

MEETING OF THE WESTMINSTER SELECTOBOARD

Wednesday, November 10, 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 Jason Perry. Toby Young was absent.

Staff & Others Present: Russell Hodgkins (Town Manager/Zoning Administrator), Darlene Kelly, Chuck Lawrence (Road Foreman), FACTV, Jennifer Stromsten and Sarah Lang (BDCC) 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:** Kevin Hughes said he needs a motion for two executive sessions at the end of the meeting. Susan Harlow made a motion to go into executive session for a Highway Issue and an Employee Review. Craig Allen seconded the motion and they both passed. Kevin Hughes then declared the Executive Sessions would take place after the (10.) date of the next meeting.
3. **Acceptance of Minutes:** October 27, 2021 – Susan Harlow motioned to accept the minutes of October 27, 2021 as printed. Craig Allen seconded the motion, the motion carried 4-0.
4. **Communications and Public Comments:**
 - Mr. Hodgkins (Town Manager) told the Board that he received a letter from Westminster Cares thanking the entire Town for their continued financial support.
 - David Major – David told the Board that he had two items that he wanted to report on. The first being that 3 new members were going to be needed for the Westminster School Board and will need to be voted on at Town Meeting. He continued, that two new Union Board members were also going to be needed and voted on at Town Meeting along with the election of the Moderator for the school portion of Town Meeting. The second item was that the present Union Board voted down the payment of the invoice that the Town sent to the School District for extra tax bills needed to be sent for the school and the elections for school officials. He continued that the other two Towns did not ask to be paid for these items so it wouldn't be correct to pay the Town of Westminster. David told the Board that the School District is receiving between \$15 to \$17 Million dollars from the federal government and would like to have the Town Manger and one Selectboard member to be apart of the conversations on how to spend this appropriation. Susan Harlow volunteered to be the Selectboard representative for these proceedings.
5. **Unfinished Business - Discussion/Action**
 - A. *American Rescue Plan ACT (ARPA)* - COVID local recovery funds update. Mr. Hodgkins said the Committee met on November 4, 2021 at 5:30 p.m. at the Westminster Institute with

Katie Buckley, Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT), Director of ARPA Assistance and Coordination Program and she gave a presentation on the do's and don'ts of the ARPA fund expenditures. The Committee has a lot of great ideas for the funding but is still working on how to get the complete Town involved to ensure proper spending. The next meeting will be posted on the website later this month.

- B. *Hartley Hill Road* - private section update, if any. Mr. Hodgkins said there was no new information available.
- C. *Financial Discussion* - Darlene Kelly – Darlene asked the Board if she needed to report any small corrections that need to be done in the existing accounting procedures as she goes through the processes that she has been hired to achieve. She continued that in her other towns these corrections are left up to her to make as long as they don't change or alter anything major. The Board agreed that minor adjustments can be made along the way but should be reported at her monthly discussion with the Selectboard. Ms. Kelly agreed. Darlene stated that she had asked for a document to be printed and placed in the packet that showed the mistake created by the Town on the direct deposit taxpayer's invoice. Kevin Hughes told Darlene that they have the document and please proceed. She asked the Board to forgive the interest charge for these accounts as this was not their fault. Unanimously, the Board agreed and thanked Darlene for her efforts. She told the Board that Paul and herself will create the letter and get it sent to these effected people as soon as possible. Darlene asked the board for answers on her recommendations that she had produced for the last meeting. The first one being the zoning salaries divided equally into each pay period. The Board agreed that this made sense and to proceed with this. The second issue was the separating of the highway budget from the Towns budget. The Selectboard said that they would be working on this and getting information from the Auditor and the Town's legal counsel to make sure all is done correctly and in the best interest of the town and its taxpayers. The line of credit issue was not addressed.
- D. *Collaborative Finance Processing Manual* - update by Darlene Kelly - Ms. Kelly said she sent a working document to Kevin Hughes and the Town Manager. Kevin told Darlene that he wasn't sure he received it and the Town Manger said that he didn't notice it either. Darlene will send it again. The TM will forward to the Board.
- E. *7.29.21 Storm – FEMA Update* – Mr. Hodgkins told the meeting that Kevin, Jason, and himself spoke to FEMA in a brief phone conversation and at the conclusion set up an in-person visit on the 17th of November to walk through the actual damage the Town received. The meeting is at 1:00 PM in the Town Hall and will last approximately 2 hours.
- F. *5-Year Capitol Plan* – No new information was shared but all the Board members are working on their project costs to come back to the main Board for next steps.
- G. *FY23 Budget Review – discussion on pages 4 & 5* – Kevin Hughes started the conversation that he was looking at the federal cost of living updates as of today and stated that they are up

