



Town of Hermon
Public Safety Meeting Room
April 13, 2023
Town Council Meeting
7:00 PM
MINUTES

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ALL ITEMS ARE SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATE COUNCIL ACTION

I. CALL TO ORDER BY CHAIRPERSON

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Councilor Wood led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance

III. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Richard Cyr, Ronald Murphy, John Snyder III, G. Stephen Watson and Derek Wood
Members Absent: Danielle Haggerty & Steven Thomas - Excused
Others Present: Town Manager Joshua Berry, Town Clerk Kristen Cushman and 32 residents/guests

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

SIGNATURES. APPROVE:
MINUTES. APPROVE 03/30/2023
WARRANTS. SIGN: 04/14/2023
RESOLVES. SIGN:

Councilor Wood moved to approve the Consent Calendar as presented. Councilor Snyder seconded the motion. Motion passes 5-0.

V. NEWS, PRESENTATIONS AND RECOGNITIONS:



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

Adam Leach, Hermon: I am an instructor of Research Design in the Behavioral Sciences and I am a Hermon Resident. I am here tonight to speak regarding the severely flawed survey of Hermon citizens, and I thank you for the opportunity to enter my comments into the public record.

1. **The survey does not contain an option that reflects my opinion on the issue, which is why I have chosen to NOT answer the survey. A better way to word the survey would have been; "Do you support the Hermon School Department's current practice for vetting the age-appropriateness of books? Yes or No?" That would have allowed me to provide a clear answer to a clear question, which represents the current reality of the issue.**
2. **The poorly written and biased nature of the survey will cause speculative conclusions, and therefore we will be no further ahead in this debate than we are right now.**
3. **By asking respondents if they want to "establish" age-appropriate standards makes the assumption that safeguards for age-appropriateness don't currently exist. Which is a false assumption.**
4. **The survey is confounded by the letter that accompanied the response card, because it contains several false and misleading statements that will bias answers. To include:**
 - **It asks for thoughts, but does not provide a space for them**
 - **The statement that "The Hermon School Department does not use age-appropriate standards" fails to equate policy and practice with standards. To maintain a sincere intent to collect, and not create public opinion, this statement should not have been in the letter.**
 - **Using the standards recommended to the school committee by citizens, WOULD in fact ban books from the library and it would restrict access to information and ideas. So the statement that it "is not the intent of standards to ban books" is false.**
 - **The statement that "The School Committee is not in favor of establishing age-appropriate standards" is misleading. A policy and practice already exists. A policy in which trained and experienced professionals are trusted to examine material, taking into consideration context and intent. Additionally, parental rights "to read or not to read" are currently protected.**
5. **Lastly, there is no explanation of how the results are to be used. The poorly written and biased nature of this survey leads me to believe that its author and supporters on this Council distributed it to either intentionally or unintentionally deceive the public. The members of this Council are too intelligent for it to be unintentional, so I stand here tonight wondering about your intent. I can make an assumption, but in the interest of decorum, I will keep that to myself. I would however be happy to discuss it with any of you at another time.**



Lee Cliff, Hermon: Went over reasons he asked for Chair Thomas resignation two meetings ago.

Tony Reynolds, Hermon: You set up a committee to work on the survey but did not have the committee come back with their work so the council could okay it and send it out to the public. Asked the council to check where the surveys were mailed. Surveys could have been mailed out of town.

Kyle Daigle, Hermon: Sad to hear the contract with Hermon Rescue has ended because I believe in the community aspect to have an ambulance.

Deb Farnham, Hermon: Handed in survey. Went over the IJJ policy that will walk a resident through the process to challenge a book.

Code: IJJ-E
Approved: 4/08/02
Amended: 04/01/19

Hermon School Department

CHALLENGE OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS FORM

Type of Material: Book Magazine/Periodical Film Recording
 Software Other (Please specify) _____

Author (if known) _____

Title _____

Publisher (if known) _____

Person making complaint: _____

Email address: _____

Telephone _____ Street _____ Address _____ Town _____

Complainant represents: Him/herself
 Organization _____
 Other group _____

1. To what portion of the material do you object? (Please be specific, cite pages, scenes, etc.)

2. What do you feel might be the negative result of reading/viewing/hearing this material?

3. For what age group would you recommend this material? _____
4. Is there anything good about this material? _____
5. Did you read/view/hear all of the material? If not, what parts did you read/view/ hear?



IJJ-E CHALLENGE OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS FORM
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6. Are you aware of the professional reviews/judgment of this material? _____

7. What do you believe is the theme and/or intention of this material? _____

8. What would you like the school to do about this material?

- ___ Do not assign it to my child.
- ___ Do not assign it to any students.
- ___ Withdraw it from the library and/or instructional program.
- ___ Refer it to the Educational Media Review Committee for evaluation.

9. In its place, what material would you recommend? _____

Signature of Complainant _____

Date _____

Andrew Farnham, Hermon: Concerned people can put their return address on the front of the survey card. After the information is compiled from the cards what is going to be done with the cards?

Ben Nichols, Hermon: I wanted to take a few minutes to highlight the concerns myself and other community members hold in relation to the recent survey that was sent out. While I strongly oppose the overstep in authority the existence of the survey alone demonstrates, I was further disappointed to receive a document with spelling issues, personal opinions, and leading questions that undermine every well-documented aspect of data collection best practices.

