

MEETING OF THE WESTMINSTER SELECTBOARD

Wednesday, July 14, 2021

Westminster, VT Town Hall and by Zoom Conferencing

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

Others Present: Russell Hodgkins (Town Manager/Zoning Administrator) Chuck Lawrence (Road Foreman), David Major, Russell Lazarek, Yvette Hendler, Cynthia Stoddard, Patrick Mayo, Millie Barry (Recording Clerk) FACTV (1 person), Nate Stoddard by Zoom conferencing and others by remote access not identified

1. **Call to Order:** Kevin Hughes, Chairperson of the board called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. The meeting was held with in person attendance at the Westminster Town Hall and by Zoom Conferencing available through FACTV. Information to attend by Zoom (remote means) is available on FACTV Facebook page or by contacting the Westminster Town Hall.
2. **Adjustments to Agenda:** Mr. Hodgkins requested to add 2 items, John Jones under Boards and Commissions regarding the Windham Regional Commission and a request from the town clerk regarding a contractual matter. The Chair noted the additions.
3. **Acceptance of Minutes: June 23, 2021 and July 8, 2021** - Craig Allen motioned to accept the minutes of June 23, 2021 as written. Susan Harlow seconded the motion, motion carried. Craig Allen motioned to accept the minutes of July 8, 2021 as printed. Jason Perry seconded motion, motion carried.

Nate Stoddard stated he was confused about the price of the backhoe. He also believed there were backhoe purchase options discussed not documented in the minutes, Craig Allen's preferences were not mentioned and multiple speakers were not identified. He believed the meeting minutes were being minimized. Mr. Stoddard did not move to amend the minutes of June 23, 2021. Mr. Allen clarified the purchase price of the backhoe as \$93,150.00.

4. **Communications and Public Comments:** None
5. **Unfinished Business (Discussion/Action) -**
 - A. American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) COVID (Corona Virus) local recovery funds update - Mr. Hodgkins said at the present time there was no update and the funds had not been disbursed. Susan Harlow questioned if discussions should be started about spending the monies. Mr. Hodgkins said there were 4-5 basic steps for spending the funds and the exact information for use of these funds has not been decided. John Jones said he believed the money would be disbursed quickly saying he thought a committee should be established. Mr. Hodgkins will advertise for this committee in the Gazette.
 - B. Hartley Hill Road - private section update (if any) - Mr. Hodgkins noted Mr. Wickberg had contacted him requesting the quit claim deed be created as soon as possible and he had not heard from Larry Slason yet. Mr. Hodgkins said that he had not heard either from legal counsel.
 - C. Website Renewal - update if any - Russell Lazarek said content from existing site was being moved to the new site. The process is about 75% complete. Cynthia Stoddard mentioned the Fund Balance Policy is not on the website asking if all financial policies could be included on new site.
 - D. Collaborative Finance Processing Manual - update if any - Mr. Hodgkins said Paul Harlow was working with NEMRC (New England Municipal Resource Center) on the Assistant Treasurer contract. Cynthia Stoddard said the contract was for NEMRC financial consulting services that include Darlene Kelly being appointed assistant treasurer to act in Paul Harlow's absence. Ms. Stoddard said Darlene Kelly worked for NEMRC and they will agree for Ms. Kelly to be the Westminster Assistant Treasurer. Ms. Kelly will not be auditing accounts when filling in for Paul Harlow. Ms. Stoddard said Mr. Harlow

could appoint an assistant treasurer without approval from the Board. Mr. Hodgkins said the Town had not received the NEMRC contract Ms. Stoddard spoke about.

- E. Backhoe Replacement Update - Information included in packet - Mr. Hodgkins said the anticipated delivery date for the vehicle is slated for the end of July to first of August 2021. Susan Harlow confirmed the monies for the backhoe were coming from the equipment fund. Ms. Stoddard questioned statements from a prior meeting regarding replenishing the emergency fund. In addition, she believed it was five years in a row the board had made a large purchase thinking of how it would be paid for at a later date. There was no planning process about the purchase. She recommended discussing what constituted an emergency and putting more money into the equipment fund at budget time. Susan Harlow stated the Board would be working on a better five year plan in the coming months. Mr. Jones stated FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) had detailed policies of what constituted an emergency. He will provide this information to the Board.
6. **New Business** (Discussion/Action) -
- A. Truck Purchase - Financing Discussion - Craig Allen provided information to Board members on specifics of a new truck. He said the price was \$133,000.00 and per Mr. Hodgkins, left in capital fund was approximately \$50,000.00 meaning to purchase the truck the fund would be \$83,000.00 short. Also, price for equipment (plow, plow blade etc.) was increasing. Mr. Jones believed the ARPA funds could be used for a one time purchase. Also, it might be possible to borrow from the State of VT municipal equipment loan fund for purchase of the truck. This use of ARPA funds for equipment was disputed by the Town Manager and Cynthia Stoddard. Mr. Allen said the truck had been ordered by his company but Westminster had no commitment to purchase. Patsy Mayo questioned if bids were requested for purchase of equipment. Mr. Lawrence confirmed bids were received from Case, Caterpillar and John Deere for both used and new backhoes. The Town purchased the least expensive vehicle to be delivered on the earliest date possible. Mr. Allen said the process should be the Town would contact two dealers to confirm the price was reasonable on the truck and equipment his company was offering. Also, his company gives more to Westminster for the vehicle being traded as the trade was worth more coming from a local town. Kevin Hughes confirmed voter approval was required to use emergency funds to purchase the truck. Cynthia Stoddard noted there was a lot of money in the general fund as undesignated surplus as well as the emergency fund. Ms. Stoddard and the Board discussed the highway budget and general Town budget be separate items. Ms. Stoddard said the benefit would be highway fund revenue and expenses would be easily identified. David Major explained there would be a vote August 31 to approve or not approve the financial separation agreement from the Unified District and to expand the existing interim board from three to five members. Toby Young motioned to add the purchase of the truck to this vote. Susan Harlow seconded this motion. As there is not enough time to warn the truck vote or a public information hearing, Ms. Young withdrew her motion. The truck and purchase will be added to the agenda and discussed at the next meeting.
 - B. Prudential Committee - Financial Discussion - information included in packet - Mr. Hodgkins said the Prudential Committee will attend the next Board meeting for this discussion. The sequence will be the fire district will receive funds after Town taxes are paid in September as usual and then in November when the State pays the Hold Harmless and Pilot monies, then a separate check will be issued on the exact amount.
 - C. Parking Restrictions Ordinance (Forest Road) - update from 2005 - Information included in packet - Parking Restrictions Ordinance - Westminster, VT. The Sherriff Department requested, ***"All Offenses Shall Be Counted on a Calendar Year Basis and will be in accordance with 23 VSA 1008. This Ordinance has been created for the safety of the public and the access of emergency vehicle and responders."*** With this addition, parking on both sides of Forest Road will be prohibited and violations will be enforceable. In addition, Mr. Hodgkins and Mr. Lawrence recently met with residents on Forest Road. At some time in the future, residents of the road may petition to reverse

