



Town of Hermon
Public Safety Meeting Room
February 2, 2023
Town Council Meeting
7:00 PM
MINUTES

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Council Meetings will be archived online after the meeting has taken place.

ALL ITEMS ARE SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATE COUNCIL ACTION

I. CALL TO ORDER BY CHAIRPERSON

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Thomas led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance

III. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Richard Cyr, Danielle Haggerty, Ronald Murphy, John Snyder III, Steven Thomas, Derek Wood and G. Stephen Watson

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Town Manager Joshua Berry, Town Clerk Kristen Cushman, 28 residents/guests

At 7:03pm after the consent calendar vote G. Stephen Watson received a call and left the meeting for business.

IV. REVIEW CONSENT CALENDAR: REGULAR BUSINESS, APPOINTMENTS, SIGNATURES, And APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

SIGNATURES. APPROVE:

MINUTES. APPROVE: 01/19/2023

WARRANTS. SIGN: 02/03/2023

RESOLVES. SIGN:

Councilor Murphy moved to approve the Consent Calendar. Councilor Cyr seconded the motion. Motion passes 7-0.



V. NEWS, PRESENTATIONS AND RECOGNITIONS:

VI. PUBLIC ITEMS OR COMMENTS: *(Items Not Already on Agenda)*

Kara Schwartz, Hermon High School Librarian:

I am the Hermon High School librarian, Kara Schwartz. I am writing this so you know who I am, how libraries function, and what we do. I am also here to explain why I think that the Survey conflicts with what the Hermon High School Library is all about.

First, I want to say that I am extremely grateful for the generosity of the town of Hermon. Without you we would not have a thriving library. I became a librarian to share my joy of books, help with research, and to create a space where a safe exchange of ideas can happen. We have over 100 students visit the library daily. I have hosted 3 events for Maine authors over the last 11 years. I love Maine, and I support Maine authors. And it is the student's first amendment right to be able to read the books in the library that their parents think are appropriate for them to read. We also have an opt out process for parents who want greater control over the content their student has access to.

Libraries preserve our Constitution's first amendment rights (Freedom of Speech), and by doing this we help to preserve the democracy of the United States. We house books and information, and upon request we retrieve the information for our patrons. We house information of all kinds for all people. We empower citizens by helping them find credible information for educational purposes. We also help people find entertaining fictional works for pleasure reading. Reading helps people enjoy their lives and thrive, not just survive. Many war torn countries often do not have libraries, as their civilizations are in peril. All the best and brightest of towns and civilizations were known for their libraries.

We house 12,000 books.

How can one find these books? Our catalog is there for all to see. It always has been, and it always should be. A parent can take the Booklooks list if they choose and review what books we have on that list, and they can opt out of every one of them if they choose. Parents can also evaluate books in our library at commonsense.org, a site where books and media are evaluated by parents and educators, and can serve as a guide to helping parents decide what books are right for their children.

The town is growing and will continue to be successful with freedom. Freedom to read or not to read. Please keep in mind that when I was hired 11 years ago I stood at this very podium and discussed how excited I was to be able to direct such a dynamic library that was open to the community and to our students. I purchased and the



librarians before me purchased popular books of all ages to enjoy; from Pre - K to senior citizens because we were serving the communities of Levant, Carmel, and Hermon. We ended the community hours only because of Covid. We hope to embrace the community again!

The survey asks if the town wants to implement standards:

We have them!

The Hermon High School Library supports both research reading and pleasure reading that conforms with the IJJ library policy.

Some of them are:

Criteria for Selection

Instructional and library-media materials selected should:

A. Support achievement of the content standards of the Learning Results

B. Support the goals and objectives of the school system's educational programs

C. Enrich and support the curriculum

E. Foster respect and appreciation for cultural diversity and varied opinions

F. Give comprehensive, accurate and balanced representation to minorities and women in history, science, leadership and the arts and acknowledge the contributions of ethnic, religious and cultural groups to our American heritage

G. Present a balance of opposing sides of controversial issues to enable students to develop a capability for critical analysis

H. Stimulate growth in factual knowledge, literary appreciation, aesthetic values and ethical standards

I. Provide a background of information that will enable students to make intelligent decisions in their daily lives; and

I also follow the Maine Guiding Principles.

A curriculum or library in the state of Maine supports:

A. A Clear and Effective Communicator

B. A Self-Directed and Lifelong Learner (reading creates lifelong learning)

C. A Creative and Practical Problem Solver (someone who can research and know how to research)

D. A Responsible and Involved Citizen (an informed citizen learns about the world.)

E. An Integrative and Informed Thinker

This means I am responsible for offering both a diversity of subjects and a diversity of ideas in the texts in the library. Books should have stories about overcoming challenges, improving problem solving skills, and helping students be aware of Maine, our country,



and the world around them. One of my favorite databases to take students to for research is Gale's Opposing Viewpoints. Where they can make their own minds up after reading about a subject from various news and academic resources. Often when helping students with research; they ask how I feel about the subject. I always tell them it is not about what I feel. My opinions are irrelevant; they need to form their own opinion after they research.

