

Selectboard Minutes

February 21, 2023

Present: Andy Artimovich, Chair
Jennifer Jones, Vice-Chair
Robert Mantegari
Russ Kelly
Jon Morgan (via zoom)

Artimovich called the meeting to order at 6pm.

The Board reviewed payroll and accounts payable then signed the register.

Jones motioned, seconded by Mantegari, to allow Morgan to attend remotely. All were in favor.

Mantegari motioned, seconded by Jones, to accept the consent agenda which consisted of public minutes from 02/07/2023, recreation manifest, treasurer's report (found at the end of these minutes), and the following building permits:

- Hi Speed Hockey Productions, 9 Tanya Lane, Plumbing
- Lanchoney Family Revocable Trust, 49 Robinson Street, Solar
- Lee & Ji Yi Park, 26 Lyford Lane, Solar
- Stephanie Cardoso & Jason Bosworth, 4 Flanders Drive, Electrical
- Monohon Rev Trust, 36 Three Ponds Drive, Building
- Anthony & Carol Marino, 26 Mill Pond Road, Electrical

Jones – aye; Mantegari – aye; Kelly – aye; Artimovich – aye; Morgan – abstain. Motion passed.

Karen Clement, Town Administrator, presented the board with Land Use Change Tax bill and warrant for 9 lots in Three Ponds for \$5,000 each, totaling \$45,000. Mantegari motioned, seconded by Jones, to take nine lots out of current use. Jones – aye; Mantegari – aye; Kelly – aye; Morgan – aye; Artimovich – aye.

Clement presented the board with a failed septic waiver request for 4 Juniper Lane to replace the septic with a like kind and no expansion. Mantegari motioned, Jones seconded, to approve the replacement request which was approved by the State of NH DES. Jones – aye; Mantegari – aye; Kelly – aye; Morgan – aye; Artimovich – aye. Artimovich as chair and Mantegari as Health Officer signed the form.

Clement presented the board with a Painters and Allied Trades Educational Exemption for 34 Commercial Drive which has been approved by Jim Michaud, the town's contracted assessor. Jones asked if it was a routine renewal. Artimovich responded it was. Mantegari motioned, Jones seconded, to accept the educational exemption form. Jones – aye; Mantegari – aye; Kelly – aye; Morgan – aye; Artimovich – aye.

Artimovich announced the dedication of the Town Report will occur on February 28, 2023.

Clement explained to the board there was an after action meeting with Emergency Management Director, Rick Murphy, in addition to the fire and police chiefs, recreation director, Russ Kelly, Daphne Woss, and herself to review protocols in response to the Christmas Eve/Day storm and streamlining communication. She requested to make Kelly the Emergency Management Director (EMD) liaison and permit him the authority to open an Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Mantegari motioned, seconded by Morgan, to name Russ Kelly as the EMD liaison and permit him the authority to open the EOC without further vote from the board. Jones – aye; Mantegari – aye; Kelly – aye; Morgan – aye; Artimovich – aye.

At 6:16pm, Artimovich opened the SB2 Hearing.

Jones utilized a power point with information gathered from Department of Revenue (DRA) and NH Municipal Association to explain what SB2 is, how procedures may change and what may remain the same, with its adoption. In 1995, SB2 became an option after it was passed by the NH Legislature. Brentwood previously had the SB2 question on the ballot in 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2016. This year will be the fifth time it is on the ballot according to Jones. After the presentation, Artimovich opened the floor to questions about SB2.

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Bill Faria, South Road, asked how many Selectboard members attended the deliberative session for the coop. Each board member responded.

John Recesso, South Road, requested Selectboard members state "I did not attend". Artimovich responded he had already stated he did not attend.

Liz Faria, South Road, stated the coop budget is 69 million while the town budget is 12 million. She also shared there were 1,193 voters at the poll and only 197 people at town meeting.