the current one way down the road nearest to the Westminster/Bellows Falls Town line making the road one way from Gageville, north leaving Forest Road driving toward Bellows Falls. The dates on the ordinance will be updated and ordinance will be discussed at the next Board meeting.

- D. Appointment to Listers position - Joan Harlow - information included in packet - Craig Allen motioned to appoint Joan Harlow as a Westminster lister for the remainder of the year. Toby Young seconded, motion carried. Ms. Harlow has experience as an assistant to the listers employed by the Town of Rockingham.
 - E. Resignation and Appointment - Unified school board - information included in packet - David Major explained there will be a Town vote to expand the three person interim board to 5 people on August 31, 2021. As Cheryl Charles is a member of the Windham Northwest Supervisory Union she will resign from the Windham Northwest Unified Elementary School Board and Westminster School board. Toby Young motioned to appoint Elise Manning to the interim board. Susan Harlow seconded, motion carried.
 - F. McKinnon Road Land Purchase from Town - Proposal - Information included in the packet - Mr. Hodgkins said the Town exchanged land in the past to make access to McKinnon road easier. In the exchange there is .16 acres including a partial pond and low lands not of use by the Town. Nora Daniels is interested in purchasing the .16 acres being responsible for the pond liability. Susan Harlow motioned to sell .16 acres on McKinnon Road for \$100.00 to Nora Daniels. Ms. Daniels agrees to pay for cost of survey and closing costs or other associated costs so the transaction would not be any expense to the Town. Toby Young seconded the motion, motion passed unanimously.
7. **Manager's Report 7/14/2021 -**
- 1. Tax Sale - Information included in packet on 12 properties where taxpayers owe tax, interest and penalties. There has been no movement on any of these properties. The sale will be schedule mid to late August 2021.
 - 2. Fuel Bid - The bid will go out next week as the market was in flux. The price would have been extremely high if it had been set in June as is usually done.
 - 3. Trash Bid - The invitation to bid will go out late August or early September for a three year contract. The current year ends June 30, 2022.
 - 4. The Town's audit is July 28-July 30, 2021
8. **Boards and Commissions** - John Jones, as part of the Windham Regional Commission Transportation Committee asked if the road foreman, Chuck Lawrence would be willing to participate in their committee meetings. He said another view would be good information. Mr. Lawrence agreed to attend these meeting.
9. **Other Business:** In response to a question about special education services and students at Westminster Elementary school David Major said he believed not all special education children were being moved to Westminster. As of 7/1/2022 these decisions would be made by school board members in Westminster. **In other matters:** Craig Allen requested an article in the *Westminster Gazette* about interest of Westminster residents being on a committee to discuss how ARPA funds would be used. John Jones will provide information to Mr. Hodgkins and the Board about the energy committee. Mr. Hodgkins mentioned the tax rate would need approval. Mr. Hodgkins said the Westminster Grand List showed a substantial decrease of overall assessed value. This was after losing 14 taxable homestead parcels. He will schedule a meeting with a NEMRC representative to discuss the decrease and request a Special Selectboard meeting either Monday or Tuesday next week.
10. Date of Next Meeting: July 28, 2021, in person or by Zoom.

Susan Harlow motioned to go into executive session to discuss a personnel matter. Craig Allen seconded motion. The Board moved to executive session at 8:18 p.m. Upon coming out at 8:23 PM, the Chair declared no further business was needed to be discussed this evening and accepted a motion to adjourn.

11. Adjournment: Craig Allen made a motion to adjourn, and Jason Perry seconded. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned.

Clerk

Date

Minutes composed by Millie Barry 7/15/2021