

**Town of Whitefield
Select Board Meeting Minutes
March 12, 2013**

**Present: Tom Colpitt, Frank Ober Lester Sheaffer, and Dennis Merrill
Administrative Assistant Aaron Miller**

Select Board actions

- 1. The minutes of the March 5 meeting were approved 4-0.**
- 2. Two warrants were signed.**
- 3. Roads. David Boynton reported that some gravel has been put on Piper Lane. He has had calls on the condition of Jewett Lane and will go down there tomorrow.**
- 4. Deeds. Quit claim deeds were signed for McEvoy (2), McCormick, Duncan and Solomon.**
- 5. Tax acquired property. The Board had a general discussion about what to do with tax acquired properties. Aaron has spoken with MMA about liability for these properties. Generally, we have good immunity for occupied properties, but would need to review coverage if a property is unoccupied for more than 60 days.**

Currently, we have 23 acquired properties with a total of about \$91,000 in taxes owed.

Aaron has copies of policies that other towns use to handle acquired properties. The most common approach in these is to sell the property soon after foreclosure. Other options include retaining the property for town use, repayment agreements with the former owner, charging rent, deferring action and using poverty abatements. In discussing these options, the Board agreed that consistency and certainty are important for any policy while retaining some flexibility to address unique individual situations. The Board's goal is to develop a policy for Whitefield in the next 2-3 months. In implementing a policy, it would be important to hold a public meeting on any proposal and to allow an implementation period for existing acquired properties. Lester will review the other town's policies.

6. Office painting. Aaron reported that he has arranged for county jail inmates to paint the interior of the Town Office. This work will be done March 21 to 24 and the Town will only have to pay for materials and snacks for the workers.

7. Map cases. The Board agreed that the map case in the office can be replaced with a cabinet that will hold rolled maps. Doing this will save a lot of space in the office. Many of the maps now stored in the cases are outdated or incomplete. The Historical Society would like to use the metal map case; the wooden one will need to find a good home.

8. Liquor license. The Board voted 4-0 to sign a liquor license renewal for Sheepscot Links.

9. Photocopies. The Board agreed to modify practices on charging for photocopies to allow residents to get a limited number of free copies of official documents that pertain to them, for example copies of their property tax cards. The office staff should use good judgement in administering this.

10. Late day customers. Aaron noted that sometimes a person will come in with a lengthy transaction, such as a new car registration, right at closing time. This seems to be especially so on Fridays. While providing good customer service is important, sometimes the office staff has personnel commitments and they cannot stay, and overtime would need to be paid. The office staff will use its judgement in handling these situations on a case by case basis.

11. Maine Revenue Service review. Dennis noted that the Maine Revenue Service was in the office today to review our property tax records and information. Everything was in good order, with only a few recommendations for improvements. The Town's valuation based on comparison of assessed values to sales was 97%, as it was last year. This allows the Town to use a valuation factor of 100% in getting State payments, etc. It was noted that there have not been very many open market sales to evaluate. Also, the State compares actual sales to assessed values that are based on replacement values, so something of a mismatch is created.

Assessors' Actions

- 1. The Board signed an abatement for the Solomon mobile home on Howe Road.**
- 2. The Board voted 4-0 to approve the following abatements.**
 - a. Peters property off Doyle Road to reduce the acreage of the parcel.**
 - b. The Sacks property to reduce the value of a porch.**

Steven C. McCormick, Chair

Lester Sheaffer

Franklin A. Ober

Thomas Colpitt

Dennis Merrill