Dick Chamberlain, Crawley Falls Road, stated as Town Moderator he attempts to remain neutral and not take sides on any topic. He voiced his concern that out of the 234 towns, only 70 are SB2 towns. He further stated of the 33 towns that have attempted to go back to traditional town meeting, only 3 have succeeded. Chamberlain believes SB2 is not right for Brentwood. He appreciates that at Town Meeting warrant articles can be spoken to by a person with a different point of view and sometimes a voter may change his/her mind.

Ward Byrne, Rowell Road, stated he is a 55-year resident of Brentwood and is disheartened by SB2. He believes SB2 form of government would change the dynamics of the town and put democracy at stake. Byrne claimed voters could zero a budget under SB2 voting. He stated Town Meeting is the "purest form of democracy".

Artimovich stated he voted in favor of putting SB2 on the ballot because he believes the townspeople should have the right to vote on it. Mantegari agreed with Artimovich's statement and voted to have it added to the ballot to see what the voters want. Kelly shared he sees understandable confusion and stated he voted for SB2 to be placed on the ballot to allow the voters to decide if that is what they want.

John Recesso, South Road, stated ballot choices with double negatives causes confusion for voters.

Jones stated SB2 was added to the ballot based on RSA requirements opposed to being an item discussed and voted on at Town Meeting.

Kim Leo, Lebreux Street, shared her frustration with the order of warrant articles being presented at Town Meeting. She explained childcare is an issue for her and when the order is rearranged it potentially affects her ability to vote on a particular warrant.

Bill Faria, South Road, ask who brought the SB2 idea.

Jones responded after some research involving previous items on the ballot, the increase of voter turnout on election day and the slight attendance increase at Town Meeting, she wanted to bring the option to the legislative body.

Bill Faria, South Road, questioned Jones specifically on the number of deliberative sessions she had attended.

Julie Velevis, Lyford Lane, stated she is against SB2. She cautioned against comparing Brentwood to other SB2 towns such as Exeter and Stratham. Velevis supports keeping Town Meeting.

Rebecca Dunham, Block Drive, stated SB2 creates an uninformed electorate. She believes Town Meeting offers education and deliberation creating a participatory democracy.

Bill Dunham, Block Drive, referenced a book *Moved and Seconded* which examines the outcomes of SB2 towns. He shared that according to the book, once a town becomes an SB2 town, it is difficult to go back to traditional Town Meeting. Dunham believes SB2 towns are ideal setup for special interest groups.

Lois DeYoung, Crawley Falls Road, stated she enjoys Town Meeting and believes that is a real democracy. She shared that she believes without Town Meeting there will be uneducated voters.

Doug Cowie, Middle Road, stated he has no position on SB2. He asked if there is any discussion about the school being part of it.

Artimovich responded Swasey School would be separate just as they are now. The School Board would need to bring something forward if they wanted to be an SB2, he explained.

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Cowie continued by stating Brentwood is popular because of the good schools.

Ridge Benton, Three Ponds Drive, asked if there is a comparative study comparing the rate of budget increase with SB2 towns versus towns with a traditional Town Meeting. He suspects the “20-minute voter” is easier to “fool” than a voter who stays for an 8-hour town meeting which may affect the budgets.

Jones responded that she believes it depends on the town. She referenced a comment made by Ward Byrne about utilizing default budgets which tend to be a bit lower than the operational budgets being voted on. Artimovich responded that he is not sure if there is compiled data Benton is asking about. He stated he works for an SB2 town and for 5 years they used the default budget, but the last 2 years the budget was approved.

Laura Hajjar, Mohawk Lane, stated Town Meeting is a 400-year-old tradition. She feels there is not enough education on SB2. Hajjar stated she has not seen it on Facebook or the website. Hajjar claimed the new Selectboard does not allow questions during the meeting until something is voted on. She alleged Jones is bringing SB2 to the ballot as a way to gain more control.

Jones responded that she is only one vote. She stated she put SB2 out because after examining the number of voters who come out to vote, she realized there was an increasing trend. Jones felt with the growth, changes in Brentwood, and it not being on the ballot for 6-7 years, now was a good time to see if it was something the voters wanted.

