

WESTMINSTER SELECTBOARD MEETING

Wednesday, December 8, 2021

Westminster, VT Town Hall & by Zoom Conferencing

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

Staff Present: Russell Hodgkins (Town Manager/Zoning Administrator), Darlene Kelly, Chuck Lawrence, Pauline O'Brien (Town Clerk) and Millie Barry (recorder)

Others Present: John Jones and by Zoom, Nate Stoddard and Cynthia 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:** None
3. **Acceptance of Minutes:** Ms. Young motioned to accept the minutes as written. Ms. Harlow seconded the motion, the motion carried 5-0
4. **Communications and Public Comments:** None
5. **Unfinished Business:** (Discussion/Action)
 - A. Financial Year to Date discussion - Darlene Kelly - (Information included in packet) Ms. Kelly said there was approximately \$223,000.00 in delinquent taxes yet to be collected.
 - Storm Costs - Line of Credit - The Board and Ms. Kelly discussed at length the July 2021 storm noting expenditures spent so far were \$795,822.24. Of these expenditures \$320,822.24 had been spent without allocation. Mr. Hodgkins said 75% (seventy-five percent) of the expenses submitted could be reimbursed from FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency). He also noted a letter from Sullivan & Powers (accountant) stated the estimated surplus was about \$340,000.00 covering the monies spent without allocation. Twelve percent (12%) of expenses submitted may not be reimbursed by FEMA and these expenses could be reimbursed by the State. Mr. Hughes said he believed there would be a report itemizing all expenses submitted to FEMA, the repairs were made in good faith, due to the storm and if FEMA did not reimburse all expenses, repairs were made directly attributable to the storm. Mr. Lawrence said all repairs were made according to ACT 64 specifications, the work done was storm related damage adding the Town would be ahead as roads repaired would be in compliance with State requirements. Mr. Jones confirmed the repairs to roads were actually better due to performing repairs conforming to ACT 64 standards. Mr. Hodgkins said the total amount submitted to FEMA to date was \$937,310.72. Ms. Kelly asked for cash flow purposes, as the Board had borrowed from other funds to pay storm expenses, where would money come from by June 2022 to cover regular

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expenses. Mr. Hodgkins said the line of credit was due in August 2022, possibly the line of credit could be extended, turned into a long term loan or the Board ask the voters at Town meeting to use the surplus funds. Mr. Hodgkins added FEMA payments would not be available or allocated until after Town Meeting 2022. Ms. Kelly will do a cash flow analysis/projection (within one week) with information Mr. Hodgkins provides regarding the Town's upcoming expenses such as road salt, sand, fuel, wages and other projects anticipated left to pay until June 30, 2022 Mr. Hughes confirmed ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds were not being utilized for purposes other than the ARPA committee approves and recommends to the Selectboard.

- Estimated Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 Surplus - Ms. Kelly said she believed it was too early to discuss the estimated surplus for FY 2022
- B. Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Review - discussion, page 7 and 8 (approval?) FY 2023 Expenditure Budget Final Draft Information included in packet - Mr. Hodgkins reviewed pages 1-4 confirming expenses that previously were in question. He noted animal control expenses will be \$7,500.00 through the sheriff's department. The Board, by voice confirmed spending \$60,000.00 for 1,000 hours of Windham County Sheriff department services and board members noted there seemed to be an increase in patrol presence in the last two weeks. Mr. Hodgkins reviewed health and welfare service amounts and noted the county tax was increasing approximately three percent (3%) each year. Mr. Hodgkins said though the report indicated no money had been spent on cemetery stone repair during the current year, he believed this was an error as there some very old stones and repairs were on-going.
- Equipment Purchase - Mr. Allen suggested adding a line to the budget as a capital expenditure for equipment purposes. There were six Town trucks requiring replacement every 7 years, loader/back hoe/excavator prices were increasing and that mowing equipment, due to emissions and electronics did not last as long as projected. The Board agreed by voice confirmation to add \$175,000.00 for equipment to the highway budget. Nate Stoddard questioned if future maintenance of the roads, due to upgrades using Surpac and large stone would cost more. Mr. Lawrence said that gravel could be added to roads repaired with Surpac, and the present budget included stone/gravel and Surpac. He added the big stone in ditches could be taken back to the Town garage sifted, leaves removed and the stone re-used/recycled. Mr. Allen questioned the amount of monies in the bridge fund and Mr. Hodgkins said it was possible there would be infrastructure funds available for bridge expense. At Ms. Kelly's suggestion/question about adding funds for capital expenditures, Ms. Harlow questioned if the fuel tanks could be replaced by requesting an additional \$15,000.00 from the voters (to the fuel line for diesel tank replacement) to the \$63,000.00 in the present budget. Mr. Lawrence noted cutting the size of the diesel fuel tanks from 8,000 to 4,000 gallons would save monies and if the additional monies were

approved, he believed the tanks could be replaced by the end of the next fiscal year.

