



TOWN OF MINOT

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Board of Selectman Meeting
Minot Town Office
Monday, October 22, 2018, 6:30 pm
Regular Meeting Minutes

Present: Chairman Steve French, Vice Chair Daniel Gilpatric, Daniel Callahan, Lisa Cesare, and Brittany Hemond.

Town Staff: Danielle Loring (Administrator), Norma Dulac (Planning Secretary) and Denis Berube (Assessor's Agent).

Planning Board Members: Candi Gilpatric (Chair); Larry Slattery, and Mike Hemond.

Other: Stephanie Gilbert (Dept Agriculture & Forestry) and Eriks Peterson (Journalist)

1. **Call to Order:** Chair Steve French called the meeting to order at 6:30pm and a quorum was present.
2. **Pledge of Allegiance**
3. **Approval of Meeting Minutes:**

a. October 9, 2018

MOTION: Lisa Cesare motioned to accept the minutes dated October 9, 2018; seconded by Daniel Callahan.

DISCUSSION: None.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS APPROVAL (5/0)

***6. New Business**

a. Voluntary Municipal Support Program Presentation by Stephanie Gilbert, Department of Agriculture & Forestry

Stephanie Gilbert explained that the intention of her department was assist farmers in evaluating their options as well as working toward protecting farmland through programs such as tax relief and permanent conservation easements. They also help municipalities recognize development pressure and find a balance between the two. She explained that she was familiar with many farms in Minot.

She continued talking about the development of a town specific ordinance that would outline the parameters to provide tax relief for Minot farmers. She explained that her role would be to provide information then work with a committee to develop material and/or decide the path for the community. She gave information regarding the Town of Winslow's process and as well as explained what Monmouth and Windham were looking to do.

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Eligibility: The Town could reimburse on land and buildings with a 20 year easement and 20 year farm support program. The legal minimum was there needed to be at least five (5) acres, \$2,000 in gross income from farm products; and buildings that the town defines as being able to qualified.

Mr. Berube confirmed that these were the minimum thresholds required by statute, and Ms. Gilbert confirmed and added that these would act as the framework for the Town to build upon. She explained the process for the Town of Winslow as the applicants applies, the assessor validates the information, the commission reviews and makes a recommendation for the Board to consider and approve/deny. She added that the Town of Monmouth had adopted the ordinance and was now creating the criteria.

Administration: The statute allows for up to 3% of the taxable value to be subsidized and anything higher than that requires a two-thirds vote from the constituent body. For each applicant, the Town can create a maximum percentage that can be allowed to qualify for a reduced assessment and this can be set on a sliding scale. There were two ways to administer the reduction. The first is to assess, deduct from assessment then bill and the other is to assess, bill then reimburse the tax payer. The Town of Winslow also requires a \$200 application fee to cover staff costs. In terms of the easement, Ms. Gilbert explained that it was better to have only the land in the easement and tangible items in a separate document that was easier to amend and did not have to be recorded. She explained that the Town needed to review the applicant's qualifications every two years and they could fulfill this arrangement through a third-party like the Maine Farmland Trust.

Ms. Gilbert went on to explain the application that the Town of Winslow use, and Mr. Berube asked if the applicant was required to provide maps, and she confirmed that they did as well as farm income, which needed to be collected every two years. Ms. Gilbert added that this program was intended to be a community program and there should be discussion with landowners prior to implementing because even some farmers felt like the 20 year easement would be too long.

Mrs. Gilpatric asked if someone was leasing their land for farm purposes would be eligible, and Ms. Gilbert responded that they would be but the landowner must recognize that the land must continue to be worked for the duration of the easement even if his lessee moves on. Mr. Hemond asked what would happen if the applicant was not able to fulfill the easement, and Ms. Gilbert explained that the applicant would need to pay back 100% of the benefit. Mr. Berube asked whether the Town could require for the applicant to be enrolled in a tax program, and Ms. Gilbert confirmed that it was possible to make that a condition and it was a good idea because it would minimize the Town's loss due to reimbursement. Mrs. Loring confirmed that the Town could limit the total assessment lost across all programs by creating an aggregate total percentage, and Ms. Gilbert confirmed.

Ms. Gilbert explained some of the challenges to administering programs due to the evolving nature of farming. Mr. Berube asked whether the program could be means tested, and Ms. Gilbert that they qualifications could only be based on the gross income from farming or the contribution of those goods on a community, but enrollment in another program that did that could be used as a qualifier.

Chairmen French asked how this program could be marketed to the community, and Ms. Gilbert answered that it needed to community driven and the first step would be to determine what the program objectives are. Mr. Hemond responded that he felt it would be an easy sell and there could be a component of the easement to make it public access for open land. Mrs. Loring added that it was part of the Comprehensive Plan to create programs that supported farmland.

