

Town of Oakham

Board of Selectmen

Regular Session

Minutes of November 27, 2023

Present: Don Haapakoski-Chairman, Lucy Tessnau (via phone), Aaron Langlois-Clerk

In attendance: Maribel LaRange-BOS admin asst., Barbara Piucci, Lucille DiLeo, Sue Adamski, Stephanie Smith, Samantha Bodine, Susan Meyer, Lee Dougan, Tom Pette, Paul Rochette, Clare Hendra, Alan Flagg, Tom Hughes, Ken Housman, Brad Taylor, Mark Moisio

Via Zoom: Stephen Dollinger

Meeting opened at 6:00 PM by Chairman, Don Haapakoski

Approve Warrant WR24-11: Don made a motion to approve warrant WR24-11, Aaron 2nd, Lucy abstained, passed.

Approve Minutes: Don made a motion to approve minutes for executive session 10/16/23 and executive session 10/30/23, Aaron 2nd, Lucy abstained, passed.

Public Session:

- **Clare Hendra: COA**

- Gift cards for seniors 75+ from Hannafords
- 151 seniors, \$30 each card, total \$4,530.00

Aaron made a motion to approve \$4,530.00 from the Alden Trust to be used for the 151 seniors for gift card to Hannafords, Don 2nd, Lucy all in favor.

- **Stephen Dollinger:**

- Donation to the COA, laptop with docking station

- **Lucille DiLeo:**

- Should the town should be plowing Skyline Drive
 - Private Drive, deeds weren't drafted properly
 - In 1963 the Town adopted Chapter 40 §6C & D
- Cannot apply an article from 1963 and apply it now
Cannot apply without appropriating a certain amount of dollars to it as it's unknow the cost it will be to plow Skyline Drive
- Setting president by plowing private way, how can it town deny any other private road of the service
 - The Town has been plowing private roads in town
 - Plowing the roads by the lake for over 30 years

- Concerned that if the Skyline Drive gets plowed why would they try to correct the deeds as they have no incentive to
- Will the Town have to pay for repairs of the road caused by any plowing?
- Believes the Town is not responsible for the road and should not be plowing it

Don said to adopt the roads is a process and not adequate time to put on the STM and winter is coming up. Contractor won't plow this winter. Town adopted the law that allows for the Town to plow private roads. Mrs. DiLeo said it had to have a dollar amount for tax payers to know where their money is being spent. Don said that in Highway Department's budget the line-item for snow and ice which is funded. Mrs. DiLeo asked why is a private contractor going to be hired to plow Skyline Drive. Aaron said it's not unusual to hire contractors to plow the roads if the Highway Department does not have the resources. Aaron said that the residents pay taxes and they're not getting anything they are not entitled to or free. Aaron said there would be a review of the roads with issues with access the fire pond prior to the Planning Board recommendation of acceptance of the roads. Don said Highway Superintendent will evaluate the roads prior. Mrs. DiLeo said there should be a cost amount presented at the STM to be appropriated. Aaron said currently there is funds in the budget to cover it for plowing with the ability to plow private roads. Don informed that the law allows for deficit spending for snow & ice which would then come out of the following years free cash. Mrs. DiLeo still thinks there should be a specific dollar amount for the additional plowing and if it goes over it should be up to the residents of Skyline Drive to plow. Mrs. DiLeo thinks that if there is a deficit because of plowing Skyline Drive those residents should pay for it because the road is private and should be up to them and or the developer of the property.

The end result is to adopt both roads Skyline Drive and Old Schoolhouse Road. Town Counsel is actively working on the road acceptance process. Aaron supports plowing for 2023-2024 winter without assuming expectations for the 2024-2025 winter. Mrs. DiLeo said it should a contract with the residents of Skyline Drive that it's only for winter of 2023-2024. Don said it will be run by Town Counsel and will inform Mrs. DiLeo.

- **Brad Taylor**

- Metes and bounds have been established
- Legal document that is registered by developer
- Should be up to the developer

- **Barbara Piucci**

- Why has it taken so long for the 1963 article to surface? If Town has been plowing private roads
 - Contractor's attorney never got back to Town Counsel and nothing has progressed.
 - Prior Highway Superintendent always plowed the private roads by the lake and when current Superintendent took over, he continued what was already being done.

- This information was just found in Highway Department records
- **Ken Housman**
 - There needs to be pressure to get the roads accepted
 - It's been mapped out from Counsel on what the steps are to get the roads accepted
- **Tom Hughes**
 - Hopeful this process can be done within 6 months, roads are in decent conditions have some cracking but can be repaired with a liquid repair, cutting trees around the bond
- **Brad Taylor:** request to be on the next BOS meeting agenda for issue with Fire Chief.