Mr. Lawrence asked if taking money from the retreatment line and adding another line for asphalt maintenance was possible? Mr. Allen noted this was not necessary as all monies in retreatment were earmarked to fix tar roads.

- Interest Due for Line of Credit (August 1, 2022) - At Mr. Hughes request, Mr. Hodgkins will request from Mascoma Bank the amount of interest due on the line of credit to August 2022.
 - Windham County Sheriff - Discussed previously during budget review
 - Single Audit for Federal dollars - Mr. Hodgkins said an audit of ARPA and FEMA funds will be required. The audit fee of \$7,500.00 can be covered by FEMA. The Board agreed to add this amount under annual audit expense in the budget. Ms. Stoddard asked if the \$7,500 (when reimbursed) would be shown as revenue so property taxes would not be increased to cover the cost. She added the Town budgets items/expense, the Town raises tax dollars to cover expenses so basically if the revenue is not shown, the Town is getting the money two times. Mr. Allen agreed, if the money was reimbursed it should be shown in the budget as revenue.
- C. State of VT - ACCD (VT Agency of Commerce and Community Development) Opportunity - John Jones - Mr. Jones said the item had been discussed previously and believed having a Town committee would bridge gaps to apply for grants at the State level and to explore things like building infrastructure for a resilient future. He said he believed there were people interested in being on a committee and thought the committee size would be 5 people. Mr. Hughes and Mr. Allen requested information (in writing) regarding resources required, a list of people interested in being on a committee and more detail, to include a mission statement. Mr. Allen added the board was required to document information regarding appointed/approved committees, minutes of meetings and goals of any particular group. Mr. Jones said ACCD was to help the Town, it was part of the State mission for Towns to have a local say. Mr. Allen wanted to be sure or to have clarified what the role of committee would be compared to the planning commission. Mr. Jones said the Board should make a statement regarding what they wanted. Mr. Jones will submit a one page draft covering the Board requests.
- D. July 29, 2021 Storm - FEMA update - discussed earlier in meeting.

6. New Business - Discussion/Action -

- A. ARPA - Town Clerk proposal to digitize/have land records in the cloud (to enable the public to search for Town land records remotely). Ms. O'Brien outlined months of research regarding online systems available. She had narrowed her findings to COT (Commercial off the Shelf) and NEMRC (New England Municipal Resource Center) systems. Her comparison of the cost and two systems was the COT start up fees were \$23,985.00, charging \$2.50 for each down load. NEMRC start-up fees were \$13,419.00 with the same down load fee. Ms. O'Brien rated NEMRC's

Customer service much better than COT. Ms. O'Brien said the ARPA committee approved the proposal and recommended presenting her findings to the Board. She was requesting \$20,000.00 as she did not know hidden costs but the actual cost of digitizing the records would be the amount paid by ARPA funds. Records will also be available physically and digitizing the records was sustainable. Ms. Young motioned to approve digitization of land records using ARPA funds up to \$20,000.00. Mr. Perry seconded the motion, the motion carried 5-0 by voice vote.

B. Town Meeting - date, location and venue - Mr. Hodgkins said where and when the meeting would be held had to be declared soon. The Board discussed using space in the fire department for Board meetings in exchange for the Town provided cleaning services one time per month and using the open bay for the Town meeting to be held late in March or early to mid-April. The Board will discuss specific Saturday dates at the next Board meeting.

C. Executive Session with Town Manager - Town Report Dedication - Mr. Allen moved to go into executive session to discuss the town report dedication. Ms. Harlow seconded the motion, the motion carried 5-0.

7. **Manager's Report** - None

8. **Boards and Commissions** - None

9. **Other Business** - Mr. Hodgkins presented a preview of how separating the highway budget from the overall Town budget would look on paper.

10. **Date of Next Meeting - December 15, 2021** at 6:30 p.m.

The Board moved to executive session at 8:59 p.m. Upon coming out of Executive Session, the Chair declared no further business would be conducted or needed this evening.

11. **Adjournment:** Toby Young made a motion to adjourn at 9:12 PM with Craig Allen seconding. The motion passed and the Chair announced the meeting adjourned.

Clerk

Date

Minutes composed by Millie Barry 12/10/2021