to 5.9%. After a brief discussion the Board approved placing the 5% increase in the present draft included in the packet but made note that the final rate will be approved in June when accurate information about the COLA rate can be found. Susan Harlow asked that a special line be added for the maintenance of the Town's website to the proposed budget. She thought that \$3,000 should be enough to manager the site per year. The Board agreed and the TM will place it under "Office Supplies for the Selectboard. A brief discussion took place asking Road Foreman Chuck Lawrence if he thought that the \$75,000 was going to cover the fuel costs for next year as the cost is presently going up? Chuck responded that he wasn't positive but that he was willing to try and make it work for another year. It might be that we can't fill everything in June as in the past and we must wait until the next fiscal year to do this, he stated. The Board chair recognized that the budget has been looked at from pages 1 to 6 as of this evening.

6. New Business: Discussion/Action

- A. *Transportation Grant - John Jones - (Update)* Mr. Jones introduced Colin Bratton from Windham Regional Commission – Transportation Advisor, to share information on the Fall Transportation Alternatives Grant Application that John is working on for the Town as it relates to Piggery Road Culvert replacement. Colin told the Board that they need to approve the application to be processed and with that the Town would be eligible for the scoping grant for the culvert replacement that Mr. Jones shared with him. Susan Harlow made a motion to accept the processing of the grant application for the Transportation Alternative Grant to scope the culvert replacement for Piggery Road. Craig Allen seconded the motion and it passed 4-0. Mr. Jones will follow up with the Town Manager to complete the application shortly.
- B. *State of VT - Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) opportunity - John Jones* – Mr. Jones introduced Jennifer Stromsten and Sarah Lang from the Brattleboro Development Credit Corp. to explain how an economic development committee for Westminster might look and how it could benefit the community and county. After a brief discussion of how this opportunity could benefit Westminster, Mr. Jones said that he is proposing to get two present Board members to be a part of this 5-person Committee and have three new people interested in moving the Town in economic development. Craig Allen asked if this subject could be tabled as he would like to know the terms of each member and if Mr. Jones had names of the members interested in the startup of this committee. The Board agreed and Mr. Hughes asked John to come back next meeting with term limits and absolute direction of this committee. Mr. Jones to follow up next meeting.
- C. *Welcome Packet:* Susan Harlow told the meeting that this is an ongoing project and said the folders have been ordered by Pauline O'Brien (Town Clerk). More information to follow.
- D. *Possible Adoption of the Rules of Procedure for Municipal Board (VLCT) - Mr. Hughes* requested the Board table this until the next meeting.
- E. *Bidding Process - discussion - Tabled to November 23, 2021*

F. Executive Session (w/ TM) – voted on earlier in the meeting

G. Executive Session (Selectboard only) – voted on earlier in the meeting

7. Manager's Report:

1. The Town Office will be closed Friday, November 12 in observance of Veterans Day.

8. Boards and Commissions: Nothing to Report

9. Other Business: - None

10. Date of Next Meeting: **Tuesday** - November 23, 2021, because of Thanksgiving

11. Adjournment: Susan Harlow moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:45 PM. Jason Perry seconded the motion; the meeting was adjourned.

Clerk

Notes composed by Millie Barry 11/15/2021

Date