I have also welcomed many different clubs in the library from Knitting and Crochet club to the Young American for Freedom, from Anime Club to FCA - Fellowship of Christian Athletes. The Library is a small democracy in a larger democracy.

Our library has books like Dr. James Lindsay's book Cynical Theories and Dr. Cornel West's Race Matters. This gives the students who are young adults the freedom to read books that represent the rich tapestry and exchange of ideas that is American culture. The library holds information. It does not force information on its users. We have books on various countries, cultures, political views, poetry, art movements, wars and historical events, and a myriad of fiction books that encourage students to read and build stronger reading skills. Pleasure reading has been shown to improve literacy skills.

On a daily basis, I am juggling, helping students with computers, finding books for them, and helping with research projects. We watch the students constantly. And we have an electronic list of students who have lost library privileges due to poor grades or disruptive behavior. I am grateful also that we have student volunteers who help keep the library dust free and straightened. Co-teaching is also something that students respond well to.

The few citizens who have brought forward concerns about the library have identified about 80 titles which is approximately less than 1% of the 12,000 books in our collection. We have various interests in our town and school, and I believe the collection represents all. From Christian fiction and non fiction to Science Fiction; our Fiction section has many genres of books that represent the multifaceted student body of HHS. The library would be empty if everyone restricted the books that offend them. If there is drug use in a book; it is part of a cautionary tale. And the books that have rape (an act of violence) like poetry book Milk and Honey are there because the narrative is about how she learned to love herself again after she was torn down by assault. It is meant to uplift a reader in trauma. Books about addiction are not in the library to glamorize drug use. They are meant to inform students of the perils of drug use and addiction. I have the AA book, and a Christians guide to the 12 Step program. Addiction exists. Not all of our students will read that book, but it is there for those who need it.

Students censor themselves. They tell me, I would like a book on dragons, but I don't like any romance in it. Or I want a book that is about Romance, but I am triggered by



any Zombies or Vampires. Students are even honest with me about their parents' opinions. A student will tell me, I don't want any books with ghosts in it because my parents do not want me reading about the supernatural, and I honor that. I am not here to judge.

I have served this community for 11 years, and only after an LGBTQ book display did this outsider come to town and disrupt Hermon's harmony.

Our display for the LBGTO students of the GSA club was there to help those students feel seen, and when it was taken down, they asked if the bad man in front of the school made me give the books away. Students see the posts and hear the news stories. It is deeply upsetting to them that someone is saying horrible words or lies about their respected librarian. For the sake of the students, our hardworking teachers and librarians and admins, for the sake of our moms, dads, grandmas, and grandpas, and all Hermon citizens, let's end this madness. This outsider stirred us all up with lies, hyperbole, name calling and misinformation. Many staff members, students, and parents have been afraid to speak out because they too would be harassed if they do.

Libraries are constantly being evaluated by the librarians who work in them. 12,000 books. Roughly 4,000 I picked, and about 8,000 were here before me. I have weeded out antiquated, outdated, and superfluous information and probably weeded about 1,000 books. The survey implies that a. We do not have standards. And B. It implies that we have pornography in the library.

Imagine the question on the survey stating this: "Do you want standards applied to the grizzly bear roaming in the library?" It implies we have grizzly bears and no standards regarding their behavior! This insinuates someone is going to get hurt. But the truth is we have standards, and books are not bears. Books don't kill. The wording of the survey could create a larger rift in this town. When Town Council Members, School Committee Members, and the public at large validate this outsiders hate, give audience to his harassment, it fosters extremism that jeopardizes all of our safety.

A book is silent. The reader engages on that journey alone. America is about a free exchange of ideas. We may not agree on all the ideas, but we choose to live in a free society. America is still free. God Bless America.

Kim Nichols, Hermon:

- Has a background in education and is a volunteer at all three schools.
- Staff at all three schools are wonderful people and we are blessed.
- Mission statement speaks about respecting individual diversity and promoting a sense of family.



Megan Leonard-Gagnon, Hermon:

- Background in surveys and polls.
- Asked multiple questions and thoughts on surveys.

Chad Leonard, Hermon:

- Hermon School is a department of the town and not an RSU
- School attorney fees listed.

Chris Gagnon, Hermon:

- Town does not have the authority to overturn the school's decision with the survey. Why would we not go through the appropriate avenue at the state level?

Ben Nichols, Hermon:

As a resident, tax-payer, member of the LGBTQ+ community, and somewhat recent graduate of this town's school system, I wanted to highlight the concern of members of the LGBTQ+ community (and its allies) regarding the discussion of removing library materials, many of which provide general, non-sexual representation to an underrepresented minority of youth who has historically (and currently in many parts of the US) been swept under the rug and politized for simply existing.

The question proposed for the survey misleads parents about the concern regarding these "content standards" (something that is vague and not defined in the survey) for minority youth and community members.

