

# MEETING OF THE WESTMINSTER SELECTBOARD

*Wednesday, September 8, 2021*

## **Westminster, VT Town Hall and by Zoom Conferencing**

**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/Zoning Administrator), Chuck Lawrence (Road Foreman), Paul Harlow (Town Treasurer), Millie Barry and FACTV - Alice Caggiano by remote means and others not identified.

1. **Call to Order:** Kevin Hughes, Chair of the Board called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. This meeting was held in person at the Westminster Town Hall and by Zoom Conferencing available through FACTV. Information to access the meeting by Zoom (remote means) is available on FACTV Facebook page or by contacting the Westminster Town Hall
2. **Adjustments to Agenda:** None
3. **Acceptance of Minutes** - August 25, 2021 - Susan Harlow motioned to accept the minutes as printed, Craig Allen seconded the motion, the motion passed 4-0
4. **Communications and Public Comments:** None
5. **Unfinished Business** (Discussion/Action)
  - A. American Rescue Plan (ARPA) - Corona Virus (COVID local recovery funds update - Information included in packet - Mr. Hodgkins said the committee members to date, to discuss and plan use of ARPA funds are:  
Jim Matteau, 3-4 Westminster Center Village Trustees, Kevin Hughes (Select Board Chair), Russell Hodgkins (Town Manager), John Jones, Cynthia Stoddard, Bobbi Kilburn, Paul Harlow (Town Treasurer) and Pauline Blake O'Brien (Town Clerk) - A meeting date will be set relatively soon and members will be notified.
  - B. Hartley Hill Road - private section update if any - There has been no word from legal counsel.
  - C. Website Renewal - update if any - Susan Harlow requested to table this item indefinitely. The Board agreed to table until further notice.
  - D. Collaborative Finance Processing Manual - update if any - Paul Harlow said he was compiling notes on everything he does as Treasurer. The information will be available in the future to be included in the Collaborative Finance Processing Manual.
6. **New Business:** (Discussion/Action) -
  - A. July 29, 2021 Storm - Progress update - Mr. Hodgkins said as of 9.8.2021 there had been no declaration of a disaster from the recent storm. He noted the Town was waiting for word to proceed with repairs in several different areas. He believes recent disasters in the south have been a factor delaying the notification process in the immediate area. There is a 30 day notification period and as the 30 days has passed, Mr. Hodgkins believes an extension was

- granted. All information on the work done and to be done has been submitted. There were eight towns in Windham County recognized as being in the disaster area. Mr. Lawrence said about 75% of the repair work had been done in Town. The areas left to complete are Henwood Hill Road, Davidson Hill, School Street culvert, Piggery Road (is a temporary repair) and Covered Bridge Road. The Manager said even though some places had not been fully repaired, snow plowing would not be a problem. In the instance of no declaration, the Town would be eligible for State of VT (SOV) funds. In answer to Susan Harlow's question regarding how much of the Mascoma loan (\$500,000.00) had been spent, Mr. Hodgkins said \$225,000.00 had been used. Kevin Hughes asked the Board to confirm they were in agreement to seek funding from Mascoma at 1% to compensate contractors, and purchase material necessary and urgent to make repairs given the time frame and amount of the damage the storm caused. The Board confirmed agreement.
- B. Contractual Matter - Assistant Treasurer - Information included in packet - Mr. Hodgkins said the minimum of 96 hours at a reduced rate of \$110.00 plus travel expenses for Darlene Kelly was realistic as Ms. Kelly would assist the treasurer and reconcile the Town books. Mr. Harlow believes Ms. Kelly/NEMRC (New England Municipal Resource Center) would be very good support and was knowledgeable regarding the processes. Susan Harlow agreed to the contract for a year and then to re-visit the service. Craig Allen motioned to approve the NEMRC Purchase Agreement for the duties of Assistant Treasurer. Susan Harlow seconded the motion, the motion carried 4-0.
- C. Five Year Capital Plan - update - Information included in Board packet - The plan included strengths, weaknesses, threats, capital improvements and ideas for 2022. Mr. Lawrence said he had received a price for the tanks to be upgraded, an estimate would be available soon for a new heating system and a contractor would estimate cost to add two bays. In addition, Craig Allen has contacted VT Foam Insulation for an estimate to insulate the garage. Mr. Hodgkins noted there was \$63,500.00 available for the in-ground tank removable at the garage in a designated fund. Mr. Hodgkins said typically capital plans all need substantial funds. If there was a goal and estimate of what was required/needed, information could be presented to the taxpayers on each item one by one. Mr. Allen said he believed there was grant money available for projects such as the North West Community House or improvements to the Town Garage. Mr. Allen said it was important to present information to the voters in March on the North Westminster Community House as the building was unoccupied and un-useable at present.
- D. Invoice for School District - Elections - Information included in packet - Mr. Hodgkins said total costs were \$9,150.65. Expenses for additional tax bills due to the absence of a school tax rate in November 2019 and October 2020 had been presented to the merged district and were denied. Additional expenses in 2021 for elections, ballot printing, clerk/assistant clerk work totaled \$3,359.65. The Manager will invite someone from the school board to attend the next Select Board meeting to discuss expenses and possible reimbursement.

**7. Manager's Report: September 8, 2021**

1. Rabies were present in Westminster when a raccoon attacked a woman near Father's Restaurant. Please be very careful around generally nocturnal animals seen and encountered during the day. It is more common in the fall to encounter a rabid animal. This information was provided by VT Alert, a service call center. Susan Harlow noted this was a good reminder to have your pets vaccinated.
2. The Town is in the process of painting the post office.
3. Town Hall Front Steps - The Board will review the steps and discuss at the next meeting.

**8. Boards and Commissions** - Mr. Hodgkins said he had notified Windham Regional Commission and the Planning Commission regarding the tragic passing of Russell Lazarek.

**9. Other Business:**

1. Information included in packet was a letter from Cheryl Charles, Chair of the Westminster School Board to Oliver Olson, Chair, Vermont Board of Education. The Manager said the letter included next steps in their negotiation to withdraw from the unified board.
2. Town of Westminster FY2023 - 1<sup>st</sup> Draft - Information included in packet - The Manager requested the Board review the information to discuss the first page at the next meeting.
3. Masks - Mr. Hughes said the protocol (at present) was to leave masking as a personal choice. This protocol was discussed and will remain in place. Mr. Hodgkins said Town personnel were following suggested guidelines for hand washing, screens and distancing in the offices.
4. Craig Allen suggested the Town resume the practice of listing residents that have passed away in the Town Report each year. Mr. Allen said in the case someone was forgotten, due to living in another area at the time of death or the Town was not notified, the person could be noted the following year.

**10. Date of Next Meeting** - September 22, 2021

**11. Adjournment:** Susan Harlow motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:36 p.m. Craig Allen seconded the motion carried 4-0

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Clerk

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Date