

Standish Town Hall

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Special Town Council Meeting Minutes 9/16/2014

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**MINUTES
SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
STANDISH, MAINE
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2014
STANDISH MUNICIPAL CENTER
7:00 PM**

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Sargent and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

ROLL CALL

Councilors present: Nesbitt, Newbegin, Olson, Pomerleau Sargent and Spencer.
Councilor Blanck was excused.

Chair Sargent thanked the voters who voted on the September 9 bond issues.

NEW BUSINESS

107-14 Call for Special Town Meeting Referendum Election, Place Referendum Question on the Ballot and Call for Public Hearing for November 4, 2014 Municipal Election Regarding Sidewalks [Olson]

Moved by Olson seconded Nesbit and voted to dispense with the secretary's reading of the order. (5 Yeas - 1 nay - motion failed needs to be unanimous to waive reading)

After a partial reading moved by Pomerleau seconded by Olson and voted to dispense with the secretary's reading of the order. (Unanimous)

Councilor Olson explained that this is the sidewalk question being brought forward for the November election. She said that in both instances we have the opportunity to utilize the Safe Routes to School Grant. She said that Steep Falls would be eligible for a Community Block Grant funds. She noted recently they were successful in splitting out the questions and presenting them again. She cited that we voted many times on the widening of the turnpike before it was finally approved by the voters. She said that this is the principal and interest that leverages grants.

The matching grant amount will be \$716,000 with \$108,000 matching funds from the town. If we don't act on this, the funds will be given to another town.

Aimee Senatore gave her personal and professional position of the sidewalk vote. As Executive Director of the Lakes Region Chamber of Commerce and a member of the Standish Economic Development Group, she explained that they believe that the presence of sidewalks will increase community interaction, foster a more vibrant town center, and also establish a safe means for people to walk, run or ride bikes. She noted that more activity in the village is good for business. She explained that she grew up in Standish and attended school here. She said that personally she is very proud of the town and the infrastructure improvements that have been made throughout the years. She noted that she lives just outside of Gorham Village and explained that they utilize the village far more due to the existence of sidewalks there. It was her opinion that if Standish Village had sidewalks they too would be used to go to the local businesses. She urged them to add the sidewalk question to the November ballot.

Carol Billington, Planning Board Member, said that she's been on many committees that advocate this matter. She said that in her opinion except for the safety issues that just were voted in, this will do more for the Town of Standish than anything she can think of. She explained as a member of the Comp Plan and other committees she listened to the experts on how do we grow our town and attract business. She cited that all of the experts say that the town needs to invest in themselves and sidewalks are the single best thing you can do for a business. She said

recently she walked at Standish Corner at approximately 7 pm and was frightened by the experience. She said that she thought the votes on this in the past have brought out negativity around this matter. She said that there are some naysayers in her experience that's in the minority. She urged them to bring this forward to a vote. She said that if this gets turned down it would be a shame, since the residents of Steep Falls are in favor of sidewalks in their village. She said that the new sidewalks at Oak Hill are transformative and they will be in Standish and Steep Falls Villages.

Mary McNeil of Manchester Road agreed with previous speakers and urged them to add this to the ballot.

Councilor Nesbitt said that he is in full support of this order. He said that all of the committees encourage pedestrian friendly neighborhoods and this is a great opportunity. He said to achieve something like this for the money we'll spend is an incredible opportunity. He said that he's heard sidewalks to nowhere, but with these someone could walk from Standish House of Pizza to Norway Savings Bank. He said that if this is not approved, we will be responsible for some of the costs. In regards to Steep Falls, if that is not approved we'll still have some costs. He said that we have a vested interest in these project and he'd like to see them more forward and let the voters decide.

Councilor Newbegin said that he sat on the Comprehensive Plan Committee and was an advocate for the sidewalks. He said that this had been before the people three times and they've voted it down, he said that he personally respects that and would like to see this split into a vote for Standish Village and Steep Falls. He said that he fully supports the Steep Falls project.

Town Manager, Gordon Billington, said that you can vote to split it out and the order will be corrected.

Chair Sargent asked what will we have to pay back if this doesn't go through.

Gordon Billington said that for Steep Falls it will be approximately \$60,000.

Chair Sargent asked if we could withdrawal the Steep Falls portion from the bond.

Gordon Billington said his that if you pulled them out separately he believed that we could move forward on the Steep Falls project based on the Town Meeting vote. His recommendation would be to bond it separately.

Councilor Olson said that part of the vision for Standish Corner was to see more business come into town. She said that we are moving forward and many would like to see this move ahead. She noted that both of the projects have paybacks. She personally would not like to see it split.

