

Starksboro Selectboard Meeting  
Minutes of 7/20/21  
Approved

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**Board members present:** Nancy Boss, Eric Cota, Koran Cousino, remote participation: Carin McCarthy, John Painter  
**Others present:** Amy McCormick, Erin Buckwalter, Penny Bennett, Mark Kinsley, Robert Turner

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The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m. by Koran Cousino.

### Changes or Additions:

Setting the tax rate

Visitor's Business: none

### Road Foreman's Report

The town needs to contact Green Lantern Solar about mowing. Mowing is required as part of our yearly monitoring and inspection and was specified in the lease agreement.

### Setting the Tax Rate

Robert Turner shared information that came in from the State regarding the tax rate. Rate is based on final grand list and town meeting approved budget. The grand list is up 1%, and the CLA dropped. Local town property taxes decreased about \$50/year on \$200K home for this year. The estimated tax information presented by Robert and Mark shall be attached to these minutes. It was noted that we are in the 4<sup>th</sup> year of the Act 46 merger and received a credit. We will not have that next year.

**Motion:** Nancy Boss moved to approve the tax rate per the document provided with rates of \$0.5975 municipal, \$0.0012 veteran's exemption, for total tax rate of \$.5987. John Painter second.

**Motion approved unanimously.**

### Speed Issues

Penny Bennett contacted the Selectboard about continued speeding issues on Mason Hill North. The road runs through her family property where they operate a small farm. Drivers entering Mason Hill from Big Hollow Road come at speeds that are dangerous to people, animals, and property, in her opinion. Tony had suggested to change the corner and add a stop sign. Travelers aren't observing the speed or sign. On July 13, her son was hit by a neighbor's car. State police were there and are investigating. In the past another family member was hit by a car. The Bennetts tenant, Roxy Rivers, has also approached the town about putting up signage for traffic calming.

They have put up signs re: pedestrian and cattle crossing, which has not helped. Discussed with the board about having the sheriff sit in the area more often. Police have not paid enough attention to this area to address the increased speeds and traffic. Koran stated she has already requested additional traffic monitoring from the AC Sheriff.

### Current Business

#### **MAUSD reorganization and potential merger update:**

The board will host a town wide forum for information to be provided to Starksboro residents and provide an opportunity for gathering more information and input from taxpayers.

The newly formed MAUSD/ANWSU merger study committee has begun meeting. There are many unanswered questions about the timeline and process that towns are facing if a town wants to hold a special meeting election regarding potential school closure. If a merger were to occur, there would not be a town by town vote but rather a vote of the majority across the towns in each school district. The merger committee could rewrite the agreement that currently allows the town vote.

Koran stated the key question is about timeline. Why would the town need to vote ahead of the decision? The group discussed when the opportunities for a town vote might be. Because there is no general election or primary in November, there is no rush for a vote in the fall. Koran noted that residents can petition for a special town meeting at any time, so timing is not an issue in that regard.

Carin fears the community isn't aware of the process and it could have huge implications for the community. Koran said she would prefer to have the Starksboro informational forum in August to help update people, find out how residents are feeling about the potential closure and what the concerns are. There is still time to either warn a special meeting or to put on the March town meeting ballot. Carin noted there is reason for concern if the merger committee puts forth their recommendation to the legislature. Nancy Cornell is most versed on the procedures and timeline concerns and is a resource for information. Erin Buckwalter asked what the latest date is the town could put forward a petition for a vote and have it supersede the recommendation coming out of the merger committee. The MAUSD Reimagined group is going forward with putting to a vote in Lincoln for the town to withdraw from the school district.

Next steps:

**Forum date: August 10, 2021, 6 p.m.**

- John will connect with the Lincoln Selectboard about their recent special meeting on the school proposals and community presentations.
- Koran will contact Nancy Cornell and Herb Olson re: availability to present
- Koran will email Edorah Frazer about use of Robinson School
- Communication to the community will be via website, FPF and word of mouth

### Town Green Pavilion Update

Carin and Rebecca met with Chris Runcie and Peg Casey about potential fundraising strategy. They discussed sending a letter to the grand list to inform residents of the. The letter would present a variety of ideas for ways to contribute i.e. materials, labor, help with organizing, etc. The board asked to review the draft letter before sending. John also suggested an announcement on FPF and the town website. Carin invited community stakeholder groups to a brief meeting on 7/21 to discuss drafting the letter.

[Eric Cota departed at 7:30 p.m.]

Mail Review: none

### Bills, Orders, and Payroll

Mark noted that the 3% increase was implemented for July 1. Nancy inquired about the Martin's invoice and whether there were one or two in the package. Approval of warrants should be confirmed via approved minutes for the meetings that were held remotely. Rebecca will confirm with VLCT that the minutes serve as adequate evidence during the pandemic office closures and remote-only meetings.

**Motion:** Nancy Boss made a motion to approve the warrants for bills, orders and payroll as presented. John Painter second. **Motion approved NB, JP, KC.**

### Minutes of 6/29/21

**Motion:** Nancy Boss made a motion to approve the minutes of June 29, 2021 as presented. Koran Cousino second. **Motion approved unanimously.**

## Minutes of 7/6/21

**Motion:** Nancy Boss made a motion to approve the minutes of July 6, 2021 as presented. Koran Cousino second. **Motion approved unanimously.**

## Accessibility Permit

**Motion:** Nancy Boss made a motion to approve the driveway accessibility permit application from Kerry Kurt for an access on Varney Hill Road. John Painter second.

**Motion approved unanimously.**

Koran noted that she recently went through driveway permitting process in another town and asked that the town consider updating the process to provide more protection for the town. The board discussed adding

## Animal Control Ordinance

The board reviewed the attorney recommendations from Kevin Kite. Primary points were related to fees, making definition of working farm dog explicit, eliminate potentially vicious dog section and references, and disturbing the peace, and then finalize.

Due to weather and connectivity issues, the board postponed the final review and approval.

## Vacation time roll-over discussion

The board received a request from an employee regarding unused vacation time. The board discussed the cost to the town if it were to pay 80% of unused vacation time to all of our employees? Koran estimates the cost would be \$3-4K. The current personnel policy states vacation time is used or forfeited. The board emphasized it supports all employees in taking their vacation. The board needs to look at the fiscal impact of a policy change for all employees. They need the chance to study this and consider it for the next budget year. No changes to be made at this time given we are already in a new budget year.

## The following items were postponed to future agendas:

Pottery studio future use

Work plan review

## Add to next meeting agenda:

ARPA funding: community process for input, and planning

## Motion to adjourn:

**Motion:** Nancy Boss moved to adjourn at 8:00 p.m. Carin McCarthy second.

**Motion approved unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Elder  
SB Assistant