

WESTMINSTER SELECTBOARD MEETING

Wednesday, December 15, 2021

Westminster, VT Town Hall & by Zoom Conferencing

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

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

Others Present: John Jones, and by Zoom, Nate Stoddard

1. **Call to Order:** Mr. Hughes called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Information to access a future meeting by remote means is available on the FACT TV Facebook page or by contacting the Westminster Town Hall
2. **Adjustments to Agenda:** Mr. Hughes requested a motion for an executive session to include Mr. Hodgkins and Mr. Lawrence to discuss highway department contractual matters. Ms. Harlow motioned to move to an executive session to discuss highway department contractual matters, Mr. Allen seconded the motion, the motion carried 4-0 by voice vote.
3. **Acceptance of Minutes:** December 8, 2021 - Mr. Allen motioned to accept the minutes as printed, Ms. Harlow seconded the motion, the motion carried 4-0 by voice vote.
4. **Communication and Public Comments** - None
5. **Unfinished Business:** (Discussion/Action) -
 - A. Fiscal Year 2023 Budget - Discussion/Adoption
 - Storm Costs - Line of Credit Interest - Mr. Hodgkins said per Katy Dearborn (Mascoma Bank) interest at 1% (one percent) to August 1, 2022 was \$2,225.00. The Town has until August 26, 2022 to extend the line of credit. The Board and Ms. Kelly discussed where the interest expense would be listed in budget expense report. Ms. Kelly suggested creating a line item titled "line of credit, storm 2021, interest expense" under bank service charges (page 2). The Board agreed to have an accounting available at Town meeting related to storm expenses to explain where monies for repairs was spent. Nate Stoddard questioned the Board's action at the last meeting of adding \$175,000.00 for equipment purposes, was the \$175,000.00 in addition to the \$145,000.00 for equipment funds. Mr. Allen explained there would be no article to appropriate \$145,000.00 to the capital fund. Mr. Perry asked about putting money aside for repair of the retaining wall adjacent to the Westminster Cemetery. Mr. Allen noted he had contacted a company in Woodstock and believed this company would do a section at the time suggesting having this company repair the wall could be \$15,000.00 to \$20,000.00 each year. This company will repair the stone, putting drainage behind the wall etc. He added the Board would need to make decision about how the actual repair would be done and the money would come from the highway department fund. Mr. Hughes suggested moving to executive session to address the highway department contractual matters. Ms. Harlow motioned to move to executive session at 6:55 p.m., Mr. Allen seconded the motion, the motion carried 4-0 by voice vote. Ms. Harlow motioned to come out of

executive session at 7:12 p.m. Mr. Allen seconded the motion, the motion carried 4-0 by voice vote. Mr. Allen noted to raise, for fiscal year 2023, town garage wages from \$363,000.00 to \$393,000.00 (page 5 budget report). He explained the increase would cover cost of living and wage increases for the highway crew. In addition, the Board believed the highway crew was the best the Town had had in years, to find drivers with CDL (commercial drivers license) was more and more difficult and the Board wanted to retain the present crew. Mr. Allen also included highway department members were trained to operate more and different equipment, replace culverts etc. and the Town was hiring fewer contractors. Training was a long term investment. Mr. Lawrence noted documents for the record were comparison analysis of wages in area Towns in VT paid for highway department employees for the same jobs.

- Year-end cost predictions - Westminster Cash Flow as December 15, 2021 - included in packet. Ms. Kelly explained the report showing anticipated monies coming in and going out with projected cash as of 6/30/2022 of \$1,008,252.40 if money came in and went out as projected.

Mr. Stoddard questioned the amount of monies in Ms. Kelly's report for Henwood Hill of \$42,000.00. Mr. Allen said at one point the town had earmarked \$37,000.00 for a number of years to have work done on Henwood Hill. The Board had abandoned that work and the highway department had made repairs to the now one way area. The \$42,000.00 was for storm related damage.

