

TOWN OF BROWNFIELD



Selectmen's Meeting August 19, 2020

Attendees: Hollie Hazzard, Ada Lane, Cindy Willets, Deb Tait, Lenny Jean, Deb Merrill, Lisa Thompson, Whit Lucy, Judi Tordo, James Lapointe, Sue Eland, Heather Jean, Kathy Fraize, Wanda Bartlett, Michelle Day, Bruce Collins, Michelle Hamlin, Ed Witt, Brittney Weckbacher, Brandon Weckbacher

5:30pm the meeting was called to order by Chair, William Flynn.

The meeting was recessed to move to the Brownfield Community Center, as the audience was over the 12 person capacity set by the Fire Chief.

5:35pm the meeting was re-opened at the Brownfield Community Center.

Bill stated that the purpose of this meeting was for the Board of Selectmen to ask questions towards the Town Clerk and Deputy Clerk to clarify how the July 14, 2020; at the end of the meeting there would be time for public question or comments.

Bill began by asking Michelle some questions which resulted in the following information: Wanda is Michelle's Deputy clerk; Wanda and Lorraine were the counters. Lorraine left at 1am when the counting was finished and Michelle and Wanda stayed until 3:30am to finish reporting. Michelle accepts responsibility for the results only being signed by Lorraine; Wanda should have signed them.

Bill referenced a quote from a 2006 letter from the Office of the Attorney General to Mr. Pestilli (then Chair of the Select board, Wanda was Town Clerk) stating "...we have concluded that while the investigation raises significant ethical issues regarding the Clerk's use of absentee ballots to advance her personal political views, we do not have sufficient evidence to prove that she committed a criminal violation of Maine's election laws." And asked why Michelle would have chosen a person to be a counter that was described as this by the AG – Michelle said she was unaware of that statement and that Wanda has been involved in every election in the Town of Brownfield since Michelle took the Clerk position.

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Bill stated that he asked Michelle on numerous occasions if she had enough help for this election and she had told him yes. Michelle said that her list of ballot clerks has narrowed over the years as many have moved on, passed away or were no longer interested. Bill encouraged the audience to come up with names of people who may be willing to be put on a list for ballot clerks.

Bill asked about the mandatory election training for the Registrar; Michelle said that she attends every two years and so does Wanda – they are due this year but due to COVID nothing had been scheduled yet. Erik stated that he heard from the Secretary of States office that they are trying to put something together for remote training before the November election. Bill asked who trains the ballot clerks; Michelle responded that she trains them. Bill asked if there was proof, like a roster that the ballot clerk would sign saying that they received training; Michelle said that she has not done this in the past, but was a good idea for the future.

Ricky asked how many absentee ballots were cast in the election; Michelle said she did not know off hand.

Ricky asked about voter intent law and which version Michelle used. Ricky asked why the votes that stated “Dick Emery” “Eric Emery” and “Richard Emery” were not counted in the original count, were not written as a write in votes on the ballot. Michelle stated that she has wanted the Town to adopt a voter intent ordinance for some time, but did not know how to go about doing it. The Board agreed that that would be a good thing to bring to the Town for a vote so will look into what other towns have.

Public questions/Comments:

Cindy Willets: Cindy stated that she would be willing to serve as a ballot clerk. She also commented on the importance of having a democratic and republican counter during state and federal elections so there was a counter representing each party.

Judi Tordo – Judi suggested that there be specific rules regarding write-ins so that there is not as much room for interpretation.

Michelle Hamlin – Michelle suggested that the voting booths have instructions to properly vote for a write-in candidate.

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Lenny Jean – Lenny asked about the timeframe for the recount request. He also asked about the lack of notice for the School Board Budget vote.

Deb Tait – Deb asked to talk with Michelle at a later date to discuss helping with the ballot clerk/counter issue.

Bruce Collins – Bruce asked for a list of names of the ballots that were not counted in the first count, but were counted for Ricky Emery in the recount.

7:10pm Erik made a motion to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Bill. Vote 3-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,
Megan Witt