

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES
TOWN OF EPPING, NEW HAMPSHIRE
April 26, 2021**



**JOINT MEETING WITH FREMONT BOARD OF SELECTMEN
VIA ZOOM**

CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTION

Chairman Michael Yergeau call this special meeting with the Fremont Board of Selectmen to order at 7:00 PM with members; Selectmen Joe Trombley, Tom Gauthier and John Cody and Town Administrator Gregory C. Dodge. Selectman Bob Jordan joined the meeting at 7:10 PM but was unable to stay for the duration as he had a conflict. Fremont Board of Selectmen Chairman Gene Cordes and fellow Board members Neal Janvrin and Roger Barham.

REPORT ON FREMONT COMMITTEE SELECTION/MEETING

Chairman Gene Cordes reported that the Town of Fremont would like to have the following representation on the committee; one (1) resident, (1) business owner, someone from their land use office as this topic has a land use/impact, Fremont road agent, Fremont Police Chief and Selectman Roger Barham from the Select Board with the understanding that if another Board member is needed that they contribute or in the absence of Mr. Barham they would sit in his place. The group met the past Monday night (April 19, 2021) and all agreed to move forward on the committee. Epping Selectman Gauthier inquired if the business owner was from Shirking Rd. Chairman Cordes said that the gentleman has a firewood business on the Fremont end of Shirking Rd. and resident lives on Leavitt Rd.

ENGINEERING REPORT

Chairman Yergeau asked if the Fremont Board of Selectmen are willing to standby the Santec Engineering report. Chairman Cordes said that they would pay close attention to that report as that was the purpose of hiring them. Selectman Janvrin agreed with his Chairman. The scope of work completed were "emergency repairs". Chairman Yergeau said that the "emergency repairs" were treated separately, he then read an excerpt of the report stating that the roads should be reconstructed as they cannot withstand the weight of commercial vehicles. Fremont Selectman Barham said that it was originally thought that a "No Thru Trucking" ordinance was in order but local residents pushed back on that idea and felt that a weight restriction was in order as the report eludes to. It was the Santec report that gave the Fremont Select Board justification for the road weight limits. Chairman Yergeau also asked if it was possible to get a breakdown of the Fremont Road Agent's claim that \$770,000 was spent on that

road. Chairman Cordes said it would be possible but he believes the amount included maintenance on other roads and not just the ones in question.

OPTIONS

Selectman Gauthier asked the Fremont Board if the Town of Epping committed to maintaining the road so that it could accommodate commercial traffic would Fremont consider lifting the weight limit. He said he would not want to see the maintenance completed on the road with nothing in return. Chairman Cordes agreed with Mr. Gauthier stating he wouldn't want to see that happen either. Chairman Cordes said that there would have to be an "understanding" put together. Selectman Trombley understood that the Town of Fremont was open to an offer from Epping on bringing the roads to standards in an effort to reopen the road. He didn't want to see the effort and money put forward and the restrictions stay in place. Epping needs to know Fremont's expectations.

Fremont Selectman Janvrin felt the committees were being formed in order to come up with options and present those options to the Boards of Selectmen. Chairman Yergeau agreed but in viewing Fremont's committee meeting he said it seemed as if it wasn't clear as to Epping's direction when he thought it was clear that Epping was asking to help upgrade the road leading to Rt. 101. Chairman Yergeau thought the maintenance option would be brought forward to the Fremont committee for feedback but he felt it did not get any traction with the committee. Chairman Cordes said the committee met with no intent to discuss any specific option and not to decide which options were on/off the table. Selectman Trombley felt the committee could take a few different directions but at the end whatever is decided it is the Selectmen who sign off. Epping's objective is to obviously eventually lift the restriction. Selectman Gauthier felt 2-3 options should be presented to the committee. Engaging the public in the discussions was important according to Chairman Cordes. Many things have been "brainstormed" but nothing had been ruled out and in fact some options need to be explored a bit more. Upgrading Shirking Rd. and Rogers Rd. to specifications as outlined in the Santec report would then leave Fremont with little justification to keep the restrictions in place according to Fremont Selectman Barham. Selectman Barham said upgrading the Epping roads is an option and finally an access road to be built but admitted it would be a longer-term option. Mr. Barham reminded his colleagues that with a not yet fully developed commercial area it would be beneficial to look at the long-term option.

