

MEETING OF THE WESTMINSTER SELECTBOARD

Wednesday, April 28, 2021

Meeting @ Westminster Fire Station and by Zoom Conferencing

Members Present: Kevin Hughes (Chair), Craig Allen (Vice Chair), Susan Harlow (Clerk), Toby Young and Jason Perry

Others Present in Person: Russell Hodgkins, Town Manager/Zoning Administrator, Chuck Lawrence – Road Foreman, Russell Lazarek, Yvette Hendler, and FACTV.

Present by Zoom: Nate Stoddard, Cynthia Stoddard, Millie Barry – Recording Clerk, Robert Wickberg, and others who did not speak to be recognized.

1. **Call to Order:** Kevin Hughes, Chair of the Board called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.
2. **Adjustments to Agenda:** None
3. **Acceptance of Minutes:** April 14, 2021 – Craig Allen motioned to accept the minutes of April 14, 2021 as presented. Susan Harlow seconded, motion carried.
4. **Communications and Public Comments:** None
5. **Unfinished Business - Discussion/Action -**
 - A. Town Meeting Articles – The Town Manager (TM) explained that he presented the Board members with a draft of their Articles to be read at Town Meeting. The drafts were in their packets with facts that could help in explaining the Article to the public at Town Meeting, on May 15, 2021. He continued, if more information is needed, please contact him as soon as possible and he would add what was wanted.
 - B. Selectboard Appointment (Interim School Board) - update if any – Kevin Hughes read a series of emails from Larry Slason which explained the next steps in the complicated sequences needed to make sure that the Articles that were Warned for Town Meeting could still be implemented. A meeting between the Secretary of State and the working group has not been set.
 - C. Website Renewal - update if any - Russ Lazarek showed the Board the new webpage that he has been working on for the Town. He went through some of the improvements that the committee has installed into the new site in hopes of making it easier for the public to find information with a single click from the front page. He explained that this feature sets apart this new site from the old. After showing some of the new features he opened the conversation to the Board members for questions. Jason Perry asked who is responsible for updating the information for each department? Russ L. answered with the Department heads will need to update their information so that the Town employees are not trying to keep up with those changes. Craig Allen asked Russ L. if our “Health & Welfare” services (appropriations) will be listed and have either quick links or contact numbers listed on the new site. Russ L. responded that this was being investigated. Yvette Hendler told the Board that she was on the committee and is requesting photos or images for the new website. Please forward them to her if you want them displayed. Chuck Lawrence told the Board that he envisioned a Facebook Page for just the Highway department where daily closures, storm related problems, and road closures due to mud could be posted for the public to get updated at a glance. Susan Harlow told Chuck that the Town has just opened a Facebook page and this is a good idea to add this type of information this page. When the questions were all asked and answers given, Susan Harlow made a motion to approve the new website and start

the process of making this the only Town site. Craig Allen seconded the motion and it passed 5-0 in favor of making this site the official Town website.

- D. Collaborative Finance Processing Manual - update if any - Mr. Hodgkins noted that in the packet was a proposal from NEMRC, signed by Cynthia Stoddard, to enhance the service to the Treasurer for monthly financial tasks. Mr. Hodgkins continued with the recommendation to wait for Paul Harlow to weigh in on the scope of service suggested before a formal vote of approval be asked for. This proposal will add possible costs to the already proposed budget. The Chair, after a brief discussion, tabled the item until Paul Harlow has a chance to agree to the services recommended. Cynthia Stoddard added that this was an estimation of time and service possibly needed and that some of the items listed were already in the time spent monthly but did not want to forget the particular task. The Chair thanked Cynthia and said again we will wait for Paul Harlow to look at the information and respond to the proposal.
- E. Town Land off Pine Banks Road – The TM told the meeting that legal counsel has told the Town that the offer for the purchase must be posted for 30 days and then the closing can happen. The closing is scheduled for late May.
- F. Town land off Davidson Hill - update - Mr. Hodgkins noted three parties were interested in purchasing the land. Legal counsel has given the Town two options to sell the land. The first one is an auction format just like the regular annual tax sale. People would come to a designated place posted in the paper and on the town notice boards and Larry Slason would act like an auctioneer and sell the parcel to the highest bid. The other method would be a flat sale which would be a sealed bid opened and read out loud in a place posted appropriately and the highest bid gets the land. The Chair asked the TM his recommendation and he responded that the Town would possibly get more money to cover their expenses if it was a bidding auction. Toby moved that the Town sell the land off of Davison Hill with the auction type format. Susan Harlow seconded the motion and it passed 5-0.
- G. 3rd Quarter Financials – Questions – The TM went through the questions that were presented about the report at the last meeting and answered each item. Craig Allen brought up that there are two items in the report that are hard to figure out at a glance and would like the report to remove the sub items and just give a total. This would be easier for a person without working knowledge of the item to justify the costs. The items in questions are the Repair & Parts line under Gas, Fuel & Oil and the Town Garage Wage line. The TM told Craig that he can hide the extra items and print the report for him with just the totals.