What began as an egregious overstep in authority ended as a spectacular display of incompetence and a waste of more than \$5000 taxpayer dollars. Below are some key issues with the survey that include:

- **The presence of spelling mistakes**
- **No inclusion or reference to current IJJ policy for citizens to read**



- No inclusion or reference to the proposed “standards” pamphlet passed out by the group who requested and helped create the survey
- The return name and address area directly on the survey despite claims that it is anonymous
 - These may be able to be FOIA’d allowing citizens’ responses to be leaked and tied back to them opening the door for defamation, slander, or general retaliation
- Extra copies of the survey were sent to households addressed to outdated inactive voters, allowing people to vote multiple times.
- Personal opinions were stated on behalf of the council without any factual information provided
 - An example being: “The School Committee is not in favor of establishing age-appropriate standards”
 - Speaking for the School Committee as a municipal authority figure is an abuse of power and borders on defamation
 - Many people do support age appropriate standards but were against modifying IJJ due to concerns of bias and subjectivity as exemplified in the “Hermon School District Library Sexual Content Report” (produced by the group who requested and helped create the survey)
- Vague and subjective language in the proposed standards could be used to remove LGBTQ+ material and books like “I Have a Dream” by MLK Jr. Some of this rhetoric includes:
 - “Alternate Sexualities”
 - “Gender Ideologies”
 - “Controversial racial commentary”
- Additionally, the proposed standards behind the survey exclusively used “Booklooks” as a source which was founded in 2022 (last year) as an LLC in Florida spearheaded by the group “Moms for Liberty” who have both a political agenda and affiliation and are not an objective book reviewer as suggested, rather run by volunteers which places its credibility on par with Wikipedia.

This is not Hermon, this animosity is the result of an outside group who makes financial and political profit off chaos and division within our town which drives clicks, views, and shares and ultimately equates to ad revenue. We are being manipulated to fight amongst ourselves to the detriment of those we’re supposedly here to serve and this survey is a prime example of this.

I firmly believe many of the people who support this survey and pamphlet have the best of intentions and have no interest in creating a “don’t say gay policy” but as for the current set of documents I’ve seen come out of this initiative, I can confidently say it walks like a duck and certainly quacks like one too.



VII. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS:

IX. SCHEDULED AGENDA ITEMS:

A. OLD BUSINESS:

B. NEW BUSINESS:

- R22-23-33** Consider scheduling and setting a
- Special Town Meeting for School Budget warrant articles on May 15, 2023
 - Secret Ballot Election on June 13, 2023
 - Annual Town Meeting on June 15, 2023

Councilor Snyder moved to approve R22-23-33. Councilor Wood seconded the motion. The motion was accepted. Motion passes 5-0.

- FR22-23-15** Consider awarding contract for roadside mowing for FY23 - FY25

Councilor Snyder moved to approve FR22-23-15 for Municipal Mowing Inc. Councilor Watson seconded the motion. The motion was accepted. Motion passes 5-0.

- FR22-23-16** Consider moving money from Transfer Station reserve to transfer station appropriation to purchase a CONEX box from Maine Trailer for \$3050.00 for the new Specialty Recycling program.
Reserve balance \$5,400.00.

Councilor Watson moved to approve FR22-23-16. Councilor Snyder seconded the motion. The motion was accepted. Motion passes 5-0.

- FR22-23-17** Consider awarding contract for Odlin Road Sewer Extension Project. Funded from Economic Development project account with a balance of \$558,681.46.

Councilor Watson moved to approve FR22-23-17 for Showcase Excavation in an amount not to exceed \$39,450. Councilor Snyder seconded the motion. The motion was accepted. Motion passes 5-0.



C. WORKSHOPS:

- Solar Ordinance – Jesse
- Mobile Vending Ordinance – Jesse
- Recreation Reserve account – Josh
- Municipal Budget – Josh

The above items were discussed by the Council.

D. OTHER ITEMS: (from Table Package)

X. APPOINTMENTS:

XI. MANAGER STATUS REPORT:

- Town Office is closed April 17th for Patriots' Day
- School vacation next week
- School flashing speed zone signs are working well
- Mrs. Williams sent an email thanking fire and Officer Sheehan for the ice cream social

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

Josh Henderson, Hermon: Does school security fall under the town or solely under the school's budget?

Ronald Murphy: The school's budget

Kim Nichols, Hermon: Thank the councilors for the Coffee and Conversation gathering. Advocated for the Hermon Connection to continue to be in paper format for the residents.

Christopher Gray, Hermon: It's important to focus on the things that matter, and if we are going to keep increasing the school budget \$400,000 plus per year we are going to be facing a fiscal cliff shortly. The mill rate will need to increase.

Chad Leonard, Hermon: Read from a book called "Me & Earl and the Dying Girl" in chapter 6 page 42.

Regina Leonard, Hermon: Why can't we come together and create a solution to the books in the library?



XIII. COUNCIL ITEMS: None

XIV. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

XV. ADJOURNMENT:

Councilor Cyr made a motion to end the council meeting at 8:14 pm. Councilor Wood seconded. With no objection the council meeting was adjourned at 8:14 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.