms presented this evening for the Town Manager's contract**



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revision and direct the Town Manager to work with counsel to put the agreement in legal form for all parties to sign.

**Roll Call Vote:**

**Mr. Donhauser – Yes  
Ms. Dow – Yes  
Mr. Shapleigh – Yes  
Mr. Trott - Yes**

**Unanimous vote to approve motion.**

**J. Approval of Warrant(s):**

**6:01 PM Mr. Donhauser moved, second by Mr. Trott, that the Select Board approve Payroll Warrant #34 in the amount of \$48,550.00, dated October 11, 2023; Payroll Warrant #36 in the amount of \$46,404.60, dated October 18, 2023.**

**Roll Call Vote:**

**Mr. Donhauser – Yes  
Ms. Dow – Yes  
Mr. Shapleigh – Yes  
Mr. Trott - Yes**

**Unanimous vote to approve motion.**

**6:02 PM Mr. Donhauser moved, second by Ms. Dow, that the Select Board approve A/P Warrant #35 in the amount of \$1,055,101.26, dated October 12, 2023; A/P Warrant #37 in the amount of \$236,332.73, dated October 18, 2023.**

**Roll Call Vote:**

**Mr. Donhauser – Yes  
Ms. Dow – Yes  
Mr. Shapleigh – Yes  
Mr. Trott - Yes**

**Unanimous vote to approve motion.**

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**K. Selectmen's Report/Other:**

**6:03 PM** Mr. Sullivan said that I hate to ask you this but I've been asked to put this on the surplus list; that you take a vote to allow us to put this on the surplus list. It's a conference table that we would price at \$150. You might recall we took a vote similar to that and wondered if you would move to put this on. It was not on the agenda. If you don't feel comfortable voting on it, we can just put it on the next meeting.

Mr. Donhauser asked if any members were opposed to this.

None were.

**Mr. Donhauser moved, second by Mr. Shapleigh, that the Eliot Select Board allow the Town Manager to dispose of the table at the price determined by the Town Manager.**

**Roll Call Vote:**

**Mr. Donhauser – Yes**

**Ms. Dow – Yes**

**Mr. Shapleigh – Yes**

**Mr. Trott - Yes**

**Unanimous vote to approve motion.**

**L. Adjourn**

**Ms. Dow moved, second by Mr. Shapleigh, that the Select Board adjourn.**

**Roll Call Vote:**

**Mr. Donhauser – Yes**

**Ms. Dow – Yes**

**Mr. Shapleigh – Yes**

**Mr. Trott - Yes**

**Unanimous vote to approve motion.**

The meeting adjourned at 6:05 PM.

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**Respectfully submitted,**

**Ellen Lemire, Recording Secretary**

  
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**Lauren Dow, Secretary**

**Date approved: November 9, 2023**