Parks & Recreation Committee:

- **Baseball field & Town Common**
 - Possibility of Parks & Rec taking over Wright's Field & Town Common
 - Need additional funds

Aaron feels that boards and committees should be empowered to make recommendations on the use of the land for recreation and park and not to the BOS. Wright's Field and Town Common currently do not get additional funding for maintenance. Sam asked if there is an itemized list on things to do. Additional funding can be to hire contractors for the maintenance. Stephanie said Parks & Rec is not opposed on possibly taking it over but would further discussion of exactly what it entails with the committee and voted on.

Aaron suggested covering with plie wood the opening in the snack shack. Aaron thanked the Parks & Rec for the progress on the cleaning of the second floor. Parks & Rec will get back to the BOS.

Appointment:

- **Erik Helle- part-time / seasonal driver**
 - Aaron made a motion to appoint Erik Helle as part-time seasonal driver, Don 2nd, Lucy all in favor.

Paul Rochette:

- **Mitel phone system bill**
 - Helping COA with the finances
 - Mitel bill gets split between different departments
 - Bill taxpayers pay, dividing it doesn't save the town money
 - Propose for FY25 that a line item be put under the Town Hall, be funded sufficiently to pay bill all out one line item

The BOS all agree that it should be one bill. Alan from FinCom also agrees and will talk to accountant about it.

Paul asked if the fax machine in the Town Hall working, BOS Admin informed that Verizon came to check the line and it's working, so the problem is the actual fax machine. New fax machine will be ordered.

ARPA- Remaining funds & soliciting input from the public:

- **Barbara Piucci**
 - Requested how much was left of ARPA funds
 - Requested the process has been for soliciting ideas, criteria, how are thing are approved and or denied
 - Town awarded \$584,961
 - As of 11/11/23 \$214, 245 spent
 - \$106,500 allocated
 - \$264,015.24 balance

Response to Mrs. Piucci via email from Chairman

- Continue to review projects to improve services to towns people
- Assist employees
- Replace and repair equipment and infrastructure as needed
- Assist with staff and temporary consultants
- Any other projects that improve the effectiveness and efficiency of town government
- Initially the used of ARPA funds was restrictive but now the Federal government has relaxed the usage
- Can be used for sewer & water projects
 - Mrs. Piucci's suggestion is for the water for the Library become a priority
- Broadband connections, infrastructure, construction or repairs, equipment purchases, repairs, vehicle purchases, wages, salary & benefits, premium pay for employees, computer technology, software, matching funds for grants
 - Mrs. Piucci request a public information on ARPA to inform the towns people
 - Process on how to submit ideas
 - Public process on how projects are looked at
 - Public process on approval

Aaron informed that it is on the website & shared with board and committees. Aaron spoke on a resident's question on what is done for the youth in Oakham? Aaron mentioned the field, all does not want to rush to spend it, December 31, 2024 to airmark the funds, 2026 to spend it.

Aaron suggested to allocate funds for the executive chairs at the table for meetings, as well as the chairs for the public.

- **Aaron's request for allocation of ARPA funds:**

- \$900 – 6 executive chairs
- \$2,000 - dumpster & shredder – Town Hall
- \$2,000 - tablets for BOS members

Aaron made a motion to allocate \$900 for 6 executive chairs & \$2,000 for dumpster & shredder from ARPA funds, Don 2nd, Lucy all in favor.

BOH is considering adding a Shred-it day opened to the public, 3 hours / \$225 per hr. Aaron will be making that recommendation to BOH to fund it in June for Towns people in June.

- **Stephanie Smith**

- Parks & Rec approached for ARPA funds soccer equipment / bring soccer back to Wright's Field by Town resident
- Presentation email & recommended that the resident come before the BOS
- Would require Oakham to invest money in soccer goals - \$5,000 each
- Recommended to get a firm commitment from different organizations to be willing to use it

Aaron should look at options and be fiscally responsible but does think should invest in youth sports / youth.

Parks & Rec discussed the storage of the nets, mowing of the field. Will advise town resident to submit proposal to BOS and for future agenda.

Aaron would like to give authority of the field to Parks & Rec. Parks & Rec is not opposed to it, just need clear guidelines for the field & Town Common.