6. New Business - Discussion/Action -

- A. Hartley Hill Road – Private Section (Quick Claim Deed) – Robert Wickberg - Robert Wickberg explained that he has done extensive research in the ownership of the private road section of Hartley Hill. He told the Board that the caretaker of the Bonds property, Steve Piluski, is ruling the road like he owns it and with the research he has done it is very unclear who can claim the ownership of this section. Robert went into detail of his findings and wants the Town to “Quick Claim” the road in the Town of Westminster’s name. Mr. Wickberg told the Board that a quick claim deed only states that if I own the land then I am willing to give it to the Town. He explained that Mr. Cersosimo (the past Owner) could do this, and this would place the burden of proof on Mr. Bonds who presently claims ownership. Craig Allen stated that this item has been placed on the Selectboard’s plate many times and was never resolved because the proof of Ownership could not be substantiated. Craig continued that a lot of money has been spent in past years by the taxpayers to prove ownership and failed. Robert Wickberg told the Board that he would pay for the legal fees to draw up the Quick Claim Deed if the Town will sign it and assume ownership. After a few questions and a little more

discussion, the Chair declared that more research needs to be done and they would revisit this item when information can be gathered, possibly at the next meeting in two weeks. Mr. Wickberg agreed to this and the subject was closed for now.

- B. American Rescue Plan Act – Local Allocations – The TM explained that no further information has been given to the Town on this subject, but that he has heard that a portion of this money will be available for Towns in June. VLCT & WRC will both be involved giving out information on how to spend this allocation and for what purpose. The Chair tabled the item until more information is available.
- C. Delinquent Tax forgiveness (under \$10) – The TM told the Board, that in the past years, the Board forgave tax payments under \$10. Typically, these are interest amounts that have been applied just before a payment is received. Susan Harlow made a motion to forgive all of the amounts under \$10 for taxes owed as recommended by the TM. Craig Allen seconded the motion and the motion passed 5-0. Craig Allen made a comment that the Town will only be out a little over \$40.00. The TM agreed.
- D. Re- Appoint DVFiber Representative & Alternates – The TM told the Board that Lisa Colby was the present Representative to the Deerfield Valley Communication Union District and that Mike Oster and Russell Hodgkins are the alternates. He continued with the fact that both (Lisa & Mike) are very active in this District for the Town and would like to continue their positions. Susan Harlow moved to keep the Representative and Alternates the same. Craig Allen seconded, and the motion passed with the Chair signing the DVFiber paperwork.
- E. Executive Session – Personnel Matter – Craig Allen made a motion to go in to Executive Session after # 10 Date of Next Meeting for a personnel matter. Susan Harlow seconded the motion and the motion carried.

7. Manager's Report:

- 1. Damage to Town Forest and East Putney Brook Road - Mr. Hodgkins said due to damage being done in the Town Forest that he purchased signs to be placed prohibiting ATV use in the forest. He mentioned this at the last meeting and told the Board that another meeting will be taking place on May 7th on-site with State authorities.
 - 2. Delinquent tax update – Only 13 properties were sent to legal counsel from the nearly 40 that were reported previously for the first steps of a tax sale. The TM thinks that 5 or so will pay before the proceedings leaving a possible 8 for the July tax sale.
 - 3. Planning Commission had a successful mapping event on April 26th. If you missed the event, you may either come to the Town Hall or the Westminster West School and map your favorite features of your Town, Westminster, Vermont. Russ Lazarek told the meeting that you can also go online and participate in this mapping. This opportunity will only last two weeks so don't hesitate in being heard about your interests.
- 8. Boards and Commissions:** Mr. Hodgkins said that in the Board's packet was a letter from Bobbi Kilburn resigning her position as the Windham Regional Commissions representative. Toby Young made a motion to accept Bobbi's resignation with regret and expressed thanks for her service. Susan Harlow seconded the motion and the motion passed.
- 9. Other Business:** The TM explained that in the Board's packet was cemetery deed which needed to be approved by the board. Kevin Hughes asked why there was no name on the deed. The TM had no answer for this because its generated by the Clerk's office but he will look into it and have it ready for a signature asap. Kevin asked the Board if they felt comfortable approving this request without seeing a name. Toby Young made a motion to have the Chair sign the deed as soon as possible. Craig Allen seconded the motion and it passed 5-0. The TM is to follow up with the clerks to get a name on the document.

10. Date of Next Meeting: May 12, 2021 - The meeting will be held in person for the Board members and anyone wanting to join and Zoom conferencing available for those who want to attend remotely. The meeting is proposed to be at the Westminster Fire Station (inside) if there is no conflict with the Fire Department. Zoom meeting information will be available on FACTV website, the Town website or by contacting the Westminster Town office.

The Board went into Executive Session at 8:05 PM. Upon coming out of the Executive Session at 8:31 PM, the Chair declared that no further action was needed before adjournment.

11. Adjournment: Susan Harlow motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:33 PM. Toby Young seconded the motion and it passed.

Clerk

Date