

WESTMINSTER VT SELECTBOARD MEETING

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2022

MEETING IN PERSON AT THE WESTMINSTER FIRE STATION AND BY ZOOM

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) Chuck Lawrence (Road Foreman) and Millie Barry (Recording Clerk)

Others Present: Cole Streeter, June Streeter, Casandra Pedigo, Katrina Hamilton and Jim Matteau

1. **Call to Order:** Kevin Hughes called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. Information to access a future meeting by remote means is available on the FACT TV Facebook page, the Town of Westminster website or by contacting the Westminster Town Hall.
2. **Adjustments to Agenda:** None
3. **Acceptance of Minutes:** January 26, 2022 Craig Allen motioned to accept the minutes of January 26, 2022 as printed, Susan Harlow seconded the motion the motion carried by 5-0 voice vote.
4. **Communications and Public Comments:** Jim Matteau stated the Westminster Institute was not closed. He requested people entering the building to please wear masks until the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) guidelines changed. Also, with half of the money in hand and half of the money financed for the elevator, there were issues obtaining permits with the State Elevator Review Board the architect was working to resolve.
5. **Unfinished Business (Discussion/Action) -**
 - A. Hartley Hill Road - Quit Claim Deed - legal opinion - Information included in packet - Mr. Hodgkins read from Fletcher Proctor's response addressing Attorney Slason's email about Hartley Hill. Mr. Proctor noted more research was required before moving forward. The matter will be put on hold until a meeting can be held between Mr. Slason and Mr. Proctor.
 - B. Budget Separation (Highway/Town) cost to update - Information included in packet - Mr. Hodgkins said the project was on hold until there was more information from NEMRC (New England Municipal Resource Center). Mr. Hodgkins also noted the auditor has requested the change not be made until July 1, 2022.
 - C. Schedule of Deficiencies - Treasurer Update - Information included in packet - Mr. Hodgkins said there would be more information to address deficiencies and recommendations by Sullivan, Powers & Co., P.C. at the next Board meeting. Mr. Allen questioned the lack of a fraud policy by the Town. Mr. Hodgkins will take information from VLCT (Vermont League of Cities and Towns) to compose a policy and discuss with the Town Treasurer.

- D. July 29, 2021 Storm - update - Information included in packet regarding documentation projects by area, total dollar amount per project and FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) report status and FEMA rate changes as of February 1, 2022. The Board, Manager and Mr. Lawrence discussed Westminster Heights' road hydraulic study, proposed culvert availability and cost. Mr. Hodgkins said he believed the amount of storm damage would be about \$1,100,000.00. In answer to Nate Stoddard's question regarding assistance to residents by FEMA for damage caused by the storm, Mr. Hodgkins said a list of residents had been provided to FEMA, inspectors had looked at individual resident damage and at the present time, there was no information regarding help. From information gathered regarding the Moffit property off Piggery Road, Mr. Lawrence said the USDA did not offer individual assistance.

- E. USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) Grant - funding - Information included in packet - Mr. Hodgkins said per grant guidelines, the finish date to use the grant monies for the Piggery Road project is July 23, 2022. This time line was not possible for the Town to advertise the project, receive bids and secure a contractor. There was not a guarantee the project would be extended (though an extension was probable). Options for funding the Town's portion of the grant were to use the line of credit transitioning to another fiscal year or to take the money from the highway department budget. To take money from the highway department budget so early in the year was concerning for the Manager and Mr. Lawrence. Mr. Hodgkins noted there may be grants available to cover the Town's portion. Mr. Allen motioned to pursue the USDA grant for Piggery Road. Jason Perry seconded the motion, the motion carried by 5-0 voice vote.

In another highway department matter, Mr. Lawrence has received approval for a passive grant in the amount of \$6,000.00 from VLCT to purchase safety equipment such as road signs, safety vests etc. Mr. Lawrence said these funds, when received, would go back into the general fund and his budget would be behind by \$6,000.00 after spending the monies for equipment. Mr. Hodgkins believed the equipment could be paid for out of a Selectboard miscellaneous expense line and when the funds are received they would offset the expense line. Mr. Allen motioned to approve spending up to \$6000.00 for equipment for the highway crew to be reimbursed by the VLCT passive grant. Ms. Harlow seconded the motion, the motion carried by 5-0 voice vote.

