

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
TOWN OF MADISON
February 20, 2024
PUBLIC HEARING
MINUTES**

Present – Selectmen Michael A. Mauro, John Arruda and Adam Price; Town Administrator Linda Shackford; members of the public

Mauro opened the public hearing at **4:50 PM**.

Mauro announced the following:

This Public Hearing is being held in accordance with RSA 41:8-c to discuss the proposed change in the size of the board of selectmen to 5 members.

Posted 02/07/2024 at the upper and lower levels of Town Hall, and the Madison and Silver Lake Post Offices. Published in the 02/08/2024 edition of the Conway Daily Sun.

Mauro opened the floor to public discussion.

Joy Gray, stating that she was the petitioner and offered her rationale behind it. She sees challenges with a 3-person board where two people make a quorum and a meeting and a 5-person board removes that restriction; two people with the same opinion always making decision for the Town.

There is a lot of work to be done by the Selectboard and with only 3 members it creates a bottleneck, stated Gray. Gray stated her list of reasons why the Board should be 5 members which included but was not limited to:

- Just two people no longer make a meeting;
- More perspectives and diversity of skill sets allows more to be done;
- Allows for more engagement of the community;
- Encourages Involvement;
- Nearly all other Boards in Town has 5 members;
- This change would not happen until next year so there would be no money associated to stipends for this year.

Michael Veilleux agreed with Gray. Veilleux listed diversity, sharing work, decisions made by too few. This change would be a positive change towards community development. Research of local towns shows that a \$4,000 stipend for each of a 5-member board would stay within the current budget numbers.

Donna Veilleux agrees with her husband's comments.

Marcia McKenna is in favor of a 5-member board.

Nicole Nordlund thinks changing to a 5-member board is a great idea and it is time to make that change.

Ted Slader feels a larger board would allow for the work to be spread out and he hopes there will be people who actively pursue the position.

Price thought that it was a bad idea while on the other side of the table and still does while sitting on this side. A major subject of contention has been transparency and he sees it getting worse with a 5-member board. A 5-member board allows for two members to talk, and then another two members can talk with the outcome of three members eventually locking out the other two. Price has seen the mess that Tamworth is experiencing with their 5-member board.

Mauro re-enforced Price's comments with Gray dismissing the idea because it would take a lot of effort to do that. Price disagreed with Gray and understands that the voters will do what they will do; but please look into how other towns with 5 members operate, it is not pretty.

Bonnie Slader thinks it all depends on how the board would mesh together.

Arruda stated his first year on the Board was in 2000 and since then this has come up and failed; this job is more difficult from this side of the table.

Paul Littlefield feels the town is not big enough for a 5-member board. The other boards in town have that diversity that they offer to the Selectmen through advisement.

Michael Brooks is opposed to bigger government and we cannot be compared to Conway as they have a Town Manager form of government. Brooks, looking at it logistically, can see a cease in the Selectmen's office to exist as there is not enough space in Town Hall. Gray does not think there should be a shared office space anyway, questioning why they would need room at Town Hall.

Nordlund questioned the validity that the other boards go to the Selectmen because she witnesses the Selectmen not taking their advice; there are no 2-1 votes of the Selectmen.

Gray questioned why the Selectmen need office space if they hold no office hours. Price cannot work from home so he come to Town Hall to review a bin full of information on a regular basis. Brooks mentioned that some documents have to be reviewed at Town Hall and cannot be removed.

Bill Dempster asked if any one has researched other towns our size and what kind of board they have. Arruda stated the vast majority of NH towns have three member boards.

Brooks noted that the ballots have been printed and this article is listed as number 3 to be voted on by ballot vote.

Mauro asked for any further discussion or comment. There was none.

Mauro closed the Public Hearing at **5:09 PM**.

Respectfully Submitted,

Linda Shackford,
Town Administrator