

MEETING OF THE WESTMINSTER SELECTBOARD

Wednesday, June 23, 2021

Meeting held at Westminster Town Hall and by Zoom Conferencing available through FACTV

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

Others Present: Russell Hodgkins, Town Manager/Zoning Administrator, Church Lawrence (Road Foreman), Russell Lazarek, Yvette Hendler, Robert Wickberg, Jason Benson, Paul Harlow (Treasurer), Peter Romano, Patsy Mayo, Tim Breer, Fran Renaud, Alice Caggiano, Pauline O'Brien (Town Clerk) others present in person and by Zoom conferencing not identified

1. **Call to Order:** Kevin Hughes, Chairperson of the board called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.
2. **Adjustments to Agenda:** None
3. **Acceptance of Minutes:** June 9, 2021 - Craig Allen motioned to accept the minutes as printed, Toby Young seconded the motion, motion carried
4. **Communications and Public Comments:** Peter Romano stated as 45 year resident of the Forest Road he was not notified Forest Road was on the agenda of the Select Board meeting.
5. **Unfinished Business (Discussion/Action)**
 - A. American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Covid local recovery funds update - Mr. Hodgkins said there was no new information available. VLCT (Vermont League of Cities and Towns) had relayed information the Town would receive notification of the funds and half of the funds by 7/1/2021. The Town is registered.
 - B. Town Hall Office Hours: Information included in packet. Pauline O'Brien said since October 2020 when she became town clerk, there had been one request for extended hours. Extending her hours would include the general Town Hall hours so residents could pay taxes, buy dog licenses, trash tags etc. She said the Town Hall is open extended hours by appointment and she doesn't believe there is a need for extended time. Mr. Hodgkins said extending hours would involve his presence in the office as well. He often begins his work day at 6:00 a.m. in meetings at the Town garage and being available for resident inquiries/problems. Robert Wickberg said many residents work the hours the Town offices are open and thinks people do not want to ask for an appointment and the present hours were not convenient. His suggestion was to try opening one hour later one day a week to extend the hours in the afternoon.
 - C. Website Renewal - update if any - Russell Lazarek said he continued to struggle to get content from Westminster committees, organizations and boards. He plans to publish the website in the next two weeks.
 - D. Collaborative Finance Processing Manual - update if any - Mr. Hodgkins said the manual had not changed in the past two weeks. Paul Harlow said he had listed in detail, all treasurer responsibilities and day to day duties. Mr. Harlow requested NEMRC (New England Municipal Resource Center) be contracted to take care of the monthly statements. At present, NEMRC is budgeted for nine hours each month for financial assistance to the Town.
 - Assistant Treasurer - Mr. Harlow requested the board appoint Darlene Kelly as assistant treasurer. The assistant treasurer hours would be sporadic, when Mr. Harlow is not available. Craig Allen motioned to appoint Darlene Kelly as assistant treasurer. Toby Young seconded motion, motion carried.

