

**Georgia Selectboard Regular Meeting
Chris Letourneau Meeting Room
Monday, January 24, 2022
7:00 p.m.**

Approved: Approved

Unapproved Minutes are subject to revision and corrections from the Town of Georgia Selectboard Members. The contents herein represent the notes and recollections of the Selectboard Clerk, Town Administrator, and representatives, and may not have captured the true intent of all statements made by the participants. Meeting Minutes are corrected when necessary and voted upon for Approval by the Board at the next Regular Selectboard Meeting. For clarification of any details of these notes please contact the Town of Georgia Selectboard Chairperson or the Selectboard Clerk.

Board Members Present: Scott St. Onge, Kyle Grenier, Michelle Phelps, Carolyn Branagan, Sara Nadeau

Board Members Absent: None

Staff & Board Members Present: Amber Baker, Town Administrator, Ashley Sterling, Selectboard Clerk

Public Present: Carrie Hungerford, Jessica Fike, Matthew Dow, Jamie Comstock, John & Gabrielle Stoughton, Ludmila Botnari, Krissy Cole, Mari Wetmore, Sara Walker, Frank Gore, Ben Driver, Kayla Glerum, Melissa Branco, Casey Waltz, Sandy Foisy, Jessica Denton, Holly & Adam Fortune, Laurie Viens, Justin Holmes, Kevin Camisa, Alec Fleury

Scott St. Onge opened the Selectboard Regular Meeting on Monday, January 24, 2022, for the Town of Georgia in person and via Zoom at 7:04p.m.

Additions, Changes or Deletions: Open Meeting Law Update, Executive Session

Public Appearance: None scheduled, but the following were present during the meeting:

Scott St. Onge began the meeting acknowledging several folks on screen, requesting that each of them to indicate their first and last name utilizing the Zoom Chat feature. Scott requested that each speaker limit themselves to 5 minutes, if possible. Scott, acknowledging that many participants were likely present to discuss the St. Albans Recreation Department (SAR) membership possibility, took the opportunity to explain the Selectboard's decision for adding draft Article 3 to the Town Meeting Warning: *"Shall the voters enter an agreement with the St. Albans Recreation Department to support the difference between the residential vs. non-residential rate at a cost of \$25,000 for a term of one year."* Scott also made some points of rationale for this unanimous decision, including: new SAR pricing schedule, unknown dollar amount, limited public input. Scott stressed the point that the Board believes that asking the public to vote on this is a matter of true, appropriate, democratic process. Scott gave further rationale for the reasoning behind the \$25,000.00 number, indicating the multiple conversations with SAR to reach this approximation.

Frank Gore was the first member of the public to speak. Frank asked about the dollar impact that the previous agreement with SAR had per each household. Answer given was the calculations at the new, proposed \$25,000.00 rate. Divided by approximately 2000 taxable parcels, for a total of approximately \$15.00 per taxable parcel. Frank asked about the possibility of an agreed upon cap of for fees billed by SAR. Answer: SAR is not offering an agreement with a cap currently.

Further discussion about ballot language, challenges of getting the community to vote, the need for more youth recreation opportunities for the Georgia community, budgeting challenges, deferred maintenance, how is information communicated to the public, ARPA money utilization.

Jessica Fike spoke second. Jessica asked how many letters were received. Answer: 8. Jessica asked how many people had attended meetings in support of this. Answer: zero. Jessica asked how the Board reached \$25,000.00 as a forecasted number. Answer: conversations with SAR which indicated that it would be safest to double the amount tracked from the previous year (approximately \$12,000) to accommodate increases in cost and possible increases because of the new year-round pool opening this summer. Jessica indicated that she believes \$25,000.00 is too high and that some voters will see it as red flag and not vote in favor of it. Jessica asked about impact fees for Parks & Recreation and if they could be utilized in funding opportunities for programming. Answer: Parks & Recreation Impact Fees, and Reserve monies cannot be used for programming. They are legally dedicated to land, equipment, etc.

Further conversation was had regarding neighboring towns contributions to recreation in comparison to Georgia, reasons behind why it was cut from the budget in 2021, further reasoning for the decision to create Article 3, how do we get more input from the public, lack of community volunteers.

Jessica Denton spoke third. Jessica asked for clarification regarding the 2022 Town Meeting Vote procedures. Answer: all 2022 articles will be voted on via Australian Ballot. Australian Ballot voting will occur in person on March 1, 2022, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Absentee Australian Ballots will be available for those who wish to vote early, or who do not wish to visit the polling location on March 1. No in person meeting or floor vote will occur in 2022. An informational meeting will be held on Monday, February 28, at 7 p.m.

Another request was made for folks to indicate their name in the chat area.

John Stoughton asked for clarification about future voting procedure regarding Article 3. Answer: depending on the next board, the amount could be worked into the general budget, or brought back as a separate article again. Neither way ensure that an agreement with SAR is guaranteed year to year. John also asked about the timeframe of the Article 3 agreement: when does it begin? Is it retroactive? Answer: due to SAR quarterly billing procedures, the year would be 4/1/22-3/31/23. There is no option for a retroactive membership.

Further discussion was had regarding quotes provided to other towns by SAR, what can be done to ensure that Georgia is continually moving in a direction the community sees as necessary, and not just the Selectboard. A suggestion was made that the Selectboard could schedule a community focused topic from time to time, which is indicated ahead of time, requesting community input.

