

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE WESTMINSTER SELECTOARD

Monday, August 02, 2021

Westminster Town Hall

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

- Toby Young was absent

Others Present: Russell Hodgkins (Town Manager) & Charles Lawrence

1. **Call to Order:** Kevin Hughes (Chair) called the meeting to order at 10:25 a.m.
2. **Adjustments to Agenda:** None
3. **New Business** (Discussion/Action) – **EMERGENCY STORM DAMAGE & PUBLIC SAFETY**
Kevin Hughes opened the emergency meeting to discuss the Assessment of Damage and Costs associated with the storm damage of July 29th. Kevin continued with the determination to follow protocol of spending in an emergency and keeping in mind the importance of maintaining highly sought-after work crews (contractors) and materials so that the correction of our road system can be brought back to safe and complete roadways in a timely fashion. This process is critical in receiving Federal & State grants for work needed while still being able to pay our Contractors in an appropriate manner. Kevin after hearing no comments from the Board turned to Russell Hodgkins & Chuck Lawrence on an update of the present conditions and comments from the VTRANS District Project Manager, Marc Pickering. The TM told the Board that the damage to our roads was significant and very costly. It is very apparent that the Town will need to obtain financial help from the State and FEMA and in doing so will need to follow the rules that have been presented as guidelines from Marc Pickering. Saying this, it is imperative that the Town maintains its work force (Contractors) as they are hard to find as many towns are trying to hire the same people. The process was explained that if we are still working on a segment of road past the 72-hour threshold then we can continue. If we moved off and then come back, it's a new project and will need to follow our procurement policy and be placed out for bid. If we have not been there yet, it needs to be placed out for bid. The major concern is that these Contractors are not willing to bid this work here and will go to another Town who is not requesting this step. Chuck went through the Contractors that helped us in the beginning but are too busy to continue and the contractors still retained are not willing to be placed in a bidding process as they are here trying to help. If demanded to follow this requirement, they will leave, and we will be in no shape to plow in just a few short months. Craig explained what the Town had done in 2011 with "Tropical Storm Irene" with the same crunch of material demands and not enough contractors to get the work done. The process will need close monitoring with documentation that projects will be put out to bid in house with any and all contractors willing to get the projects done. Following the procurement policy can be achieved without actually stopping work and waiting for a bidding process that will be time consuming and inappropriate for the demand of services. The question was asked about further damage due to the rain last evening (8.1.21) and Chuck responded that very little damage was reported where actual circumstances got worse but there were two areas (Rt. 121 & West Road), that recorded mud slides from the present storm that were compromised due to the first storm. Craig told the Road Foreman to document any new storms as separate incidents as they got in trouble last time as more storms hit and continued to show damage on the same ticket. Verify all work and dates.

Kevin then asked the Board, the TM, and the Road Foreman are we all in agreeance that the Town needs to continue to act swiftly to assure the workforce continues the quest to complete the road damage and that the Town will continue to support the cost. The Board, TM and Road Foreman all agreed. Kevin asked three questions continuing. 1.) How much money does the Town have to place towards this incident right now? The TM told the Board about \$200,000. 2.) Are we going to be reimbursed for all of the work that has been done thus far? Was it done appropriately? Both the TM & RF said yes. 3.) What is the total assessment thus far of the total damage? The TM said that through the State's eyes it will be approximately \$500,000. Kevin asked is this over the \$200,000 that was already available? The Road Foreman said yes and the TM said because of the low numbers that the State works with, it was hard to say affirmatively. Kevin asked how much money do we need to get this damage corrected? The TM said that Chuck and himself agreed that it should be \$500,000 because it is really hard at this point to narrow the need to an amount, and we surely don't want to run shy. Craig Allen stated that is why a "line of credit" is what we should seek because if we don't use it all then we just give it back. This is what the Town did with Irene and it worked extremely well. Agreement by the Board, Kevin stated that a line of credit should be gotten, and the amount should be equal to \$500,000. He continued that a bidding process would be advisable for this option as well and the TM agreed. Results from this process with the banks will be decided upon by the Board when all of the banks respond. Craig Allen also mentioned that the Federal Government, with Irene, declared a special lending rate to Towns to reclaim their damage after a disaster was declared. A special meeting will be required to accept the lending company. Craig thanked the Road Foreman and Town Manager for their work on this disaster. Russell Hodgkins thanked Jason Perry for his work on some of the disaster and wanted the Board to know that absolutely no bias or conflict of interest was or is being done by hiring Mr. Perry as all the Contractors were given equal opportunity to work in the last 72 hours. Craig commented that all of the contractors are busy with their normal work and to step up and help is a huge support. Russell also thanked Susan for gathering a care package to the Governor's crew with special treats and water for the long day.

4. **Adjournment:** Craig made a motion to adjourn. Susan Harlow seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 11:20 a.m.

Selectboard Clerk

date