Jim Hajjar, Mohawk Lane, stated the Brentwood Newsletter’s last issue listed pros and cons of SB2. He encouraged people to visit citizens.org for more information as well. Hajjar voiced his concern that fewer people show up at deliberative sessions, fewer attend, and those in attendance can “screw up” warrant articles for everyone. He believes Town Meeting is the purest form of democracy.

Michelle Siudut, Middle Road, believes the Selectboard is pushing to eliminate the exchange of information. She believes SB2 would eliminate the back-and-forth discussions. Siudut stated there has already been an elimination of communication at Selectboard meetings and not funding the newsletter. She stated if Town Meeting is important enough, residents will be there.

Jones responded that with an SB2 the exchange of information is at the deliberative session which serves similarly as the exchange of information would at Town Meeting. She stated there is no removal of the education aspect prior to the vote.

Jim Michaud, Route 125, stated he is a 23-year resident who moved to Brentwood for the small-town feel. He is saddened that people are trying to change the town and reminded everyone Brentwood is not Manchester or Salem. Michaud believes it is a shame to go from a Town Meeting structure which he believes has worked for 400 years.

Susan Benton, Three Ponds Drive, stated it is poor timing to propose SB2 with the recent defunding of the Brentwood Newsletter. She believes it was deliberate and believes townspeople do not know about SB2. Benton expressed her thoughts about it appearing to be bad optics for Jones to bring SB2 to the ballot.

Jones responded that according to Jim Hajjar, the Brentwood Newsletter has an article about SB2. The latest edition should arrive as soon as mail is delivered.

Eric Turer, Peabody Drive, speaking as a private citizen stated he has no position on SB2. He stated in the past it was conservative people who put the SB2 forward. Turer stated he enjoys Town Meeting. He believes it gives residents a chance to make their voices heard about where they stand on SB2. Turer also stated that he feels the members of the Selectboard do not have an agenda as claimed by a resident’s recent comment.

Dick Chamberlain, Town Moderator, stated there is no question the majority of those who have spoken tonight have spoken in favor of traditional Town Meeting. He believes the majority of voters will not understand SB2.

Lois DeYoung, Crawley Falls Road, believes most voters will not understand SB2.

Kim Leo, Lebreux Street, stated there is a common theme which is uneducated voter and lack of participation. She suggested the possible

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use of technology to inform people by using online platforms like zoom.

Liz Faria, South Road, reiterated the coop budget is 69 million dollars covering six towns.

Bill Faria, South Road, stated voters will not get an opportunity to review every budget with a deliberative session.

Jones responded the SB2 would Brentwood only and not involve any other towns.

Melissa Litchfield, Eleanor's Way, addressed her question directly to the chair and based it on her schoolboard experience. She stated you would have a public hearing and then take a vote. Litchfield asked why is it different with SB2.

Artimovich replied the public hearing is required at least 15 days prior to the question being voted on. He explained if the question was not on the ballot, there would have been no reason to have the public hearing.

Melissa Litchfield, Eleanor's Way, stated she is disappointed it was put on by the Selectboard when it could have been petitioned by 25 voters. She expressed concern that it is being "sold" as a public service.

Eric Trump, Ole Gordon Road, shared his concerns following the recent defunding of the Brentwood Newsletter and a desire for Town Meeting to go away. He expressed he is concerned the direction of the town and SB2 will not increase the opportunity to vote.

Rebecca Dunham, Block Drive, read some statements from *Moved and Seconded* regarding meeting increasing fourfold, small number of people controlling the ballot and SB2 being easy to vote in.

Ward Byrne, Rowell Road, believes Town Meeting offers a sense of community and moderated discussions. He believes without Town Meeting the town would be harmed by having the police, fire or highway defunded.

Jones clarified that SB2 towns cannot have the police and fire defunded, as they would operate with a default budget.

Liz Faria, South Road, concerned there is no free speech because the newsletter was defunded.

Rebecca Dunham, Block Drive, stated the newsletter is available online.

At 7:28pm, the SB2 public meeting closed.