At this time most Zoom participants departed.

Review of Past Minutes: Scott St. Onge requested to Continue the Budget Meeting Minutes from 12/16/21. Scott requested that any edits be communicated sooner rather than later. The Budget Meeting Minutes will be approved all together, once the budget meetings are complete, ensuring a comprehensive package.

1 edit: Line 24 – adjust to “Georgia Fire & Rescue.”

Michelle Phelps made the motion to approve the Selectboard Regular Meeting Minutes 1/10/22, as drafted. Kyle Grenier Seconded. No further discussion. All voted in favor.

Review of Warrants: None

Business:

Highway Garage Update: Still awaiting State Stormwater Permit finalization. Hopeful that groundbreaking can begin soon, even as the weather has been cold, there are indications that the ground is not too frozen to begin.

Zoning Regulations Update: Final public hearing scheduled for February 14, 2022, 7p.m.

Black Walnut Road Request: Kevin Camisa and Justin Holmes both present via Zoom. Discussion was had regarding Memorandum of Understanding language between the Town of Georgia and Black Walnut. Members of the Board requested that at least a draft of said language be presented before a decision could be made. Amber Baker to begin compiling language with appropriate assistance from the Town Attorney. Motion for Amber Baker to pursue a working draft Memorandum of Understanding between the Town of Georgia and Black Walnut LLC for the construction of a road in the planned development. Motion made by Kyle Grenier. Seconded by Sara Nadeau. No further discussion. All voted in favor.

Kevin Camisa and Justin Holmes departed the meeting.

Planning Commission Member Reduction: It is the recommendation of the Planning Commission to reduce from a 7-member board to a 5-member board, as the transition to the Development Review Board will absorb many of the previous Planning Commission functions. This is also supported by Northwest Regional Planning. Motion to reduce the total number of seats on the Planning Commission from seven down to five based upon the recommendation of the Planning Commission itself. The seats will reduce as the terms expire, upon Town Meeting Day 2022. Carolyn Branagan made the Motion. Seconded by Michelle Phelps. No further discussion. All voted in favor.

2022 Town Meeting Day Warning: Draft of the Town Meeting 2022 Warning was reviewed. Article 3 and Article 4 language was finalized per the discussion had amongst the Board. Of note, the Board discussed the \$25,000.00 dollar amount noted on Article 3 and possibilities to reduce it to appear more reasonable to some voters.

Kyle Grenier Motioned to reduce the dollar amount on Article 3 from \$25,000.00 to \$18,000.00. Seconded by Carolyn. Further discussion was had about St. Albans Recreation opportunities for other members of the community, rather than just families with children. Further discussion was had regarding the rationale for removing the SAR program from the 2021 budget. Further discussion was had regarding what to do if \$18,000.00 is exceeded. All voted in favor.

Additional discussion was had about the wording of Article 4. More discussion was had about the importance of growing the Town of Georgia in a responsible manner.

Discussion about Article 5. Motion to approve the budget for 2022 totaling \$3,459,136.00 of which \$2,230,025.00 shall be raised by taxes and \$1,019,111.00 by non-tax revenues made by Kyle Grenier. Seconded by Michelle Phelps. No further discussion was had. All voted in favor.

Common Level of Appraisal Covid Impacts: Presentation shared by Bill Hinman.

Vermont Rockets Beach Waiver Request: Discussion was had about impact to the beach by tournaments – heavy use, trash, cleanup needs, and costs associated. The previous beach supervisor supported some amount of fee be collected by tournaments renting the beach. Kyle Grenier made a motion stating that the VT Rockets pay a fee for fifty percent of the days they utilize the beach for their tournament in 2022. Seconded by Michelle Phelps. No further discussion was had. All voted in favor.

Request for Proposal – Bovat Road Culvert Replacement: Sealed ballots were received and opened:

Goodhue Excavation \$349,500.00 without P&P Bond. \$360,000.00 including P&P Bond.

Avery Excavation Inc. \$290,470.00

SD Ireland \$490,000.00

CCS Constructors \$453,000.00

All bids to be vetted by Amber Baker and Todd Cadieux.

Fairbanks Memorial Request: The board received a request to name some type of memorial for Mr. & Mrs. Fairbanks, who have resided in Georgia, on Rt. 7, near the 104A intersection, for many years. The request did not indicate a specific type of memorial, but instead asked if the Town had any suggestions. Amber Baker will investigate details about naming the road proposed by Black Walnut LLC to meet this request.

Consent Agenda:

Georgia Conservation Commission Minutes

First Response Minutes

Library Trustee Minutes

Fire Department Minutes

Development Review Board Minutes

Northwest Solid Waste Management District Agenda

Selectboard Interests: None

Executive Session: Motion to enter into Executive Session under 1 V.S.A. §313 with Amber Baker to discuss personnel, where premature, general public knowledge would clearly place the state, municipality, other public body, or person(s) involved at a substantial disadvantage, made by Carolyn Branagan at 9:38 p.m. Kyle Grenier seconded. All voted in favor.

Motion to exit Executive Session at 10:18 p.m., made by Kyle Grenier, seconded by Sara Nadeau. All voted in favor.

No motions out of Executive Session. Motion to adjourn the meeting made by Carolyn Branagan at 10:19 p.m. Michelle Phelps seconded. All voted in favor.