

# **Town of Oakham**

Board of Selectmen

Regular Session

Minutes of December 26, 2023

**Present:** Don Haapakoski-Chairman, Lucy Tessnau- Vice Chairman, Aaron Langlois-Clerk

**In attendance:** Maribel LaRange-BOS admin asst., Paul Rochette, Tom Hughes, Scott Corey, Mass. State Senator, Peter Durant

**Via Zoom:** Barbara Piucci

**Meeting opened at 6:16 PM by Chairman, Don Haapakoski**

**Approve Warrant WR24-13:** Don made a motion to approve warrant WR24-13, Aaron 2<sup>nd</sup>, passes.

**Approve Minutes:** Don made a motion to approve minutes of 10/30/23, Aaron 2<sup>nd</sup>, passes. Don made a motion to amend minutes of 10/2/23 (correction), Aaron 2<sup>nd</sup>, passes.

**Public Session:** No public session.

**Peter Durant- MA. State Senator:** New State Senator Peter Durant came before the BOS to introduce himself to provide information on his office. The Senator's Chief of Staff is Ann Gaudreau, Legislator Director, Curtis Boucher. Dan Hicky, communication director, Jared Grey, rep district. Office number 617-722-1540. Senator asks to always be informed of anything occurring in the Town so he is not be surprised. First formal session withing the Senate is January 3, 2024. Durant discussed how the budget process works. The House is first on the budget then the Senate. Durant would like to have in put from his towns as what is import and their town's needs. Keeping a close eye on the revenue as it appears to coming up a bit short.

Aaron stated that he's been attending Director Gobi's weekly check in and shared that he thinks she's doing amazing in her new role and understands the needs for rural communities and seems to be advocating for them. Durant shared that Director Gobi is trying to put in a Municipal Factor that can help rural communities and thinks it's a great idea.

Lucy asked who is assigned to come to the towns each month to represent the Senator and to collect the town's thoughts, Durant said he hasn't assigned anyone but believes it will be Jared or Ann. Durant said they will be setting up office hours in conjunction with Donna Farmer, State Representative Donnie Berthiaume's Chief of Staff.

**Charter Oakham Renewal License Agreement:** Aaron supports moving with the recommended contract. Cable Internet Committee has been notified of the renewal license agreement. The

agreement will continue from the previous agreement. The money provided from the agreement can be used for cable access. The agreement is for 10 years.

Aaron made a motion to sign the Oakham renewal license agreement, Lucy 2<sup>nd</sup>, Don all in favor.

**MIIA- Valuation update:** Four Town buildings, Safety Complex, Town Hall, Library & Oakham Center School have been reassessed; they are insured but were under insured due to valuation. Valuated now at the current value, which is an increase of \$7,501. Installments of 1/3 FY24, 1/3 FY25 & 1/3 FY26 for payments. The construction or additions do not affect the value of the library. If there was an injury on the rocks at the library would be covered under the Town's insurance. Lucy questioned the valuation of the Police Department as it was not listed, Aaron said to verify if the Police Department is insured.

Aaron made a motion to sign the updated valuations and cost associated, Lucy 2<sup>nd</sup>, Don all in favor.

**Community Compact Technology Grant:** Oakham was awarded \$25,587. Grant needs to be signed and accepted.

Aaron made a motion to authorize BOS Admin, Maribel LaRange to sign the Community Compact Technology Grant, Lucy 2<sup>nd</sup>, all in favor.

Aaron offered to work with Maribel and Civic Plus as a liaison for options for the website.

**Flooding conditions- Adams Road:** Residents from Adams Road expressed concern on the water floods especially since culvert removed. Don said the culvert on Adams Road was removed several years ago. Aaron said there's the MVP grant through CMRPC that can help with culverts. The BOS stated that there are several areas affected in town. The BOS will ask Kevin do a list with priority of which culvert would need repairs. MVP Grant agreement Oakham is working with CMRPC can be helpful in the future with culverts.

Paul Rochette expressed concern on the water level on Adam's Road. Suggested that the owner lower the level and if damaged caused they should be responsible.

**Town Policies discussion:** Aaron had offered to consolidate the personnel policies in to one file and add a table of content. Aaron said it's correctly on SharePoint in its original form.

**Climate resilience grants discussion:** Aaron, Tom Hughes and Maribel are on Climate resilience committee as well representatives of CMRPC. It was made clear that rural needs are different than urban needs. Goal to be complete by fairly soon. In order to be compliant to be able to get future grants need to go through the motion of certain workshops and steps. Looking for community input.

**Oakham Center School repairs- ARPA funds:** Mr. Nutter was not present and will meet with the facility's committee, will be on next agenda.

