

MEETING OF THE WESTMINSTER SELECTOBOARD

Wednesday, October 27, 2021 - 6:30 p.m.

Westminster, VT Town Hall and via Zoom Conferencing

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

Staff Present: Russell Hodgkins (Town Manager/Zoning Administrator), Darlene Kelly, Chuck Lawrence (Road Foreman)

Others Present: FACTV (1 person), John Jones by Zoom,

1. **Call to Order:** Kevin Hughes, Chair of the Board called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. The meeting was held in person at the Westminster Town Hall and by Zoom conferencing available through FACT TV. Information to access a meeting by remote means is available on the FACT TV Facebook page or by contacting the Westminster Town Hall.
2. **Adjustments to Agenda:** The Town Manager noted to remove 6 A, Noise Exemption was not required. Mr. Hughes noted 6 I, Executive Session, Mr. Hughes said this item would be tabled to the next meeting.
Mr. Hughes said an executive session is to be noticed and voted on if a session is called for. Proper procedure is to notify all those present specifying the topic of the executive session. The Board is required to vote to go into the executive session prior to the session.
3. **Acceptance of Minutes:** October 13, 2021 - Mr. Allen motioned to accept the minutes of October 13, 2021 as printed noting there was a lot of detail in the minutes. Ms. Harlow seconded the motion, the motion carried 4-0.
4. **Communications and Public Comments:**
 - Noise Exemption - Jeffrey Carlstrom - Item tabled to next meeting - Mr. Hodgkins said Mr. Carlstrom was not available to attend the meeting. Information is included in the packet to be discussed at the next meeting. Mr. Jones noted the noise ordinance decibel at the property level appears to be very vague, he asked if there would be more definition by the Selectboard as to decibel level.
5. **Unfinished Business - Discussion/Action**
 - A. *American Rescue Plan ACT (ARPA)* - COVID local recovery funds update. Mr. Hodgkins said the next meeting is scheduled for November 4, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. at the Westminster Institute. Katie Buckley, Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT), Director of ARPA Assistance and Coordination Program will attend the meeting to provide information to the committee.
 - B. *Hartley Hill Road* - private section update, if any. Mr. Hodgkins said after a discussion with legal counsel, Mr. Slason's advice is not to create a quit claim deed for a section of Hartley Hill. A quit claim deed could create a financial burden for the Town and there was a possibility of losing this section of road. Mr. Slason will put his recommendation to the Board in writing.

- C. *Invoice for School District* - update - Information included in packet - Town Manager Hodgkins said the request for payment to cover additional expense for tax bills, elections, ballot printing and clerk costs has been denied. Ms. Harlow questioned if the invoice would be re-submitted. Mr. Hodgkins said as the present Schoolboard was in flux, there was a possibility the invoice would be addressed when the new Board took over the expenses.
- D. *Collaborative Finance Processing Manual* - update by Darlene Kelly - Ms. Kelly said she was working on procedures for the manual and these could be sent to the Board via email. Ms. Kelly said she was detailing each and every step.
- E. *Financial Discussion* - Darlene Kelly - information included in the packet. Ms. Kelly said revenues were on target for this time of year. She noted significant delinquent tax owed and an issue in February 2021 regarding debits (automatic payments) not processed correctly. Mr. Hodgkins said of approximately 40 residents, 20 have paid the tax owed from the automatic payment problem. Mr. Hughes requested a list be available for the next meeting. Ms. Kelly questioned the Board regarding miscellaneous accounting procedures adding she had created a new fund in the financial statement for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) 7/29/2021 storm. Everything related to the storm is in the new fund information. Also, if the highway department was a separate fund, she had created a sample general ledger sheet to show highway revenue, related expenses and current balance, highway benefit information is not included. Mr. Allen said he was happy with this as the highway department was not physically separate but financial information was separated on paper. Ms. Kelly continued New England Municipal Resource Center (NEMRC) would have to re-number accounts to make the highway information available. Mr. Jones said any time the Town was requesting reimbursement from FEMA there is an accounting procedure to follow he will forward to the Town Manager. Ms. Kelly is aware of the procedure. In Ms. Kelly's remarks she explained the Due/To Due/From report that shows moving money, the Town is using cash from other funds at the present time. She said the Town was borrowing for itself and not paying interest, this was a normal course of business to borrow funds and pay back funds until getting to the next tax payment. Mr. Lawrence asked the difference between funding the Town Hall renovation and funds for repairs for roads. Ms. Kelly said the road repair, due to the storm was an emergency, repairs had to be done. The voters were asked about spending monies on the Town Hall renovation (not an emergency situation). Mr. Hughes noted the Board set out to create a collaborative finance processing manual for accuracy and transparency so taxpayers know exactly what is happening and the information is clear and easy to understand. He noted, with Ms. Kelly's help, this information will be available.. He suggested the Board take Ms. Kelly's suggestions under consideration and to discuss at the next meeting.
- F. (E miss-lettered on Agenda) - July 29, 2021 Storm - progress update - Mr. Lawrence said all contract work was done and all major repairs had been made. They were working on grading and smaller items. After the Henwood Hill project went out to bid, two bids were submitted,

