

**TOWN OF ROME, MAINE
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MARCH 21, 2016
MINUTES**

Chairman Richard LaBelle called the meeting of the Board of Selectmen to order at 5:15 p.m. in the Selectmen's Office at the Rome Community Center in Rome. Selectmen LaBelle, Archer and Charles were present. A quorum was declared. Also present at all or parts of the meeting were Kimberly Brooks, Andy Cook, Cheryl Cook, Rick Damren, Dick Greenan, Fred Gagnon, Howard Holinger, Terry Hughes, Tammy Lyons, Gary Mahler, Andrew Marble, Ed Pearl, Jr., Ernie Rice, Dan Robbins, John Schlosser, and Lois Stratton.

Charles/LaBelle Motion to accept minutes for March 14, 2016, selectmen's meeting, as amended
LaBelle, Archer, Charles in favor (3-0)

Archer/Charles Motion to accept minutes for March 17, 2016, selectmen's meeting
LaBelle, Archer, Charles in favor (3-0)

Charles/Archer Motion to enter executive session to discuss personnel pursuant to 1 M.R.S.A §405(6)(A)
LaBelle, Archer, Charles in favor (3-0)

Executive session entered at 5:18 p.m.
Executive session adjourned at 6:38 p.m.

Archer/Charles Motion to appoint Alan LaBelle as a member of the Planning Board for a term of two years, to expire April 1, 2018.
Archer, Charles in favor; LaBelle abstain (2-0-1)

Charles/Archer Motion to appoint Barbara Saxton as a member of the Planning Board for a term of three years, to expire April 1, 2019.
LaBelle, Archer, Charles in favor (3-0)

Archer/Charles Motion to appoint Fred Gagnon as a member of the Planning Board for a term of one year, to expire April 1, 2017.
LaBelle, Archer, Charles in favor (3-0)

LaBelle/Archer Motion to appoint Richard Greenan as a member of the Planning Board for a term of three years, to expire April 1, 2019.
LaBelle, Archer, Charles in favor (3-0)

LaBelle/Schultz Motion to appoint J. Jackson Schultz as a member of the Planning Board for a term of two years, to expire April 1, 2018.
LaBelle, Charles in favor; Archer opposed (2-1)

- Charles/LaBelle Motion to appoint Lincoln Nye as an alternate member of the Planning Board for a term of three years, to expire April 1, 2019.
LaBelle, Archer, Charles in favor (3-0)
- LaBelle/Charles Motion to appoint Daniel Robbins as an alternate member of the Planning Board for a term of three years, to expire April 1, 2019.
LaBelle, Archer, Charles in favor (3-0)
- LaBelle/Archer Motion to recess.
LaBelle, Archer, Charles in favor (3-0)

Meeting recessed at 6:44 p.m.

Chairman Richard LaBelle calls the meeting back to order at 6:56 p.m. in joint session with the Belgrade Board of Selectmen. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the current relationship between Belgrade, Rome, and Regional School Unit No. 18.

Belgrade Board of Selectpersons Chairman Ernest Rice extends an invitation to the Rome Board of Selectmen to explore costs and potential cost savings that may result should the two towns remove themselves from the existing relationship with RSU 18. There is a possibility of joining with Belgrade to create a new school unit, or tuitioning students to Belgrade.

Rome Chair LaBelle stated that Rome is open to exploring any options to realize cost savings, but must consider the impact of changes on students. There is no reason to believe that the quality of education would be negatively impacted by any alternative plan.

Belgrade resident Howard Holinger suggests that Belgrade and Rome join together to explore the twenty-two step process of withdrawing from RSU 18. There will be some initial legal costs associated with the process and these costs could be shared if done cooperatively. Mr. Holinger also stated that the local share funding formula could be changed to lessen the disproportionate burden placed on Belgrade and Rome, but a change in the formula is unlikely to gain support in other RSU towns.

Rome Selectman Malcolm Charles questions the current percentage of state funding. The state committed to funding schools at 55 percent; the state committed revenues from the lottery to education. This money has been redirected to the General Fund and other causes.

Belgrade Chairman Rice states that there is a committee in Belgrade that has been exploring costs and cost savings associated with Belgrade withdrawing from the RSU. This committee is scheduled to report its findings to the Board of Selectmen on April 5, 2016 at 6:30 p.m. at the Belgrade Center for All Seasons. Rice invites all to attend.

Selectman LaBelle states he is unsure of the level of support that could be gained from Rome residents. There is a significant question as to how much of a financial burden the people of Rome will tolerate and for how much longer.

Rome's Representative to the RSU 18 Board of Directors, Andy Cook, states that each director should represent the best interests of the town from which one is elected. Increasing the RSU's budget will not increase academic excellence. What drives academic excellence? Cook also suggests to the Belgrade Board of Selectpeople that they contact the two Belgrade representatives to the RSU 18 Board of Directors and express their opinions and encourage the representatives to vote in the best interest of Belgrade.

Chairs Rice and LaBelle thank delegations from both towns and look forward to continued research and cooperation.

Selectman Archer states that the fuel contract should be delayed until there is a better idea of what prices will look like later this summer. She feels this contract should be tabled; Selectman Charles agrees.

Archer/Charles Motion to table consideration of the winter heating fuel contract indefinitely.
Archer, Charles in favor; LaBelle abstain (2-0-1)

Tammy Lyons presents the Board of Selectmen with the percent of Town budget that the school bill accounts for each year. In 1996, the school appropriation accounted for 71% of the total budget; 2000: 61%; 2005: 71%; 2010: 68%; 2015: 61%.

Selectman LaBelle states that there is an understanding that the school appropriation fluctuates; however, enrollment over the same period of time has declined over 20 percent. In addition, unique to Rome and Belgrade, the towns are paying a disproportionate amount per pupil than other member towns. Rome and Belgrade pay approximately \$14,000 per pupil to attend school; other towns in RSU 18 are paying approximately \$9,000 per pupil.

LaBelle/Archer Motion to sign letter to resident Rose Talbot denying the request to reimburse automobile repair expenses.
LaBelle, Archer, Charles in favor (3-0)

LaBelle/Archer Motion to set poll hours for the RSU 18 Budget Referendum for 12:00 noon to 8:00 p.m. on May 24, 2016. Voting to take place at the Rome Community Center.
LaBelle, Archer, Charles in favor (3-0)

LaBelle/Archer Motion to abate 2015 taxes for the Travis Mills Foundation, a tax-exempt organization.
LaBelle, Archer, Charles in favor (3-0)

Archer/Charles The meeting be adjourned.
LaBelle, Archer, Charles in favor (3-0)

Meeting adjourned at 9:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kimberly R. Brooks
Assistant to the Selectman

Richard A. LaBelle, First Selectman

Kelly Archer, Second Selectman

Malcolm Charles, Third Selectman