

Town of Waldoboro, Maine
Select Board Meeting
Municipal Building – 1600 Atlantic Highway
Tuesday September 5, 2023

1. Call to Order

Select Board Chairman Abden Simmons called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Select Board members present were John Blodgett, Robert Butler, and Michael Thayer, Will Pratt. A quorum was present throughout. Town Manager Julie Keizer, resident George Seaver and Elizabeth Waltztoni from LCN were also present.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Public Hearings – None

4. Adjustments to the Agenda – None

5. Citizen Comments - None

6. Select Board Comments

Blodgett commented on the upcoming street dance this Friday night at the Wooster Parking Lot. He would also like to invite people on Friday night September 15th to the Waldo Theatre for a premier showing of Waldoboro's 250th anniversary celebration presented and created by LCTV.

Thayer noted that Saturday is Community care day which helps those in need with home improvements such as skirting, stairs etc.

7. New Business –

8. Old Business –

8.1 RSU 40 Bond Referendum discussion

Thayer opened the discussion with the comment that the request was a lot of money. He asked the question if extra space at both Miller School and at the High School is needed, due to population decline, stating that 1/3 of the bond request was for this space. He further noted that he has asked superintendent Steve Nolan what the projected number of students are expected at those schools over the next 5 to 10 years to justify the request but has not received an answer. Thayer wants answers to his questions and expressed concern for the residents that cannot afford an increase in their taxes.

Blodgett read a prepared statement which expressed his concern over the needs vs wants in the RSU 40 Bond and stated that he personally could not support this request. Blodgett noted that there are many unanswered questions for such a big request. He further stated that several Select Board members have requested a priority list to be looked at more closely to determine if the request could be reduced and have not received one. Blodgett further stated that no one is arguing that the repairs and improvements are needed but at this time tackling all the "asks" would be a heavy burden on the taxpayers of Waldoboro. If the Bond should be passed by the voters, the annual budget would be affected in the services that Waldoboro provides by making drastic cuts in the town budget (cutting services, eliminating jobs etc.) to make it affordable for the taxpayers. Blodgett noted that the Superintendent commented that some of these issues should have been addressed a decade ago and Blodgett questioned why that hasn't been done. Blodgett also questioned what the RSU was doing with their capital fund. Additionally, he asked where the estimated projected costs came from and do they have engineering or initial plans in place to get those projected figures. Blodgett recommended that the School Board go back to the district and prioritize the projected needs and worry about the wish list later.

Butler agreed with Thayer's and Blodgett's comments and concerns. Butler stated that at a minimum he would also like to see a list of priorities from the top down and how the school board stood on each priority. Butler noted that they are recommending a whole package, however Butler feels like the package is a wish list rather than a list of items that need to be done. Butler commented that the school district must be accredited if they apply for and receive federal funds, but feels like there is no direct correlation, other than in a general sense, between the 81-million-dollar bond and the accreditation issue. There is an illusion of accreditation but no direct ties to the issue. Butler would like the school to pinpoint where they are having trouble with accreditation, so the voters know what is important. However, Butler noted that we do not want to impede our ability to apply for the federal monies needed in the long term to make the structures viable. Butler does not question the dedication and effort of the school board in lifting the school district up and making it look forward and improve, however Butler questions how it is being done.

Simmons agreed with all that has been said. He also agreed that there needs to be a priority list and not a wish list.

Keizer read the proposed question to the Select Board in full and noted that the school has requested to see the proof before it is finalized. Thayer asked her to repeat a portion of the question which is as follows, "the project may include but is not limited to the following". Thayer stated that it is problematic wording, it does not specially say what they are going to do with the money. It is open ended and certainly is 180 degrees from itemizing and prioritizing what needs to be done.

Resident George Seaver stated that from the standpoint of the economic development committee he cannot imagine selecting Waldoboro to live in with this open-ended question about future taxes. Seaver noted that the higher the taxes, the fewer families which pushes the population down and to have this significant unpredictable timeline tax increase seems to be a good reason to live someplace else. Butler added that the school is the most important asset we have, however this has to do with transparency, and this is not transparent.

Simmons continued with comments stating that we have no choice because it is going to be on the ballot and the school does not want to wait or go back to the drawing board. He stated that the State level does not provide any detailed priority list in the budget and seems the school is following suit. Simmons stated that there are priorities that we need, sewer system, heating system, water system but the other "stuff" is not a necessity and are not going to close the school down.

Butler asked the question if the school had investigated connecting the sewer at Medomak Valley High School to the town sewer. Keizer stated that it had been looked at and there would be several properties that it would have to cross that were prohibited. Thayer (a member of the Utilities District) noted that Brian Race had met with the Utilities district. Several years ago, a study was performed and the cost to connect the school to the town sewer was in the range of 5 to 7 million dollars to extend that it which is considerably less than the cost to build a new leach field. Thayer noted that it should have been done on day one, but we are now living with decisions made long ago. Thayer understands that the sewer at the high school has been repaired/rebuilt two or three times. Butler asked if the funding of the sewer is related to the accreditation issue, but Thayer did not have an answer. Simmons noted that at the previous Select Board meeting the school officials attended they were asked this question regarding the sewer, and they would not answer it.

Keizer noted that this meeting was to give the Select Board an opportunity to come together and discuss the bond. The Select Board can express an opinion, but they have no authority regarding the bond, and the ultimate decision is up to the voters. Keizer also mentioned that if this should pass it will affect the borrowing capacity of the town in the future. It may limit how the town budgets for items needed or services it now provides. Keizer would like to convene a joint meeting of the Select Board the Budget Committee and make them aware of how this Bond if passed can affect the future budgets.

8.2 ASK Grant Request approval

Keizer presented a grant request in the amount of \$2500.00 to the Select Board as recommended by Planning and Development director Max Johnstone. This grant would assist in paying for the engineering study that would extend municipal water from the intersection of Main Street and Old Route one to the intersection of Route One and Grace Ave, approximately ½ mile and further along Route one. The work has been estimated to cost between ten thousand and four hundred thousand dollars. On the motion of Butler/Blodgett, the Select Board voted unanimously to approve the application of the ASK Grant as recommended by Max Johnstone, Planning and Development director.

9. Agenda items for next meeting

10. Adjourn as Select Board

On the motion of Butler/Thayer, the Select Board voted unanimously to enter executive session pursuant to MRS 405 (6)(A) to discuss contractual matter.

Select Board

Town of Waldoboro, Maine

Abden Simmons, Chair



Michael Thayer



William Pratt



Robert Butler



John Blodgett, Vice Chair

