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Town of Castine  
**PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES**

DATE: Thursday, February 1, 2024

TIME: 6:00 PM

PLACE: Emerson Hall

**PRESENT:** Gordon MacArthur, Chair, Roberta Boczkiewicz, Selectboard member (Dan Leader, absent); Shawn Blodgett, Town Manager; Karen Motycka, Finance Officer and Susan Macomber, Town Clerk; **Expert Panelist:** Andy Hamilton, Atty; Andy Hyland, Port City Architecture; Erik Clapp, Savee & Maher Engineers, Peter Garrett, Hydrologist, Analeise Hafford & Dan Piasecki from Olver Associates, Kirk Langford, Castine Utility Board Chair; Fire Chief Randy Stearns, and Assist Fire Chief Jack Spratt.

**PUBLIC:** Estimated 30 members of the public including Michael Dickerson of the Castine Patriot.

**Zoom:** Estimated 15 members of the public.

Gordon MacArthur opened the Public Hearing at 6:00PM and introduced the topic of discussions regarding the March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024, Castine Referendum Election Warrant to vote on several articles:

- Preliminary concept design and preliminary hydrogeologic investigation and baseline characterization of groundwater and soil at proposed Battle Ave site (M20 L8A);
- Part-time Code Enforcement Officer and part-time Town Office Clerical;
- Part-time Public Works worker;
- Replace damaged dock ramp; and
- Amend lease with American Towers, LLC until 2077

Gordon read opening statement.

Shawn Blodgett, Town Manager, reviewed article #3 (part-time Code Enforcement Officer and part-time Town Office Clerical). This allocation would help to cover an overlap for new Town Manager transition. It is anticipated that there will be shadowing for new hire with current Town Manager for about one month. Additional clerical assistance in the Town Office has proven to be extremely helpful and needed. This allocation would help to cover 15hrs/week at \$20/hr. Lastly, the Code Enforcement Officer (CEO) duties have seen an influx over the years which is taking up a greater role for the Town Manager position. This allocation would help to cover hiring a separate part-time CEO for about 20hrs/week at \$31/hr.

Bill Corbett asked if permitting fees cover CEO costs? Shawn answered not entirely. An updated permitting fee schedule needs to be done.

Josh Adam asked if there was any idea who would be hired to do the separate CEO job? Shawn said the Selectboard asked if he would stay on for a period to do this position and he has agreed to stay on as a part-time CEO.

Gus Basile asked if the part-time CEO would get a benefit package. Shawn answered no.

Bob Friedlander (just resigned from the Planning Board after decades of serving) said the Town definitely needs a separate CEO. Castine has had this position separate in the past and it needs to go back that way.

Shawn Blodgett, Town Manager reviewed article #4. Shawn said Public Works used to be a 3-person crew when the Town did its own snowplowing. We subcontract snowplowing but have found that seasonal work needs more than just two (2) people. We currently have a Public Works person out on Worker's Comp until March. Additional part-time help was hired, and it is working well. The Town owns 23 buildings and other functions that warrant a part-time position.

Shawn Blodgett, Town Manager reviewed article #5. The Town Dock ramp was damaged in a 2023 storm and is not repairable. It was damaged during one of the significant storms with high tide causing it to get caught up. It was not covered by insurance.

Gus Basile asked if the old ramp is saleable? Shawn answered yes but with conditions and a "Hold Harmless Agreement" would be needed. Shawn said the ramp could probably be split in half and utilize the top half.

Charles Hodgkins asked if there are reasons or a need to redesign the dock or float layout giving the damage from the recent January 2024 storms. The Harbor Committee has been meeting frequently and is talking about the future and needs. It is a good question and is on everyone's radar but should be talked about later and at a different mtg as it does not apply to discussions for this article.

Shawn Blodgett, Town Manager, reviewed article #6. Shawn said the Town has a long-standing lease with American Tower. The Town receives a monthly lease amount for all equipment on the tower. American Tower wishes to have first refusal if the Town were to ever sell the Transfer Station property. American Tower will pay the Town \$15,000 for this first refusal.

Charles Hodgkins pointed out that it has been difficult to work with American Tower in regard to the Fire Dept repeater. Could this also help with getting them to work with Fire Dept better? Shawn said there is a possibility but would discuss at a later time and mtg as it does not apply to discussions for this article.

Penny Carlhian asked if American Tower asked for the 2077 extension. Shawn said the current lease term expires in 2042 and yes American Tower asked to extend the term until 2077.

Marc Pelletier asked if there was a clause for successors & assigns? Shawn said yes. American Tower cannot sell it. The Town will never sell the Transfer Station property either.

Gus Basile asked if a new antenna is being installed. Shawn said yes. T-Mobile is installing which will increase the Town's monthly lease amount.

