

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES
TOWN OF EPPING, NEW HAMPSHIRE
March 29, 2021**



JOINT MEETING WITH FREMONT BOARD OF SELECTMEN

VIA ZOOM

CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTION

Chairman Michael Yergeau called this special meeting with the Fremont Board of Selectmen to order at 7:00 PM with members; Selectmen Joe Trombley, Bob Jordan, Tom Gauthier and John Cody. Also attending was Town Administrator Gregory C. Dodge. Fremont Board Chairman Gene Cordes and Selectmen Neal Janvrin and Roger Barham introduced themselves. While the Fremont Board is the same as it was at the March 1, 2021 joint meeting the Epping Board had a change from Chairman Adam Munguia and past Selectman Cody Belanger leaving the Board and replaced by Mr. Gauthier and Mr. Cody.

COMMITTEE MAKE-UP EPPING/FREMONT

Chairman Yergeau explained that the Epping Committee on the Shirkin' Road issue is pretty much formed and wanted to know how Fremont felt about a committee.

Fremont Chairman Cordes felt that having two "parallel" committees that may go off on different direction would not be good. He felt representation from Fremont on the Epping committee made good sense though he was concerned as to the size of the committee.

Selectman Trombley ran down the proposed members of the Epping committee; Town Administrator, Police Chief, Road Agent, two Selectmen, representative from the public and commercial district.

Fremont Chairman Cordes stated he would have "like" membership on the Fremont side. He felt his Board would have to solicit from their Town appropriate committee members and their level of interest.

Fremont Selectman Janvrin asked if these committees would meet together. Selectman Trombley thought initially they probably would to set goals, etc. and then meet individually going forward.

It was felt that dependence on the committees would become less as agreements and/or progress is made.

Mr. Cordes felt that time would be needed to form the Fremont committee and a time line should be set as to when that should be.

Both Boards agreed that the committees probably would meet only once a month. Chairman Yergeau stating that their tasks are predicated on what the issues are as some could be easy while others more complex.

CONSIDERATION OF FREMONT LIFTING ROAD RESTRICTION

Chairman Cordes was surprised to see this item on the agenda. There is no interest in rescinding the ordinance at this time. He felt that it was the ordinance that got both Boards to the "table". Fremont officials are sensitive to the "blow back" they are probably getting due to the ordinance however they are also sensitive to the roads.

Fremont Selectman Garham agreed with the Chairman's assessment. The road study which the Town of Fremont undertook helped them decide that they had the legal right to enact the ordinance.

Epping officials have not seen the study and asked for a copy, which will be provided.

Epping Selectman Trombley countered the Fremont Chairman by saying the Town of Epping has always been ready to work on the issue. If the ordinance were to be lifted he and the rest of the Selectmen are still interested in seeking a solution. The only reason why it was suggested that the ordinance be lifted is it gets the Towns back to where we were prior to the ordinance. The Boards will still work towards a solution. Fremont was not interested in any temporary reprieve either. Selectman Garham from Fremont reiterated that it was the road study that led them to enacting the ordinance. He said the Fremont roads are being damaged and their Board needs to protect the roads.

Having the Town of Epping contributing to Fremont's road maintenance was discussed. Town Administrator Dodge stated that it takes a court order to allow one Town to contribute to the other so in this case the Town of Fremont would have to petition the Superior Court for relief. That procedure had been sent out to Administrator Carlson in Fremont to disseminate amongst her Board members. Selectman Gauthier said that perhaps the businesses on Shirkin Road would contribute to maintenance as well.

Chairman Cordes noted that seemingly the Town of Epping would like to discuss cost sharing on maintaining Shirkin Rd. and Rogers Rd. and now that it is known how that can be accomplished his Board will have to have further discussion on it and seek advice as well.