**Payroll quotes:** Aaron updated that Harpers Payroll can be entered and approved online. It's an option with an additional cost. Harpers Payroll can also track holidays, sick time, paid time off which is currently all manual. The cost is \$3.50 per employee, per month, allow employee to submit their payroll and supervisor approve the payroll. Can request time off through the app, website, time clock if opted into that. Cut down on manual entries, the Treasurer would still get report with all employees and given to the accountant. One time set up fee \$750, will do conversion and training.

Aaron made move to adopting the contract with Harpers through Time & Attendance at \$3.50 per employee and one time fee of \$750 through ARPA funds, Lucy 2<sup>nd</sup>, Don all in favor.

The BOS agree that all department need to be on the same payroll schedule.

**New Business:** No new business

**Old Business:**

- **Primary Posting Location**
  - Reminder that the official posting location is 1/10/23
  - Check list for posting of notices, check list for minutes
  - BOS Admin live demonstration 1/27/24 on posting agendas & minutes on the website
  - BOS Admin will provide step by step instructions for the website postings
  - BOS Admin will provide letter to AGO of the official posting location
- **Safe in Town Clerk's office**
  - Interim Town Clerk will contact State for requirements of the safe as the one in the office is not locking or are there other options that can be done to be in compliance
  - Intern Town Clerk provided a quote via email of \$30,000 for the repair of the safe

**Correspondence:**

- **Susan Turnbull- Lucy read the letter**
  - Mrs. Turnbull provided the BOS a letter with some time-line information on the library and the property, in which would affect the Children's Play Garden that is currently being built. A site plan and survey were completed at the library. Mrs. Turnbull was asked to try and find the bounds of the lot for the layout and construction of the children's play garden. Only one out of three pins still exist. Discussion between trustees, the abutter and Mrs. Turnbull about the deeds and the right of way across the back of the library lot to the back of 176 Maple Street. Mrs. Turnbull got the library's original deed from 1907 and the abutter's deed from the Registry of Deeds and gave everyone involved copies. Mrs. Turnbull said there is no mention of any right of way in either deed. The right

away existed to ensure property access for the abutter. The playhouse was sited to accommodate the access of the right away.

- Mrs. Turnbull established The Friends of the Fobes Memorial Library, nonprofit in 1998
- Mrs. Turnbull stated that the Play area is not funded with any town money. It will be dedicated to commemorate a young woman's life, from a family that has been part of the town library and town's history.
- Mrs. Turnbull stated in her letter that the Library Trustees have nothing but the best of intentions to carry out a fantastic idea. To remember that these people serve and work for the good of the town. Mrs. Turnbull asked to please let them get on with what they do best.

Mrs. Turnbull asked for the BOS to keep her letter near and reference it for any further discussions.

Aaron stated the letter was well said. Aaron for the record wanted to acknowledge that the individual's letter from the prior meeting that Aaron read would have been more appropriate for the individual to have read or expressed the letter rather than him reading it. Aaron said that as he read it there were things in the letter there were things personal towards a town employee and feels that as a board, they have an obligation to give the towns elected, appointed and employees the opportunity to have a voice when they are publicly called out and unfortunately that opportunity was not given to the Library Trustees and the Library Director. All members of the BOS agreed with Aaron's statement.

Mr. Scott Corey- Stated that there a lot of things that can be disagreed on but believes they can all agree that Sam, Library Director, has done more for the town than anyone since he's lived in town. Sam deserves a big thanks from everybody instead of the slandering comments. Mr. Corey said Sam hasn't just done a lot for the library, she has done a lot for the town as well.

The BOS stated they have no authority over the operation of the library or the facility of the library. It's a Trustee's issue not a Town issue.

- **Samantha Bodine**

- Letter of resignation from the Samantha Bodine as the Library Director and from the Parks & Recreation Committee
- Will stay on through the hiring and training of new director
- Take over as President of the friends of library group
- Will volunteer to help finish the Playhouse project

In Sam's letter she mentioned her accumulated comp time and vacation time on how to be used. Sam stated that the position needs to be more hours.

The Board said that Town Counsel advised employees under 40 hours need to get paid, not comp time. The BOS said they will need to talk to FinCom for the FY25 budget.

Aaron mentioned that the nonprofit Friends of the library have no legal standing in anything with the town. They might fund the playhouse but that's it. The Trustees and the Director ultimately accountable to the Town for the playhouse.

Aaron said it is with regret the BOS acknowledge her resignation to the Library Trustees.

Correspondence from the Chair of the Planning Board on a letter to Town Counsel for Schoolhouse Rd. Aaron thought it was very informative and the planning board is continuing to move forward. Tom Hughes said Planning Board would like to have a one on one meeting with Town Counsel for further understanding.

**Meeting Adjourned at 8:02 PM:** Don made a motion to adjourn, Aaron 2<sup>nd</sup>, Lucy all in favor.

Next Regular Meeting: January 8, 2024 at 6:00 PM.

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