- **Zoom Equipment invoices:**

- Originally bills were going to be paid from the cable access account
- Bills cannot be paid directly from cable access account without Town vote
-

Social Media Policy:

- **Recommended updates**

- Sent to boards & committees
- Policy from KP Law
- Made adjustments to fit Oakham
- Added acknowledgement of social media policy before being accessed social media rights
- Social media is a public record, cannot be deleted, cannot shut off comments
- Open Meeting Law

- Share meetings, notices & agendas on social media
- BOS will retain a listing of all social media sites
- Administrative rights shared with at least one other person prior to resignation, termination or vacancy, rights should be transferred to another authorized individual
- Identification social media post, notate initials at the end of a post
- Signature page to be included in personnel file or elected or appointed personnel file and with the office of the BOS office

Lucy would like to review the policy, will be on the next agenda for vote

Funding for MMA annual meeting:

- Municipal Selectboard Association
- Volunteer to fill the Worcester County vacancy
- January 2024 – January 2025
- Aaron Langlois was selected
- Intended goal to represent rural communities
- Annual Mass Municipal Association training, in Boston, begins early morning 1/19/24 until end of day of 1/20/24
- Request to be funded by the Town for the benefit of the Town
- Allocate funding for the BOS to participate
- 2-night hotel (Thurs & Fri) \$222
- 2-day conference, \$240
- Parking- unknown
- Estimate cost \$666-\$800

Aaron requested to allocate \$2,400 from ARPA funds for the BOS members that would like to attend, Don 2nd, passed.

Review Special Town Meeting article requests:

- Park benches for the baseball field, by Parks & Rec
- Adopt a flag bylaw that states no person shall fly or display on a Town flagpole on a Commemorative or Organization Flag other than the United States flag, the Mass State flag, the official Town of Oakham flag, the official flags of all branches of the U.S. military and armed forces and or the POW on the Town flagpole, by Aaron Langlois
- \$1,611.52 fund owed benefits for fy 22; 23 & 24 retro pay to the assessor- by Board of Assessors
- \$2,000 for engineering for Green Hollow Arch- by Historical Commission
- \$5,000 for maintenance of Memorial Field if Parks & Recreation votes to take it on- by Parks & Rec

Aaron made a motion to accept the articles as submitted for STM, Don 2nd, Lucy all.

The BOS support the cemetery arch funding from ARPA.

Aaron made a motion to allocate \$20,774.80 from ARPA funds for the completion of Green Hallow Cemetery Arch, Don 2nd, Lucy all in favor.

Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission (ABCC):

- **2024 Retail License Renewals**
 - Gulfers Arm- full liquor license
 - Route 148 & Variety- full liquor license
 - Pine Acres lodge- full liquor license
 - Oakham Pine Acres- wine & malt
 - Agronomy Vineyard- wine & malt

Aaron made a motion to accept the liquor licenses, Don 2nd, Lucy all in favor.

BHT cannot renew Class II until the special permit is reinstated because it lapsed.

New Business:

- **Aaron Langlois**
 - Investing funds- most of the money is in a money market earning pennies. Capitalize on higher interest rates. Opportunity to do and look into for investing.
 - Municipal cyber security grant
 - Lucy did this grant last year
 - Will continue to do
- **Don Haapakoski**
 - MMA Cannabis Commission webinar
 - Recommend for all to watch very informative on what Town can and cannot do
 - Growth & selling facilities
 - Stephen Dollinger- push back if there isn't proper security to implant a grow and if not, Town can reject it
 - Clare Hendra- State Security Requirements

Old Business:

- **Lucy Tessnau**
 - Requested to revisit the discontinuing of the fax machine at the Senior Ctr for the nutrition program, paid by the Formula grant
 - Aaron- COA met with Elder Services to sign agreement for Elder Servies, they agree on using the fax machine at the Town Hall
- **Aaron Langlois**
 - Volunteer policy, waiting on Town Counsel's review

- List of appointments, outstanding minutes from the Town Clerk, importance of the requirements for the ethics, open meeting law, all boards and committees need to be in compliance. Check list on posting of agendas, check list form minutes be sent to all
- **BOS Admin**
 - Phil Warbasse submitted an update on behalf of the Town Study Hall Planning Committee for the Town Hall for ARPA funds

Correspondence: Board of Health Clerk's resignation

Executive Session MGL Chapter 30A Section 21

Opened at 8:22 PM by Chairman, Don Haapakoski:

Roll Call: Don Haapakoski-Aye, Lucy Tessnau- Aye, Aaron Langlois-Aye

Meeting Adjourned at 9:30 PM: Aaron made a motion to adjourn, Don 2nd, Lucy all in favor.

Next Regular Meeting: December 11, 2023 at 6:00 PM.

To view the Board of Selectmen's meeting please visit: [youtube.com/@TownOfOakham](https://www.youtube.com/@TownOfOakham)