- Single Audit cost update - Mr. Hodgkins said the interest for the line of credit and single audit costs was not reimbursable by FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency). The regular and single audit expenses were included in the budget report. The Board and Ms. Kelly discussed showing in the FY2022 revenue budget report \$63,000.00 to be transferred from the garage fund for fuel tank replacement. Per Ms. Kelly, the \$63,000.00 should show as a transfer from the garage fund as revenue to offset the expense. This to not raise taxes for the repair/replacement. To clarify further, Ms. Harlow said \$15,000.00 has been budgeted for 2023 and is in addition to the \$63,000.00 presently in the garage fund. In answer to Mr. Allen's question regarding the status of the Town wide re-assessment, Mr. Hodgkins said the numbers were where they needed to be postponing the re-assessment for an additional year.
- Cleaning Expenses: Mr. Hodgkins said the one time monthly cleaning expenses for the fire station to include the bathroom, would be \$80.00. The Board agreed to add \$1,000.00 to the budget (page 4, janitor contract service) from \$8,400.00 to \$9,400.00 for this purpose.

Mr. Allen moved to accept the 2023/2024 budget with changes of \$2,500,665.00 to

include noted changes. Ms. Harlow seconded the motion, the motion carried 4-0 by voice vote.

- B. Selectboard Meeting - Fire Station - Mr. Hodgkins noted his discussion with Cole Streeter included to use the fire station meeting room for approximately eight to 12 months during the high COVID infection rate and to re-assess the meeting space in the future. The long term plan was for the Board to meet at the Westminster Institute. Mr. Hughes noted the next meeting, January 12, 2022 would be at the fire station to address public concerns regarding spacing and safety.
- C. Town Meeting - Date/Time: Mr. Hodgkins said April 30, 2022 was a good date for the clerks adding there may be the possibility of having the informational meeting by Zoom and all votes by Australian ballot. At Mr. Allen's request, details of Town meeting will be discussed at the next meeting. Mr. Allen motioned to schedule Town meeting February 26, 2022 (usual Saturday) with an alternate date of Saturday, April 30, 2022. Mr. Perry seconded the motion, motion carried 4-0 by voice vote.
- D. Financial Processing Manual - update - Ms. Kelly said due to working on other Town items, she would resume work on the manual after the holidays.
- E. State of VT - ACCD (VT Agency of Commerce and Community Development) opportunity - John Jones - Mr. Jones presented a draft regarding opportunities of having a committee, SOV (State of VT) guide and committee structure. Mr. Allen noted changes in Westminster during his tenure on the Board included slowing growth down. He specifically asked what direction the Town was going in believing residents did not embrace change. He questioned what opportunity the ACCD would bring to the Town. Mr. Jones asked the Board to give a committee a chance saying there were many people ready to serve on a committee and stake holders ready to support the work of an ACCD group. Having a committee would provide grant opportunities not available to the Town at present to explore projects like sidewalks. Input from members on the planning/zoning committees would be important. Ms. Harlow suggested having a three year sunset for the committee noting senior housing in Westminster may be a good starting point. Mr. Allen moved to authorize a group (up to seven members) with alternating terms called WCECD (Westminster Commerce and Economic and Community Development) and to review the committee in three years. Mr. Jones said the committee would have a chair and vice chair. Ms. Harlow seconded the motion, the motion carried 4-0 by voice vote

6. New Business (Discussion/Action):

- A. Town Report - Selectboard report due week of December 27, 2021 - Ms. Harlow will work on this report for the Selectboard.
- B. First look at Town Meeting - Tabled to a future meeting

7. Manager's Report - The Town office will be closed on December 23/24 and 30/31, 2021 for the holidays.

8. **Boards and Commissions:** Mr. Hodgkins noted the Planning Commission is working on the new Town Plan.
9. **Other Business:** Ms. Harlow said she and Pauline Blake (town clerk) had completed work on a Town welcome packet - Mr. Allen suggested giving packets to local realtors.
10. **Date Next Meeting** - January 12, 2022 to be held at **Westminster Fire Department**
11. **Adjournment:** Ms. Harlow motioned to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Perry seconded the motion the meeting adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

Clerk

Date

Minutes composed by Millie Barry 12/18/2021