

Submitted by: TOWN OF PHIPPSBURG Approved by Selectmen:
SELECTMEN'S MEETING
John M. Young MINUTES
Administrator July 22, 2009

Meeting convened at 6:00 p.m. at the Town Hall with Selectmen Douglass, Perkins and Pye in attendance. Selectman Douglass had to leave for work part way through the meeting.

I. Meetings and Hearings:

1. Presentation of appreciation plaques

The Selectmen presented a plaque to Richard Lemont in appreciation of his 20 years of service as Chairman of the Shellfish Committee and a plaque to Carol Doughty in appreciation of her 39 years of service as a Totman Library Trustee.

Mr. Lemont mentioned that the flats have been closed to shellfish harvesting for 72 days and asked the Selectmen to write or e-mail the Governor, DMR and legislators to request red tide financial assistance for the harvesters. Administrator Young will send an e-mail. Mr. Lemont also encouraged the harvesters to do the same. Mr. Lemont added that DMR is conducting some workshop sessions and is applying for a pollution abatement grant for the Kennebec River.

Ms. Doughty described how the Totman Library has changed over the years and stated that there is an increased demand for library services.

2. Meet with Dave Percy, Park Manager Brian Murray, and Police Chief Skroski concerning parking issues at Popham.

Dave Percy (retired park ranger and owner of Percy's store) complained about the police department closing down 1 to 1 ½ miles of Route 209 in Popham and turning traffic around at Parker Head Road. He has seen the traffic backed up to Parker Head intersection twice this year. He recommends that the police just keep the traffic moving down Route 209 instead of turning the traffic around because a lot of times there is parking available down the road. He added that the town has been dealing with this issue for many years.

Police Chief Skroski stated there were two days recently when the traffic really backed up and according to Park Manager Brian Murray the State Park fills to capacity on the average of 10 times a year. He added that weather has a lot to do with it. On Sunday, thanks to good communications with the Park Rangers, he as well as Officer Alexander and the Parking Enforcement Officer were able to keep traffic flowing. However, the department doesn't always have resources like this available - sometimes there is only one officer on patrol. These situations will continue to occur and the long term solution would to widen the road. He added that the

question lies with priorities. The police department provides a lot of services to Popham – this takes up the lion's share of their patrol time and they do what they can to provide services, but they still need to provide coverage for the rest of the town. Chief Skroski gave a recent example of traffic backing up on Route 209 while he was responding to a marijuana patch found off the Sprague Pond trail. Mr. Percy questioned if the Chief considered that a higher priority than Route 209 traffic control. Mr. Percy also recommended that the Sagadahoc County Sheriff's Department and State Police provide traffic control assistance. Chief Skroski stated that maybe the State could fund them through park revenues.

Selectman Douglass asked if Mr. Murray still opens two lanes to enter the Park. Mr. Murray replied that they open two lanes, have added a second register and have increased the available parking spots.

Mr. Percy stated that the backup occurs while the park is filling and the traffic should be kept moving. He recommended using handouts to explain to the drivers why they are being waived through.

Selectman Douglass stated that we used to meet annually on the parking issues and one time we had representatives from many of the State departments present. He asked if we should have a sign somewhere around Parker Head Road that states "Park is Full". Mr. Percy replied that even though the park is full there may be parking available further down Route 209.

Mr. Percy asked how many cars should be allowed to wait in line and get backed up. He added that maybe the Parking Enforcement Officer should move cars along after the Park is full and 80 cars are parked in the turnout lane. Mr. Murray added that he has used all his ideas up.

Selectman Perkins asked if Mr. Murray is using signs. He replied that they were – but people just want to get into the Park. He does not reduce parking because of tides – but that may be coming. Right now the available parking still fills to capacity and that is after adding 30 more spaces this year. They are letting in cars as fast as possible.

Selectman Douglass asked if someone could be at the turnout lane break point to move traffic along. Mr. Murray replied that they use the Parking Enforcement Officer to move traffic on and he provides a walkie talkie to the Officer for communications. Selectman Douglass stated that it sounds like they know what to do and who will do it – so Chief Skroski and Manager Murray need to work out a plan.

Selectman Douglass referred to excerpts of the 2002 meeting minutes and stated that back then the main problem was getting people into the Park. The entry lane will handle 80 cars and the rest will just have to be moved along. He recommended putting up a sign so people know this and then to enforce it. Selectman Pye asked if the sign would really do anything and Selectman Douglass replied that it would provide an explanation. Chief Skroski stated that he would check with DOT concerning the sign. He added that some folks will still argue because they have state park passes and feel that they should be allowed to wait in line.

Fire Chief Totman stated that it was really a State problem and they Town needs to bring them in to discuss this issue. He also recommended having the State Police and County Sheriff's present and that the Park train their staff for traffic control. Administrator Young added that the State does provide money to the Town each year specifically to fund the Parking Enforcement Officer.

Selectman Douglass agreed with Chief Totman and requested that Chief Skroski contact the State Police and the County Sheriff and ask them to attend another meeting. Mr. Murray stated that he would look into traffic control training for his staff.

Chief Skroski reminded that Selectmen that the time spent on day shifts providing traffic control at Popham will take away from night patrols.

Gary Morong, EMA Director, asked how many cars can park in other spots along Popham Road. He also recommended having them listed on a handout. Selectman Douglass replied that he was not in favor of giving handouts to drivers. Mr. Percy recommended that someone, either Chief Skroski or Brian Murray, coordinate the parking at the other lots in Popham.

Gail Butler and Bob Butler, Popham residents, stated that the parking problems were so severe at Fort Baldwin that you could not get an ambulance or fire truck through and people were walking alongside the narrow road. They added that on Sunday a school bus was turned away from the park with a full load of teenagers and then went into Ocean View's driveway, stopping vehicles, and then ended up parking by the marsh. He added that for a while traffic from both directions were completely stopped and there was a concern about rescue vehicles getting through. Mr. Butler added that the parking was irregular and not managed well. He recommended that Mr. Murray provide signs reflecting the parking status of Fort Baldwin and Mr. Murray replied that he would look into it.

Selectman Pye stated that we only have just so many resources and people are very determined to get to the Park. We have come up with solutions in the past and people do their best to work around them to get to the Park. He stated that they may need to discuss increasing the fines for illegal parking.

Administrator Young will set up another meeting to discuss these issues with representatives from the County Sheriff's Department, State Police, and Department of Conservation. Items to be discussed will be assistance in traffic control, cutting off parking at a certain spot along the entry lane, signs, training park personnel in traffic control, and Fort Baldwin parking issues.

II. New Business

1. In accordance with Article #58 of the March 20th, 1993 Annual Town Meeting consider authorizing a septic loan to assist the homeowner at Map 039, Lot 046 repair a malfunction in the existing septic system.

Selectman voted (3-0) to authorize funding from the septic system account.

III. Correspondence

1. Donation "thank-you" letters from Big Brothers Big Sisters of Bath/Brunswick, Bath Area Food Bank, Sweetser, and American Red Cross.

Selectman Douglass read the letters to the public.

IV. Selectmen/Administrator Comments and Announcements

1. Administrator Young

Administrator Young announced upcoming meetings and events.

V. Public Forum

1. Gary Morong

Mr. Morong stated that he would volunteer to make a list of the veterans buried in the private cemeteries. He also wished Ashley Thayer (camera operator) a safe trip to France.

VI. Review and Sign:

1. Accounts payable and payroll warrants.
2. Minutes

Selectmen voted (2-0) to approve and sign all items.

VII. Adjournment - Selectmen voted (2-0) to adjourn at 6.57 p.m.