Councilor Pomerleau said that he has tried hard to get sidewalks in Standish, but on the flip side he's seen this turned down three times. He said that 1,110 people signed a petitions for term limits for Councilor because they say we don't listen to the voters. He said that if we put this on the ballot in November we will definitely have term limits. He said that he's nervous where this town is going especially if we have term limits. He said that he disagreed that everyone supports sidewalks because if they did, it would have been passed the first time. He said 70% of the people that he talks to do not support sidewalks. He said that we will bring Steep Falls down if we keep this together. He said that Steep Falls is a walking village and has always been. He said what happens if it fails again – do we go out again for a fifth time. He said we've educated people and he'd like to see Steep Falls be a separate vote. He said that he would not support this at this time, he would consider this at a later time.

Councilor Olson said that if there was a limit of people saying no, and not putting a question forward, we would have Mr. Newbegin sitting with us. She said that it often takes several votes before something goes through. She went on to say that the grant administrator agreed to accept approval through the end of this year, this would be the last opportunity for Standish Corner.

Councilor Spencer said that she agreed with Councilor Newbegin, she would hate to see Steep Falls go down because of Standish Village. In order for her to support this it has to be two questions.

Councilor Nesbitt didn't support it being split because we're all Standish. In addition, he didn't see this as grouping. He said as a Councilor he will listen to the people, but ultimately he'll do what he thinks is best for the town. He said this is best for the town, the charter questions are a separate matter.

Chair Sargent said that he's been asking people what they think. He recalled that the voters voted to buy land for a community center but ultimately turned down the community center due to the costs. He said that he was in favor of sidewalks for both Standish Corner and Steep Falls, but the voters have spoken three times and they don't

want them at Standish Corner. He said that although he doesn't agree with it he respects what they have said. He said that Steep Falls has overwhelming support of sidewalks. He's like to see it split or move it forward as just Steep Falls. He does not want them bundled.

Moved by Olson seconded Spencer by to split this into two separate questions.

Councilor Pomerleau voiced his concerns whether we're able to split this.

Gordon Billington said that you can. He said what he understands is that you're splitting the question into two questions on this order.

Chair Sargent said if we split it, it will go to the voters in two questions.

Councilor Pomerleau wanted to make sure that there would be additional discussion on the amended order.

Moved by Olson seconded by Spencer and voted to split this into two separate questions. (5 Yeas – 1 Nay, Nesbitt)

Mary McNeil of Manchester Road said she was confused, if the Steep Falls measure get voted down, can they still move forward with the project.

Chair Sargent said that the Steep Falls project is under the threshold that needs to go to referendum, however, it's better to go to the voters and ask for their approval. He said that he was in favor of splitting them out.

Councilor Pomerleau said that the Council could split out the cost of engineering and have a council vote.

Councilor Olson said if we didn't bring it to vote people would question that. She felt safer having it got to vote.

William Orr questioned who would do the maintenance on the sidewalks.

Councilor Nesbitt said that initially the sidewalks would be three season so there will be no snow removal.

Mr. Billington mentioned that he has been approached by our grounds maintenance contractor who has equipment to remove snow from sidewalks. The contractor has offered to plow the sidewalks, but has not submitted a quote at this time.

Mr. Orr said that the people would like to know the full cost including maintenance.

Councilor Pomerleau agreed that we have to be aware of the maintenance cost. He said that maybe we were going maintain the sidewalks is news to him. He said he was not supporting the sidewalks at this time, he appreciated that Steep Falls was being split out.

Councilor Newbegin questioned if this is broken out will be money be split out.

Councilor Olson said it will be the same total dollar value split separately for Standish Corner and Steep Falls.

Mr. Billington said that the order will be re-written with the appropriate numbers, which he can do administratively.

Chair Sargent said that we'll have two bond issues for sidewalks one for Steep Falls, one for Standish and Gordy will provide the numbers administratively.

VOTE ON ORDER AS AMENDED: 5 Yeas – 1 Nay, Pomerleau

108-14 Designate the Voting Delegates for the Maine Municipal Association Annual Business Meeting [Sargent]

Chair Sargent said that this is an annual event.

VOTE: 6 Yeas

PUBLIC ITEMS

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Several upcoming meetings and building events were announced.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

An executive session was not needed at this meeting.

ADJOURN

Moved by Sargent seconded by Newbegin and voted to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:48 p.m. by unanimous consent.

Submitted by: Mary Chapman for Gordon Billington
Clerk/Secretary

PLEASE NOTE: THESE MINUTES ARE NOT VERBATIM. A VIDEO RECORDING OF THE MEETING IS AVAILABLE AT THE TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE DURING REGULAR BUSINESS HOURS