



# Lamoine Board of Selectmen

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**Draft**

## Minutes of Special Meeting – January 21, 2019

Chair Nathan Mason called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM at the Lamoine Consolidated School gym.

Present were: Selectmen Robert Christie, Kathleen Rybarz, S. Josephine Cooper, Nathan Mason; Administrative Assistant Stu Marckoon, Appeals Board Chair Griff Fenton, Iris Simon, Conservation Commission Chair Larissa Thomas, Recreation Committee alternate Allison Howaniec, Budget Committee Alternate Paul Howaniec, School Committee Chair Brett Jones, School Committee members Bob Pulver & Gordon Donaldson, Parks Commission Alternate Georgianna Pulver and Lamoine 150! Co-chair Cynthia Donaldson.

### **Community Center Conversation**

Nathan said the purpose of the meeting was to sit down and start the formal discussion about a future community center for Lamoine. Everyone in the room introduced themselves.

Nathan asked what is needed and said space seems to be the biggest need. He said the school is unable to accommodate everything that is going on in the community. He said the school gym is a horrible place to play a basketball game. He said it would be nice to have an alternative, but he's not sure what it would be. He said the Comprehensive Planning process identified the need for a community center of some sort, and the town has been talking about the need for space for a long time.

Cynthia Donaldson asked if this was a session to start dreaming of what could be. Nathan said that's part of the reason for the meeting. Jo said it might be good to put everything out there and find out what the community wants. She said there are lots of different groups with different needs. She said children have a lot of needs. Bob said at the Comprehensive Planning Committee's Community forum, the issue of a community center surfaced without prodding from almost every group. He said the idea is to form a group to see how financially feasible and practical a center for year round use could be.

Brett Jones said the issue was a dominant topic at the last school board meeting. He said they looked at the needs for the school and a community center and whether to use the same facility. He said there should be input from other groups in town. He noted that a large committee would be tough to work with. Nathan said the Selectmen never intended to have 25-people on a committee. He said the purpose at this point is to gather information. He said he finds it difficult, as the school's basketball coach, to find gym space anywhere in the area. He said other people are looking for other needs. He said previous efforts did not receive voter approval. He said it's important to find out what voters want, and whatever comes out of the effort should be open to all in the community.

Griff Fenton said the community needs to know what the Selectmen and any future committee are thinking about, and not have something rammed down their throats. He

suggested sending a survey out and finding out what the town thinks and recalled an effort many years ago of hand delivering and collecting surveys on another topic. He said a plan should be based on that response and that would give it credibility. He said a lot of work should not go into something that is rejected. Mr. Jones noted that the Comprehensive Planning Committee gathered some data. Mrs. Donaldson said a similar survey was tried in regard to when to hold town meeting and there was a lot of feedback.

Gordon Donaldson said he was curious to know whether the effort was to build a larger town office and/or gym or whether the effort is to provide more community activities to feel more like a community. He said that feeling of community is important. Larissa Thomas said before circulating a questionnaire, it might be helpful to narrow the focus to find out what the known needs are, and how can a center address those needs. She said once that's know, then a questionnaire could ask intelligent questions. Mrs. Donaldson said beyond the needs, the question could be asked with the preface of "wouldn't it be great if.....".

Mr. Jones said the school staff needs to be engaged in the effort, especially with needs of the older students. He said the superintendent and principal need to be engaged along with the staff. He said the school department has started down the needs assessment path more formally. He said the older portable classroom should be removed and more space added.

Iris Simon said the school was not as viable the last time the issue was discussed, and now it's more important. A discussion about the school and maintenance of the school facility followed.

Mr. Fenton noted that requirements have changed since the school was built in the 1970s. Mrs. Simon said there seem to be two things at play – school needs and community needs and asked if the town and school need to work together. Nathan said that's why we are here tonight. Mr. Donaldson said the school wants to work with the community.

Bob gave an example of how Portland collaborated on using buildings for both school and community. He said the needs assessment process is huge, and having an approved Comprehensive Plan may help make the town eligible for some assistance. Mr. Jones said it's unlikely the school department will see any construction money available from the State of Maine. He noted that on paper the Town of Hancock looks like a rich town, though its residential income level is not rich. He said anything Lamoine does will likely have to be self-funded.