the bid was awarded to Adams Trucking Company. The repair is slated to be complete in December 2021. Mr. Hodgkins said the Town was discussing with Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) the School Street intersection and FEMA will also be involved in the intersection renovation. Mr. Lawrence added there may be other grant possibilities available to renovate this area. Mr. Jones noted he was working on a grant of up to \$300,000.00 for the Town and there is process with VTrans to obtain the grant monies. Mr. Hughes said the storm showed a lot of work that needed to be done to the Town's infrastructure

G. (F on agenda, error in letter listing) Five-year Capital Plan - update - Tabled

H. (G on agenda, error in letter listing) Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Review - discussion page 2 and 3 - Information included in packet - Mr. Hodgkins said MVP health insurance coverage was going up 1.5% (one and one half percent) for half of the year. He believed a realistic number for 2023 was \$176,250.00 noting employees pay 20% (twenty percent) of their family coverage. The figure includes dental and a small life insurance policy for employees. Mr. Hughes noted the 2023 cost of living adjustment (COLA) has increased to 5.9% and believed it wise to stay as close to the COLA number as possible. Mr. Hodgkins said the end decision for increase would be made in June when the number was final. Ms. Kelly said as a taxpayer, when voting on a budget, what was presented was what the taxpayer was approving. Ms. Allen said the Board was discussing adding enough money to the budget to cover the increase when it is determined. In answer to Ms. Kelly's question, the Board does offer an 'opt out' option for health insurance if an employee requests. Ms. Harlow requested funds to hire a computer expert to migrate the information generated by Russ Lazarek to a new website and to hire a contractor (approximately \$5,000.00) to keep the Town website up to date. Mr. Lawrence requested a tablet with cell phone capability to do EMRTP inventory to connect through global positioning system (GPS). Ms. Harlow noted this purchase would be a one-time request. Mr. Allen requested the Manager change percentages (for employee increases, etc.) from three percent (3%) to five percent (5%) to generate a total dollar amount for the higher percentage. Ms. Harlow questioned the assistant treasurer's salary figure. The Board and Ms. Kelly discussed line items; assistant treasurer salary, NEMRC and contract services and what the money in these lines actually covered. Ms. Kelly will review the items, what they cover and report back to the Board. While discussing page 3 of fiscal 2023 2nd draft, Mr. Hodgkins said the audit was a regular audit making the amount less. The assessment firm was NEMRC and the Computer Aided Mass Appraisal (CAMA) charge should be discussed with NEMRC as there would be a significant increase to add real estate values. Mr. Hodgkins added the temporary lister would be done in December and had done a very good job for the Town. The Manager has not discussed the planning board budget with members.