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Mr. Slattery wanted to know what the difference was between this program and others that redistributed taxes. Mr. Berube explained the different programs and the returns to the Town, such as Homestead and BETE, and how other programs, such as Treegrowth and Farmland, through the state had penalties for withdrawing land. He explained that there were 57 accounts in farmland with a total of 3,500 acres and that 1% of the taxable value for Minot was \$1,788,442 which at the current tax rate was \$28,188 in lost tax revenue.

Mr. Hemond explained that he was concerned that if they used NRCS requirements, that they may be too lax and then anyone with backyard animals would be permitted to apply. Ms. Gilbert explained that the program was reliant on the Town to set additional requirements that made sense to their demographics as well as enforcing the legal minimums. Chairman French asked if there was a way to limit certain crops, and Ms. Gilbert explained that there was a new law that defined recreational and industrial hemp.

Mrs. Loring asked for direction from the Board, and Chairman French said to bring back to the next meeting to give the Board time to review the information. Mrs. Loring explained that one of the next steps for staff was to review the existing applications and see what the demographics were for the Town. This would determine the potential applicants as well as help set parameters.

4. Fiscal Warrants

- a. Payroll Warrant – October 22, 2018**
- b. Treasurer’s Warrant – October 22, 2018**

MOTION: Brittany Hemond motioned to accept the Payroll Warrant, dated October 22, 2018, in the amount of \$14,718.97, and the Treasurer’s Warrant, dated October 22, 2018, in the amount of 22,629.28; seconded by Lisa Cesare.

DISCUSSION: None.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS APPROVAL (5/0)

5. Public Comment: None

6. New Business

- b. Consideration and Review of Municipal Valuation Return (MVR) – Denis Berube, Assessor’s Agent**

Mr. Berube reviewed the information in the Municipal Valuation Return (MVR) and what the requirements the Town needed to follow.

- c. Executive Session pursuant to Title 1 MRSA §405 (6)(a): Town Administrator’s Review**

MOTION: Lisa Cesare motioned to go into Executive Session pursuant to Title 1 MRSA section 405 (6)(a) for Town Administrator’s Review; seconded by Brittany Hemond.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS APPROVAL (5/0)

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The Board went into Executive Session at 8:15p.

MOTION: Lisa Cesare motioned to come out of Executive Session at 8:55pm; seconded by Brittany Hemond.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS APPROVAL (5/0)

MOTION: Lisa Cesare motioned to move forward with what was agreed upon in Executive Session; seconded by Brittany Hemond.

DISCUSSION: None.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS APPROVAL (5/0)

7. Department Updates

a. Clerk's Report – Submitted by Sara Farris, Town Clerk

b. Highway Report – Submitted by Scott Parker, Highway Supervisor

8. Town Administrator's Report

Mrs. Loring commended the work by the juniors from Poland Region High School, who came on Volunteer Day. They completed work on the Town sign, painted the side of the salt shed and cleaned up Hodge Cemetery and the walking trails.

Mrs. Loring also explained that she was looking into wage protection for the employees, as MMA offered a program that was at no cost to the Town. She wanted to investigate whether they needed to create any policies for its use first. She was also looking to transfer their payroll system from Advantage to Paychex, which owned Advantage. She was hoping to utilize the online feature as well as package it with HR Compliance software that would assist in getting the Town up to date in some areas. The package was the same cost now but would be reduced if they chose not to continue the HR compliance portion. Mr. Callahan asked what the difference was, and Mrs. Loring explained that it would be more efficient, reduce mistakes/errors, and increase accessibility.

MOTION: Lisa Cesare motioned to try the new payroll system for the time being; seconded by Brittany Hemond.

DISCUSSION: Chairman French explained the issues that Mechanic Falls had had with Paychex and did not feel he could support the change at this time. Mr. Callahan explained that he did not have enough information and was going to abstain.

VOTE: MOTION CARRIED (3/1 SF/1 ab DC)

Mrs. Loring explained that there was discussion about the Governor's preliminary budget that could lead to additional cuts to Revenue Sharing. She wanted to make the Board aware as they were beginning to discuss the Town's FY2019 Budget. She also provided information on the Androscoggin Budget hearing that was coming up. It looked like there would be an increase in Minot's portion.

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9. Selectmen Comment – None

10. Scheduling Next Selectman’s Meeting:

- a. October 29, 2018 – Department Head FY19 Budget Presentations with the Budget Committee**
- b. November 5, 2019 – Regular Meeting**

11. Adjourn

MOTION: Brittany Hemond motioned to adjourn; seconded by Lisa Cesare.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS APPROVAL (5/0)

The meeting adjourned at 8:56pm.

Recorded by Danielle Loring
Town Administrator

Steve French, Chairman

Daniel W. Gilpatric, Vice Chairman

Daniel Callahan Jr.

Lisa Cesare

Brittany Hemond

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