

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES
TOWN OF EPPING, NEW HAMPSHIRE
March 1, 2021**



JOINT MEETING WITH FREMONT BOARD OF SELECTMEN

VIA ZOOM

CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTION

Chairman Adam Munguia called this special meeting with the Fremont Board of Selectmen to order at 7:00 PM with members; Selectmen Bob Jordan, Mike Yergeau, Cody Belanger and Joe Trombley. Also attending was Town Administrator Gregory C. Dodge. Chairman Munguia asked each Board member for comments and all agreed that having this meeting was a good start in resolving a shared problem. Fremont Board of Selectmen Chairman Gene Cordes introduced himself and fellow Board members Neal Janvrin and Roger Barham who was having a connectivity problem. Fremont Town Administrator Heidi Carlson was excused.

BACKGROUND ON SHIRKIN ROAD

Fremont Chairman Gene Cordes acknowledged that Epping and Fremont have this common concern that has received a great deal of press lately. Both he and Chairman Munguia agreed there was no need to discuss what has gone on in the past. The issue before both Boards was to seek remedies that will benefit both Towns and both Towns need to move forward.

Chairman Munguia – It is understood that the Town of Fremont took the action based on legitimate concerns.

Chairman Cordes – The Town of Fremont has been dealing with this issue for a long time. There is a significant increase in the commercial base on the Epping side coupled with Fremont roads that are not adequately built to sustain commercial traffic and impacting Fremont residents. The question is, how the commercial traffic gets to Route 101 with the least impact.

OPTIONS/DISCUSSION

Selectman Neal Janvrin – Believes an access road that runs parallel to Rt. 101 would be ideal but it is probably a long-term solution and would need support from the State, DRED, DOT and RPC.

The area where an access road could be built has substantial wetlands and may not be viable.

Selectman Trombley wasn't sure who owns that land but believes it is State owned. Even if a road were to be built there the time frame for completion would probably be 36 months or more. He felt there were some relatively short-term solutions that could be addressed immediately such as Epping helping out with the wear and tear on Rogers Rd. in Fremont and addressing safety and speeding truck concerns.

Chairman Cordes – An access road would be an ideal solution but has some significant challenges. It should be seriously explored but agreed the time frame is 36 months or more. Shirking Road and Rogers Road just were not built to sustain the commercial traffic. Fremont did conduct a road study and the sub-surface was deemed inadequate for heavy truck traffic. This has been ongoing in Fremont for quite some time and the issue is complex with no easy solutions that led to the ordinance being enacted. He also suggested that the hours of operation for these businesses may be looked at as well.

Selectman Belanger – He understands that Fremont’s problem had to be dealt with and knows the concerns to be legitimate. He has had discussions with NH DOT but they were “uninterested” at best. He did suggest somewhat of a drastic move where the State Representatives and State Senator put forward a bill to “re-draw” the boundary line that would encompass all of Shirking Rd. and Rogers Rd. This measure however could be quite a process. Essentially Fremont residents would become Epping residents which would not be an easy sell and then perhaps the residents impacted would choose where to send their students, Epping or Fremont.

Chairman Cordes - We would have to solicit help from DRED and our Legislatures. He thought re-drawing the Town line would be “difficult” and not easy process.

Selectman Trombley – Believes that the hours of operations could be looked at and the safety concerns addressed. The commercial zone was established in 1971 and believes a zoning change might be in order. He did not see Epping’s concerns the same as Fremont’s in that traffic has always flowed towards Rout 101 via Shirking and Rogers Rd. and the roads impacted now due to the ordinance were never intended to be impacted. Mr. Trombley believes that hours of operation and modifications to the road were relatively easy to address first.

Selectman Jordan – He walked what looks like the beginning of an access road off of exit 6 and said that the land is wet and probably not a viable option. He too spoke with DOT and the person he spoke with did not want to go on record but it was clear that DOT was not in a position to assist.

In fact all those who spoke with DOT including both Town Administrators had little or no response from DOT.

Selectman Janvrin – Mr. Janvrin asked that Fremont be a part of Epping’s Shirkin Road committee or at the very least keep Fremont informed of their progress. Selectman Trombley suggested that Fremont have their own committee independent of Epping’s but stressed the two committees could meet and exchange ideas.

Selectman Yergeau – Mr. Yergeau said without an access road Shirkin Rd. has a “regional impact” and if an access road were built it could “lessen the regional impact” and be detrimental to the Town of Fremont. It could invite more commercial businesses to Shirkin Rd. increasing commercial traffic.

Chairman Munguia – The Chairman listed “action items” he took away from this meeting and they are:

- Review of impact from future businesses
- Contacting our State Representatives
- Contacting the NH DOT one more time
- Review of hours of operations and the noise produced from those businesses
- Safety regards as we move forward
- Requirements around Regional Impact

PUBLIC COMMENT

Michelle Mylott

Ms. Mylott expressed her concerns for the increased commercial traffic on Jenness Rd. and said that the Town of Epping needs to look at the zoning regulations and to also reinstitute good ordinances that regulate weight limits, odors produced, etc. While she thinks an access road is a good option she doesn't believe it will happen based on DOT's interest thus far. In terms of maintaining Fremont's ½ mile section of road, the Epping roads would require more maintenance in that the roads are longer thus costing more money. She felt that Epping should look into maintaining the Fremont side as it would be less costly. She said that since December the heavy trucks have been creating potholes stating the road was in poor shape prior to the increased truck traffic. Safety is also a major concern. Selectman Trombley expressed the need for better enforcement. Selectman Jordan said that he hopes this problem can be resolved for both sides but acknowledged it is not an easy problem to fix.

Steven Thomas

Encouraged the Board of Selectmen to enter into an agreement with Fremont to repair and/or rebuild the road so that it can support the heavy traffic and that it be acceptable to the Town of Fremont. He also felt that an access road should be explored and suggested limiting interaction with DOT.

NEXT MEETING

Selectman Trombley didn't want to lose sight of the importance of continued meetings and would like to see another meeting scheduled. It was decided that the Boards will meet again on Monday March 29, 2021 and that the Town Administrators from both Towns may decide on an earlier meeting depending on the need.

Chairman Cordes said he would recap this meeting at his Board's next meeting which is Thursday of this week. He will suggest the formulation of a committee and to decide on their mission and goals. Selectman Trombley hopes that the two committees can work together.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Selectman Cody Belanger to adjourn. Seconded by Selectman Bob Jordan. Roll Call vote; Selectmen Mike Yergeau, Joe Trombley, Bob Jordan, Cody Belanger and Adam Munguia all voting aye. Motion carried 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gregory C. Dodge
Town Administrator

Adam Munguia, Chairman

Bob Jordan, Vice-Chairman

Michael Yergeau, Selectman

Cody Belanger, Selectman

Joseph Trombley, Selectman

Dated: March 8, 2021