Gordon MacArthur, Selectboard Chair read article #2. Gordon introduced the panelists and Peter Garrett, Hydrologist who has worked for Castine on and off since 1989 who started with a

brief presentation. Peter's conclusion: he does not believe there is a threat to Castine's water source for a new Fire Station to be located at the Battle Ave property; Peter's recommendation: a preliminary hydrogeologic investigation and a baseline characterization of groundwater and soil tests be conducted which is what article #2 is asking the voters to approve.

Erik Clapp, Savee & Maher Engineers, gave a brief presentation. Whatever firm hired would conduct the testing recommended by Hydrologist, Peter Garrett. There is no actual info for this site. The goal is to investigate and nail it down.

Gus Basile asked about test boring, and Bill Corbett asked about the duration on report. Erik said it should probably start early spring, weather permitting, and take about 60-90 days of work. The aim also would be to do some testing during the summer months too, spreading it out allows to collect good data. End of the summer would be a good assumption for a completed report.

Dave Hassett asked what would happen if there would to be a major fire at a new fire station on the Battle Ave property? Erik said the studies would help to answer those types of concerns. Josh Adam said he asked at the last Selectboard Mtg if a firm had already been chosen. Josh said low and behold your firm has been chosen. Erik confirmed that Savee & Maher has not been hired. Savee & Maher Engineering firm did the testing at the current fire station location on Court Street and was asked to be a presenter to give expert information and opinion but is not hired to do work at the Battle Ave location. Shawn reiterated that no firm can be hired until after the March 5, 2024, Election and see if the voters approve the funding in order to hire a firm.

Bobby Vagt asked if the five (5) borings that Erik presented would be sufficient. Erik said typically 3-5 is enough. The focus should be in the area of where the development would be. Erik said it will be better determined when it goes out to bid with a detailed plan.

Marc Pelletier stated that monitoring the test borings is critical especially during construction. This needs to be considered. What figures would be considered for monitoring post construction?

Tom Comiciotto asked if the neighborhood would be affected by these test borings? Erik said they should not be affected since households in that area are on Town water.

Dan Piasecki & Anneleise Hafford, Olver Associates (firm who runs Castine Water Dept and Wastewater Treatment Plant; and also designed the Water Dept's Filtration System) reviewed their eight (8) item recommendation list if a new fire station was to be built on the Battle Ave property:

- Smal ditch/berm be constructed on west side of developed area to convey any contaminated water runoff
- Ditch further back from developed area for added security
- Floor in fire station slope forward
- Spill management plan at the fire station
- Spill kit on site
- Secondary containment for chemicals stored on site
- No chemicals stored outside
- Personal vehicles parked away from the developed side towards the water sources

Josh Adam asked about Dan Piasecki's email exchanges stating Olver Associates initial thoughts

was that Battle Ave site was not an ideal or good location for a fire station. Josh also asked if Dan or Anneliese had ever run across any other Town/City who has a fire station within a Water Shed area and if they have any concerns about Castine being the first. Dan answered that the Battle Ave location is not in the water recharge area. His overall opinion, which he stated at the 12/14/23 Public Informational Mtg, is that there is no real good location for a fire station. Kirk Langford, Castine Utility Board Chair, addressed. Kirk said a little over a year ago the Utility Board was asked to give a recommendation to the Selectboard. The Utility Board viewed all three (3) sites being nominally compliant with the Castine Source Water Protection Ordinance (SWPO). The Battle Ave site is the only site located within the SWPA and if selected will require additional study according to Section 12 (General Activity Standards) of the SWPO prior to permitting. This further study should be part of the detailed design process for the new facility.

Gordon MacArthur reiterated to the public that the purpose for this article is to secure funds needed to pay for a preliminary design, investigation, and testing if the voters approve. The goal is to make sure through investigation, testing and studies that the Town's water supply would not be contaminated if a fire station is located at the Battle Ave site.

Mac MacArthur pointed out that some level of investigation, testing and studies would also be needed if the site were to be at another location, i.e., Transfer Station so any site is safe for the community and our firefighters.

Gordon MacArthur said the Selectboard has a duty to do what's best for the Town. This is an important decision for the Town, therefore, the Selectboard will have detailed studies done wherever it is needed for a potential fire station location.

Gordon MacArthur informed that the Selectboard received a letter that day from Maine Maritime Academy (MMA) President, Jerry Paul, denying the Town any sale, loan, or lease of the Court Street strip of MMA property. In the letter, MMA feels they have a need for that piece of property.

Bill Corbett asked if the Town has a funding backup plan since we also have major infrastructure needs to pay for. Gordon answered that there are several options, the Town can consider such as securing a bond. Gordon said we will find a way and will also have a priority list for the projects needed. Bill also mentioned building the fire station out into Court Street at its current location as a possibility. He was reminded that this suggestion should be talked about later and at a different mtg as it does not apply to discussions for this article.

Bobby Vagt said thank you to the Selectboard for doing all this work and for conducting this mtg resulting from community follow up opinions about the 12/14/23 Public Informational Mtg.

With no other discussion, Gordon closed the Public Hearing at 7:22 PM.

Public Hearing minutes by Susan M Macomber, Town Clerk.