Dick Chamberlain, Town Moderator, was present to ask some questions to the board about warrant articles which will be presented to the voters at Town Meeting. He asked specifically about the warrant articles pertaining to the exemptions. Chamberlain asked what the tax impact would be and how much more money it will cost him as a taxpayer. He suggests the Selectboard be ready to explain to the voters.

Artimovich responded that the tax impact would be difficult to know ahead of time since there is no way to know how many residents may qualify.

Jack Mitchell, Budget Committee Chair, offered a little information about the expected impact. He stated a \$100,000 exemption of assessed value would calculate to about \$2000 lost to the town. He went on to say to recover that, a property valued at \$400,000 would have an impact of about \$1.20. Mitchell said the real question would be how many exemptions there will be. He stated Brentwood was more restrictive than other towns.

Chamberlain asked about warrant article #20 regarding partisan ballots. Jones responded it was a citizen petition and would be spoken to by one of those bringing the petition warrant article. She explained she understands it to mean anyone running for a town position such as selectboard, budget committee, etc. would need to have their political affiliation beside their name to indicate their party affiliation.

Chief Ventura, police chief, was present to request use of impact fees. He explained there was a safety/security issue at the school which needed addressing. At the presentation, Chief Ventura explained he offered the school board access to some of the police impact fees to assist with covering the cost of the project.

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Morgan motioned, seconded by Jones, to expend \$10,000 from PD impact fees for safety and security upgrades at Swasey. Mantegari stated he was concerned because of how the school is handling their budget and with the freezing of their spending. Morgan stated he will support it because they did have a plan and what occurred with the funding was unexpected due to legal advice. Jones – aye; Mantegari – abstain; Kelly – aye; Morgan – aye; Artimovich – aye. Motion carries 4-0-1. Morgan thanked Chief Ventura for prioritizing the project.

Clement shared that Steve Cummings did the original site work for the fire station and the feasibility study to move the police department to the new site. Clement requested \$3,000 out of the capital reserve fund for the police facility to explore the possibility of moving the town hall as well. Mantegari expressed his concern for how the CRF is setup for the police station. After discussion, it was decided the funds to cover this cost would need to come from a different fund because of the wording of the warrant article. Mantegari motioned, seconded by Jones, to expend the \$3,000 from the town office impact fees. Jones – aye; Mantegari – aye; Kelly – aye; Morgan – aye; Artimovich – aye.

Clement requested funds for the purchase of new chairs for the meeting room and two training tables. The request was tabled until the projector and screen can be considered as well.

Jim Michaud, Route 125, suggested a better microphone system so those at the table can be better heard by the audience. Artimovich explained the speakers are broadcast mics. He stated revamping the audio is on his radar.

Morgan stated he believes the Planning Board approved \$1,500 for the purchase of a screen and projector.

At 7:49pm, Mantegari motioned, seconded by Jones, to go into non-public for legal and hiring. Jones – aye; Mantegari – aye; Kelly – aye; Morgan – aye; Artimovich – aye.

At 8:17pm, Artimovich motioned to come out of nonpublic and seal the minutes from the non-public meeting. Mantegari seconded the motion. Jones – aye; Mantegari – aye; Kelly – aye; Morgan – aye; Artimovich – aye.

Artimovich motioned, seconded by Mantegari, to adjourn the meeting at 8:17pm. Jones – aye; Mantegari – aye; Kelly – aye; Morgan – aye; Artimovich – aye.

Respectfully submitted,

Tamera Peek

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WEEKLY TREASURER'S REPORT				
DATE:			2/21/2023	
General Fund:		TD BANK		
Previous Balance:		6,639,903.26		
Deposits:		58,502.75		
Payroll:		27,129.71	DDP: \$27,129.71	
			CHK: \$	
FICA:		6326.78		
A/P:		131,899.63	Reg A/P Cks \$131,899.63	NHRS \$
			Swasey \$	CO-OP: \$
GF to Impact Fees				
Admin CC Pd				
Account Balance:		6,533,049.89		
Interest Earned YTD:		23,775.12		
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Joyce A. Gallant, Treasurer				