6. New Business: Discussion/Action

A. Noise Exemption - actions - Item removed per Town Manger under Adjustments to Agenda

- B. State of VT - Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) opportunity - John Jones - As a follow up to an email from Randall Szott, a specialist with State of VT (SOV) ACCD Mr. Jones believes an ACCD committee would provide out-reach opportunities and could stabilize the Town's economic development/infrastructure. The committee would be on-going such as planning/zoning committees. Ms. Harlow asked if this committee would over-lap (in some ways) the work SeVEDS (Southeastern Vermont Economic Development Strategies) and BDCC (Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation) were doing adding the Town had difficulty filling volunteer boards at the present time. Mr. Jones said he believed one member of the already established boards could form an ACCD committee of 3-5 people. Mr. Hughes requested Mr. Jones come back with a structure for the committee, and talk to SeVEDS/BDCC. Mr. Allen requested he provide information on other towns that have a committee.
- C. Transportation Grant - John Jones - (information included in packet) Mr. Jones relayed information from information provided by Scott Robinson, VTrans representative about a \$300,000.00 yearly grant. Due to the time line to apply, the Town could apply for scoping (engineering) study money for the School Street extension project. He strongly encouraged the Town identify projects and have scoping studies done for future projects so all information is identified for future assistance from FEMA or VTrans. Mr. Hodgkins and Mr. Lawrence did not believe scoping was needed for School Street. Information on Piggery Road will be provided to Mr. Jones to apply to the Agency of Transportation (AOT) for monies. Mr. Jones requested the item remain on the Boards agenda.
- D. Welcome Packet: Ms. Harlow and Ms. O'Brien (town clerk) have a quote on a folder for the packet. Cost of about \$1,000.00 is available in the office expense fund.
- E. Possible Adoption of the Rules of Procedure for Municipal Board (VLCT) - Mr. Hughes requested the Board review the procedure for the next meeting.
- F. Bidding Process - discussion - Tabled to November 10, 2021
- G. Trash/Recycling Bid - (information included in packet) Mr. Hodgkins said a letter and a bid were received. The budget for 2023 would be \$297,000.00 with a 5% (five percent) increase for the next two years for a three year contract. Mr. Hodgkins read a letter from Casella requesting the Town consider an every other week collection option using a 64 gallon tote for trash and a 96 gallon tote for zero sort recycling. Mr. Hodgkins said the totes would be too large for the elderly and others to handle. There is a mandatory purchase for the two size totes. In answer to Ms. Harlow's question, Mr. Hodgkins said the increase in price is due to trucking, equipment and fuel. Ms. Young moved to accept the Ruggiero Trash, LLC trash removal contract for three years. Ms. Harlow seconded the motion, the motion carried 4-0.
- H. Front Entrance Bid - information included in packet. One bid was received from Streeter, LLC for \$20,359.53. The bid includes front entrance stairs, landings, fixing wall cracks and painting. The bid does not include doors. There was no set date for completion of project. Mr. Allen motioned to accept the Streeter, LLC bid not to exceed \$20,359.53. Ms. Young seconded the motion, the motion carried 4-0
- I. Executive Session (Selectboard only) Tabled
- J. Cemetery Deeds - information included in the packet - Mr. Hodgkins said the land survey had been completed of the cemeteries. There are five mislabeled lots where numbers need to be corrected in the location. Ms. Harlow moved to approve the assignment of the grave for Trina Janeczek section E grave 93, Westminster New Cemetery, motion seconded by Mr.

Allen, motion approved 4-0. Ms. Harlow moved to re-assign Isolde Parda section E, grave 78 in Westminster New Cemetery, Mr. Allen seconded motion, the motion approved 4-0. Ms. Harlow moved to re-assign to Harland P. and Cheryl A. Rounds section E grave 71 and section E grave 70 in Westminster New Cemetery, Mr. Allen seconded motion, the motion approved 4-0. Ms. Harlow moved to re-assign Jeffrey Supernaw burial 1, section E, grave 86 in Westminster New Cemetery, Mr. Allen seconded the motion, the motion carried 4-0.

7. Manager's Report:

1. Tax Sale - The sale was successful. Three lots were sold including Christian Blake property that has been offered at tax sale for the past three years.
2. The Manager will be out of the office October 28 and 29.
3. The Town Office will be closed Friday, November 12 in observance of Veterans Day, November 11, 2021. The flags in Town cemeteries will be taken off graves the week of November 1st.
4. The Regional Emergency Management Committee member will be Cole Streeter.

8. Boards and Commissions: Nothing to Report

9. Other Business: - None

10. Date of Next Meeting: November 10, 2021

11. Adjournment: Ms. Young moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:37 p.m. Ms. Harlow seconded the motion, the meeting was adjourned.

Clerk

Date

Notes composed by Millie Barry 10/30/2021