- E. Hartley Hill Road - private section update - Mr. Wickberg has provided additional documents to Samantha Snow, an attorney in Larry Slason's office now involved in the Hartley Hill project.
- F. End of Year Financials - Information included in packet -
 - Employee Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) FY 2022 - Toby Young motioned to adopt a cost of living employee increase of 2.5 percent for FY2022. Craig Allen seconded motion, motion carried.
 - Backhoe Replacement versus Repair - Information included in packet - The Board and participants at the meeting discussed at length, replacement or repair of the present backhoe. No new information is available regarding repair, if the machine can be repaired or cost of repair. Options discussed were to buy a used 2015 Caterpillar 430F2ST with 341 present hours. This backhoe includes 12 foot snow pusher. The purchase price of \$90,000.00 less \$24,000.00 in trade for present machine is \$70,300.00. This price includes a 4 year, 2000 hour power train and hydraulic warranty at \$2,900.00 and \$1,400.00 delivery fee. Mr. Hodgkins said emergency funds of \$150,000.00 were available for a one time emergency expenditure. Alice Caggiano said she was hesitant to think an equipment failure constituted an emergency. She felt an emergency would impact more residents in the community. Katie Dearborn said it was at the Select Boards purview to use the money, believing replacement was an emergency. Kevin Hughes stated at present the machine was in distress. The machine's life could not be extended to the anticipated replacement date without considerable maintenance expense impacting its re-sale value. The machine could also be a hazard to residents or those operating it. The Board also discussed the highway department having its own separate budget voted each year at Town meeting. Mr. Lawrence stated the grant money received would be placed in the general fund (not highway budget) though this money was received for work/repair on Town roads and highways. Craig said the road crew was able to do more extensive road work, culverts etc. using Town equipment where in the past, this work was contracted out. The decision for the highway department to have its own budget is one Town residents will decide at Town meeting time. Jason Perry stated the 2015 Caterpillar was six years old. He felt the purchase of a new 2021 Case 580SN WT Wide Track Loader Backhoe for \$118,150.00 less trade of \$25,000.00 leaving balance of \$93,150.00 was better choice. This machine has an anticipated delivery date of July 2021. Craig Allen motioned to authorize the Town Manager to purchase the 2021 Case wide track loader backhoe for \$93,500.00 (trade included) using emergency fund monies. Jason Perry seconded the motion, motion carried. Mr. Hodgkins said an extended warranty can be purchased with money available in the equipment fund.
- 6. New Business (Discussion/Action) -
 - A. Forest Road - No parking ordinance - Tim Breer a resident on Forest Rd. said there had been a continuous parking problem on Forest Road since 2005. At times parking on the road to access the Twin Falls swimming area and take pictures was better. At present, unwanted activity, blocking resident's driveway and threatening behavior toward adjacent landowners had again become a major problem. Private property and no parking (on both sides of the road) by order of the sheriff's department signage had not alleviated parking problems. During the summer months, activity at the swimming area and on the road had become similar to 'spring break'. Residents stated the VT State Police had been of no assistance. The

sheriff department was patrolling on a daily basis but their patrol efforts were sporadic and not during high traffic or unwanted activity time. Residents did note the extra effort made by trooper Jessica Fellows from the sheriff's department. David from the Basin Farm said sheriffs, when called stated the present ordinance was not enforceable so possibly more detail in the ordinance was required. Mr. Hodgkins said in the past, arrests had been made using Town placed camera surveillance. He added he had made many calls to the sheriff requesting more patrol on the road. Mr. Lawrence believes a no parking ordinance on both sides of the road as well as blocking the pull-offs will help with many of the problems. He also said blocking the pull-offs with debris such as branches and logs was dangerous and the road crew will remove any debris placed by residents. He will meet in person with residents after Wednesday, June 30th to discuss blocking some of the turn-off areas. Mr. Hughes asked residents if they believed Mr. Lawrence's suggestions would alleviate or eradicate the problem. Mr. Mayo said he believed this would help. Kevin Hughes requested an action memo for the sheriff's department to be more present patrolling the area.

- B. Dog Licensing - annual notification - information included in the packet - Mr. Hodgkins said there were 175 known dogs previously registered that are not now registered. Beginning 7/2/2021 Westminster will have access to an animal control officer through the Windham County Sheriff Dept. Toby Young asked if it was possible to extend the registration time to every other year or every three years (when rabies vaccinations are due) instead of the present 1 year to register. This item will be included in the agenda for the next meeting.

7. Manager's Report:

- 1.) Davidson Hill Land - Property auction will be June 29, 2021 at 10 a.m. at the Town Hall
- 2.) School Vote - 3 members to be elected to new board - Voting will be 6/30/2021 at Town Hall from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.
- 3.) Pine Banks Road property is sold
- 4.) This year's audit is July 28 through July 30.
- 5.) Reminder - Town offices will be closed on July 2 and July 5 for the holiday

8. Boards and Commissions: Kevin Hughes thanked Russell Lazarek and John Jones for their willingness to be representatives to the Windham Regional Commission.

9. Other Business - Information included in packet - Mr. Hodgkins said the fire department is asking for input regarding a problem seeking a grant for the hold harmless funding. The Prudential Committee is scheduled to meet with the board on July 28, 2021. Mr. Hodgkins will have more information available about this issue at the next meeting.

In another matter, Russ Lazarek asked if the meeting room could be re-arranged for the next meeting so attendees could hear and see those speaking.

In another matter, Jason Perry asked how trash tags were issued. Mr. Hodgkins said tags were not mailed out of the immediate driving distance, mailing to parts of VT, NH, MA (some to NY). The town does not mail tags to Boston, MA. They are issued 1 set per parcel.

10. Date of Next Meeting: July 14, 2021

11. Adjournment: Toby Young motioned to adjourn, Jason Perry seconded, meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Clerk

Minutes composed by Millie Barry 6/24/2021

Date