Bob Pulver said the Conservation Commission years ago explored having the University of Maine study the town, and perhaps that could be a resource as part of its land grant charter. Mr. Fenton said the town needs to look at presently available spaces. He said there are lots of buildings that might be able to help meet needs. Nathan noted that the fire chief expressed his space needs and the need for parking. He said this is going to be an intertwined project. Mr. Jones suggested maybe the present fire station could be re-structured as a community center and a new fire station constructed instead.

Nathan said lack of parking is an issue. A brief discussion followed. Mrs. Simon asked how much property is on the present school/fire station lot. A brief discussion followed. Mrs. Donaldson said there has to be some risk. She said the town owns very little land, and the process should move a little faster. Discussion followed regarding putting needs on the table.

Bob said an evaluation of present assets should be done and let a community center committee do some work, and getting community involvement. Kathleen said all possibilities could be explored, including possibly bartering with present neighbors in the school neighborhood.

Mrs. Thomas said the process should not get bogged down looking at funding sources, but to look at it as an investment in the community where the school is presently an attractor. She said adding to the school with a community center which could be a green building could make the town more attractive in the long term. A brief discussion followed.

Mr. Donaldson said there have been a lot of good ideas discussed. He said a committee could come up with goals for a community center with specific targets and then float out ideas to the community for conversation. He said the school department has felt some need to move forward and they don't want to miss the opportunity to collaborate with the town.

Allison Howaniec said a needs assessment is critical to develop a plan. She said a multi-functional facility might be a good idea. Georgianna Pulver said this is a great time to jump on the coat-tails of the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Fenton said a survey will give the participants some ownership of the project. He said a lot of times projects fail to win approval because they don't start from the bottom up. A brief discussion followed.

Nathan said he agreed with conducting a survey, but the town needs to know what the needs are and why the town and school are talking about it. He said there is money out there and cited the Harold Alfond and Steven King Foundations as possible sources. He also noted that if there is some sort of facility that management and maintenance will have to be coordinated. A brief discussion followed.

Stu asked if there was any possibility about splitting the current school and combining with Hancock and a new middle school complex. A lengthy discussion followed with the general consensus being that the idea likely would not work, and the current Lamoine setup is optimal for education.

Mr. Donaldson said a community center committee could invite input from different groups. He said the committee could come up with a document with suggested uses for a center and whether the community felt they would be worth paying for. He said he would hate to build something and then try to convince people they ought to use it. Mrs. Donaldson noted that outside use of the school complex is not very easy during school hours.

Nathan said the consensus seems to be that yes, Lamoine needs something. He suggested that an exploratory committee to develop a survey and needs assessment might be in order. Kathleen said she would like to target the March town meeting for a survey or presentation. Nathan said a survey on Election Day would be a possible wider target audience.

Paul Howaniec said there should be a big event targeted and suggested that some reward be offered for completing a survey. A brief discussion followed. Mrs. Howaniec suggested finding out how other communities with a community center accomplished their projects.

Nathan said he'd like a list of volunteers. Kathleen suggested three distinct work groups to conduct a needs assessment, develop and conduct a survey, and research other community centers. A brief discussion followed. Kathleen said there should be a regular meeting time for a committee.

Nathan noted that this has been an open ended item for the past year, and it's remained that way because the task feels overwhelming. He said this should be on the next Selectmen's meeting agenda because there needs to be some structure and a committee needs a mission statement. Mr. Donaldson said there should be a timeline so any committee has a concrete idea. Mr. Jones suggested doing it in conjunction with school efforts. Nathan said a mission statement is critical. Stu asked if that would come from the Board of Selectmen. Nathan said yes. He asked if everyone in the room would be comfortable serving on a committee. The Donaldsons indicated they have too many other commitments. Nathan said the Selectmen would try to put something together at their next meeting.

There being no further discussion, the meeting ended at 8:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Stu Marckoon, Adm. Asst. to the Selectmen