Selectman Trombley said that Epping will look at the road study and get input from our Road Agent. Perhaps a concept can be developed on maintenance that is agreeable to the Town of Fremont. Selectman Janvrin from Fremont said that Epping would be remiss if they didn't discuss this with their Road Agent. Chairman Garham said that maybe Santec who prepared the road study could give an idea on costs to upgrade Shirkin and Rogers Rd. Chairman Yergeau would like the time to review the road study before any estimated costs were given. Selectman Trombley agreed that reviewing the study was important to understand first and foremost and then perhaps both Boards would get back together and exchange ideas as to what contributions could be made towards maintenance.

Selectman Gauthier agreed with what was said but wanted to know from the Fremont officials as to whether or not Epping was just "spinning their wheels" and if Fremont was committed to working with Epping. Chairman Cordes said that they have had "lively" discussions on this topic and it would be fair to say that nothing is off the table as supported by his fellow Board members; Mr. Janvrin and Mr. Garham. Chairman Cordes said that the direction being taken seems to be having the commercial traffic going back through Fremont but on better roads. There will have to be further discussions amongst his Board. Selectman Trombley felt if the only option is for Epping to build its own road he feels, personally speaking, that it would be too costly. Chairman Cordes said that once discussions with his Board are complete and perhaps some solicited advice he would get something in writing out to the Epping Board through the Administrators. He felt it was important at this point to get the study out and solicit interest for the committee on the Fremont end.

There was some discussion about the posting of Beede Hill Rd. and how some of that road is State maintained, etc. but that discussion was deemed to be a sidebar discussion to the Shirkin Rd. and Rogers Rd. issue.

Chairman Yergeau clarified his statement from the March 1st meeting regarding Regional Impact. He believes an access road exclusively in Epping would actually lessen the regional impact and perhaps open the door to more commercial businesses. Selectman Janvrin said hours of operation could be restricted for the area businesses. Selectman Garham felt a “service” road that extends from Shirkin Rd. to Beede Hill Rd. and exit 6 would give Epping the opportunity to build out those commercial lots and the traffic would not impact the Town of Fremont and he was “all for that”. Selectman Trombley said that a dedicated road may be beneficial to the Epping side however he was concerned for the increase in noise. He further stated that maybe if traffic were restored through Fremont the businesses may be in favor of changing their operational hours in exchange. These are things the committee(s) might vet out.

UNIFIED APPROACH TO STATE OFFICIALS (DOT, DRED, ETC.) – ALTERNATE HAUL ROAD OPTION

Selectman Gauthier thought that this agenda item really did not make sense. An alternate road was not cost effective coupled with what Selectman Jordan said regarding his discussions with DOT. It was clear to him that the State would not help with an alternate road. Selectman Garham admitted it could be a “reach” but with proper homework it may have its place. Mr. Garham said it was important that all avenues were explored so we can tell our residents all options were looked at. Chairman Yergeau said that in his discussions with District 6 it was noted that due to the substantial wetlands in the area it would not be good to put a road through anyway. Selectman Trombley agreed that exploring all options would not necessarily be a bad thing and it would help both Boards express that all was done to seek a viable solution.

NEXT MEETING

Both Boards agreed to meet again on April 26, 2021 at 7:00 PM.

Chairman Cordes recapped that they had a lot of work ahead of them. Agenda items will get out ahead of the next meeting. First the study would go out to the Epping Board and Fremont’s progress on many interests will go out including what they might want to see in a maintenance agreement. In the meantime, if additional information needs to get out it could go through the Town Administrators.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Michelle Mylott said she had nothing to say but was glad that the Boards were meeting and working together, the discussion was great to hear.

ADJOURNMENT

Selectman Joe Trombley made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Selectman Bob Jordan. Roll Call Vote; Selectmen Cody, Gauthier, Jordan, Trombley and Yergeau all voting aye.

Meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM.

Respectfully Submitted:

Gregory C. Dodge
Town Administrator

Michael Yergeau, Chairman

Joe Trombley, Vice-Chairman

Bob Jordan, Selectman

Tom Gauthier, Selectman

John Cody, Selectman

Dated: April 5, 2021