Selectman Trombley said even with an agreement in place, discussions by the committees, engineering, legal aspects, etc. we will be into the spring of 2022 before anything gets done. He said building a new road would cost far more than upgrading a road. The cost of building a road would be a hard sell to the residents. In listening to the Fremont committee meeting it was clear that a new access road was the desired option to which the Fremont officials agreed. Selectman Trombley said that if NH DOT took that option off the table saying it could not or would not be done then that leaves the upgrading of the road as the only option. He understands that Fremont would have to benefit in some way.

Selectman John Cody said the committee needs to be presented with a short-term and a long-term solution. He recommends getting the road upgraded, lift the restrictions and get the trucks flowing again. Selectman Barham said that building a new access road is definitely a long-term goal. From a Fremont perspective the road is restricted due to an inadequate road and if the upgrades are made then the restriction should be lifted. He suggested that Rockingham Planning Commission get involved for assistance.

Chairman Cordes said that if the upgrades were completed and the restrictions lifted the commercial district could intensify attracting more businesses. The situation could get worse while a long-term solution is being explored. Chairman Yergeau answered by saying Epping will want to be a good neighbor to Fremont. Residents in Fremont don't want any further development. With a new road to 101, it is unlikely further developers would pay for that road and the residents aren't going to want to pay for it either. Selectman Trombley said upgrades to the road doesn't eliminate the impact to the residents of Fremont. A new road could mean more trucks and will produce more noise. If the State were to commit to an 80/20 split funding and 20% more for a new road that would be great but probably will not happen. Having the RPC involved is a good idea as we need to understand the regional impact issues. Chairman Cordes would like to hear from planners as to what is a regional impact.

NEXT MEETING

Selectman Gauthier said getting RPC involved is a good idea and mentioned that this was his third meeting on this subject and the same things are being said over and over again. Action needs to be taken. Selectman Janvrin asked when the Epping committee met, Selectman Trombley responded that they have not met Epping was waiting for the Fremont committee to consider upgrade options. At the time there seemed to be no purpose to the Epping committee, Epping will need to finalize their committee selection. Chairman Cordes committed to having a draft narrative to Epping within 2 weeks. Selectman Trombley thought a follow-up with DOT and would be a good idea while Epping gets their committee finalized.

Selectman Gauthier suggested a joint committee meeting in four weeks. Selectman Trombley agreed and suggested that the May 24th be also the next joint meeting. That would give the Epping and Fremont officials an opportunity to brief the committee on goals etc. The meeting of the committees and officials will be at the Epping Town Hall. Fremont officials asked if it would be in-person or virtual. Epping officials said that we can now meet in-person and add the virtual option as well in case someone did not want to be in person.

Chairman Yergeau felt that many questions may be answered by the Rockingham Planning Commission. With nothing further to discuss the Fremont Selectmen signed off as Epping had one additional agenda item to consider.

REPURCHASE OF DEEDED PROPERTY

Town Administrator Dodge brought forward a proposal to approve the settlement to repurchase the former home of Jeanne and Raymond Bernier to the heirs providing that all back taxes, interest and other costs are paid in full. This property is located at 24 Jacobs Well Rd. identified as Map #024 Lot #018 and Map #24 Lot #018-001. The additional penalty of 10% of the assessed value is waived since the home is going back to the previous owner (owner includes heirs). Total settlement costs are in excess of \$58,000.

Motion by Selectman Tom Gauthier to approve the repurchasing of properties by the heirs of Jeanne M. and Raymond A. Bernier located at tax map #024 lot #018 and tax map #24 lot #018-001, 24 Jacobs Well Road which was taken under tax deed July 19, 2019. Providing all back taxes, interests and other costs are paid in full by the heirs of said properties. In accordance with RSA 80:90 the additional

penalty of 10% is waived. Settlement costs are in excess of \$58,000. Seconded by Selectman John Cody. Roll Call Vote; Selectmen Joe Trombley, Tom Gauthier, John Cody and Chairman Mike Yergeau all voting aye. Motion carried 5-0.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Selectman Joe Trombley to adjourn. Seconded by Selectman Tom Gauthier. Roll Call Vote; Selectmen Joe Trombley, Tom Gauthier, John Cody and Chairman Mike Yergeau all voting aye. Motion carried 5-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 PM.

Respectfully Submitted:

Gregory C. Dodge
Town Administrator

Mike Yergeau, Chairman

Joe Trombley, Vice-Chairman

Bob Jordan, Selectman

Tom Gauthier, Selectman

John Cody, Selectman

Dated: May 3, 2021