This is not an objective survey and does not provide parents with adequate information to understand what they are answering to and how answering could impact the non-sexual LGBTQ+ representational content in the schools. By waiting until directly after public comment on the topic to release the specifics including

1. The question itself
2. The updated & increased cost estimate
3. Whether the "content standards" parents are being surveyed on are actually defined in the survey or if it would be left vague providing the opportunity to later define them and claim support even if a citizen would have changed their answer after being provided with the specific standards



4. **Who decided the question’s wording and whether there would be additional questions or information included**

The chair refused citizens the opportunity to voice their concerns with the bias included in the survey’s details and prevented us from exercising our first amendment right before the item went to vote. Citizens have a right to discuss and express concerns with items being proposed and funded by the town in which we live and pay taxes and providing specific details strategically after public comment prevents this.

Kimberly Stewart, Hermon:

- **Sent emails to council members regarding the survey and wondering when they will be answered?**

Additional comments from Shawn McBreairty, Hampden, Jenna Gerry, Terri Hamm-Morris.

Please see the complete video at [Town Council Meetings | Hermon \(hermonmaine.gov\)](https://www.hermonmaine.gov) for all public comments.

VII. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS:

IX. SCHEDULED AGENDA ITEMS:

A. OLD BUSINESS:

B. NEW BUSINESS:

R22-23-27 Consider appointing Scott Perkins to be an “authorized person” to apply for a *USDA Rural Business Development Grant* and the *Strategic Economic and Community Development Grant (SECD)* on behalf of the Penobscot Snowmobile Club

Councilor Murphy moved to approve R22-23-27. Councilor Haggerty seconded the motion. The motion was accepted. Motion passes 6-0.

R22-23-28 Consider accepting the FY24 Capital Improvement Plan

Councilor Cyr moved to table R22-23-28 until 3/2/2023. Councilor Murphy seconded the motion. The motion was accepted. Motion passes 6-0.



C. WORKSHOPS:

MainePERS – Fire Department

Town Manager Berry gave an overview for the addition of MainePERS for the Fire Department. To implement this plan would make Hermon competitive with surrounding towns. This will go for a Special Town Meeting in March or April.

D. OTHER ITEMS: (from Table Package)

X. APPOINTMENTS:

XI. MANAGER STATUS REPORT:

- **Manager Berry will bring a capital improvement for insulating the Public Works garage. Approximately \$17,000.00.**
- **Town Office will be closed on 2/16/2023 from 11:30 to 2:00 for training for the Clerks.**
- **Special Olympics will be held at Hermon Mountain on February 13 and 14. The Fire Department will be attending as they have for to hand out awards. Mr. Berry has encouraged staff to volunteer at upcoming events.**

XII. FINAL PUBLIC ITEMS OR COMMENT: (Items Not Already on Agenda)

XIII. COUNCIL ITEMS:

Danielle Haggerty: Answers to questions regarding the survey.

- **Who is participating? Josh Berry and Micah Grant. Mr. Grant opted out in participation and has not delegated or sent anybody to contribute to the process.**
- **Two citizens reached out to assist in the process: Brian Veneziano and Rhonda Waskiewicz. Rhonda's background is in research design in methodology, a professor, a dean of students in education and health.**
- **Capped amount to spend on the project is \$6,000.00.**
- **Survey will have an introduction, demographic, and a one question survey.**
- **One time survey – a snapshot in time.**
- **Not intended to be a scientific evaluation but intended to explore the of the community desires and establish age-appropriate standards for sexual content within the school libraries.**
- **Survey question will not be released in advance.**
- **Third party – will not be used as with past practice.**



Richard Cyr: Mr. Cyr wanted the audience to know he has a background in master's in art for teaching and three certificates in life science, physical science and mathematics.

XIV. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Enter into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing a legal matter regarding Hermon Volunteer Rescue Squad (HVRS) per 1 M.R.S.A. 405 (6)(E).

Councilor Murphy moved to enter Executive Session to a discuss a legal matter regarding Hermon Volunteer Rescue Service (HVRS) per 1 M.S.R.A. § 405(6)(E). Councilor Cyr seconded the motion. The motion was accepted. Motion passes 6-0. Councilor Watson was absent.

The motion carries. Executive Session started at 8:06 p.m.

Councilor Snyder made a motion to end Executive Session at 9:25pm. Councilor Cyr seconded the motion. With no objection the Executive Session was adjourned at 9:25 pm.

XV. ADJOURNMENT:

Councilor Murphy moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 PM. Councilor Snyder seconded. With no objection the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

**Kristen Cushman
Town Clerk**

Explanatory note #1: All items in the CONSENT CALENDAR are considered routine and are proposed for adoption by the Town Council with one motion without DISCUSSION or deliberation. If DISCUSSION on any item is desired, any member of the Council or public may request the removal of an item for it to be placed in the regular agenda prior to the motion to approve the Consent Agenda.
Explanatory Note #2: In the interest of effect decision-making: At 10:00 p.m., the Chairman shall poll the Council and Town Manager to identify remaining items which shall be carried forward to the next Regular Meeting.
Explanatory Note #3: A Councilor who feels the need for the Council excusing his/her absence will make the request to the Town Manager or the Town Clerk prior to the meeting.