- 6. New Business (Discussion/Action) -
 - A. NEMRC - Contract/Services - subcommittee update- Information included in packet - June Streeter and Toby Young questioned the reasoning for an executive session regarding NEMRC contract services. Mr. Hughes explained the discussion was regarding a specific contract and monies. When the executive session concluded the Board would issue information/statement regarding how the board would proceed and or next steps. Mr. Hughes noted information found online had been provided to the board. Mr. Hughes confirmed with FACT TV the remainder of the meeting would be available by remote means

after the executive session concluded.

- B. Adopting Road and Bridge Standards: Certification of Compliance included in packet - Mr. Allen motioned to sign the certificate of compliance for Town road and bridge standards, Ms. Harlow seconded the motion. Mr. Perry said he was being asked to approve something he had not seen prior to the present time. Mr. Hughes asked the Board to review the Standards packet and the item would be tabled to the next meeting. Mr. Allen withdrew his motion.
 - C. Meeting venue discussion: Mr. Hodgkins said he would clarify with the Westminster Historical Society an email to the Board from the Society. He added the opportunity to hold Selectboard meetings in the fire station was temporary until a permanent meeting space was determined. Ms. Harlow confirmed the historic society was giving the Board an option for more room (to expand into the society space). Mr. Allen stated the Town had spent money for heat, air conditioning, internet and elevator and the Board was requesting a larger space to hold Selectboard meetings on the second floor. He questioned moving display cases for meetings and replacing after meetings. Mr. Matteau, speaking on behalf of the Westminster Institute Board, said no decisions has been made about moving forward. His proposal to the ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) committee suggested using ARPA funds for an independent qualified assessment to make the Institute a safe and efficient meeting space. He noted the acoustics were very poor as well as the ventilation system and audio/visual capability required work. He believed the process would be for the Town to decide what money they might spend, the Institute Board would decide what changes to make to the building and a detailed agreement would be required about who would use the building and when. He added the Institute Board was open to discussion about the building suggesting an assessment to answer questions and noting that preserving the historic nature of the building as paramount.
 - D. Executive Session - Contractual Matter - Mr. Allen moved to go to executive session at the end of the meeting to discuss a contractual matter. Mr. Perry seconded the motion, the motion carried 5-0 voice vote.
- 7. Manager's Report:**
- 1. Windham County Sheriff - credit received - information included in packet documenting credit from the sheriff's department of \$6,833.33.
 - 2. Town Hall Front Entrance - renovation to begin week of February 21, 2022. The ballot box has been installed in the front entrance (per VT law) to be under lock and key.
 - 3. February 21, 2022 is Presidents Day. The Town offices will be closed.
 - 4. Next ARPA meeting date is February 22, 2022 at 5:30 p.m. at the Westminster Institute.
 - 5. Voting will be held at the Town Hall on March 1, 2022 from 10:00 a.m. to 7 p.m.

8. Boards and Commissions:

Conservation Commission - new member approval

Mr. Hodgkins noted a letter in the packet from Sarah Waldo stating her interest in joining the Westminster Conservation Commission. Ms. Harlow motioned to appoint Sarah Waldo to the Westminster Conservation Commission. Ms. Young seconded the motion, the motion carried 5-0 by voice vote. Mr. Hodgkins noted there were no terms for members and no limit to number of members for this commission.

9. Other Business:

Mr. Hughes thanked Cole Streeter and the fire department for use of the department meeting space for Selectboard meetings.

Cole Streeter asked to begin a discussion on ‘routine calls’ by the rescue department. He stated one resident had requested assistance 32 times and another resident 10-11 times in the past year. Westminster Cares and other agencies had been contacted for input. Mr. Streeter said the problem would not go away but members would stop responding to calls. He noted this problem was also prevalent in other communities and in some cases, related to mental health and or and living alone. Mr. Hughes will contact Donna Dawson for suggestions.

10. Date of Next Meeting: - February 23, 2022 at the Westminster Fire Station at 6:30 PM.

The Board moved to executive session at 8:00 p.m.

Upon Coming out of Executive Session at 8:43 PM, the Chair declared that the sub-committee consisting of Kevin Hughes, Susan Harlow, and the Town Manager will continue the search for other avenues (options) for financial services as per the previous resolution created at the last Selectboard meeting. Susan Harlow moved this motion as declared with Craig Allen seconding. The motion passed 5-0.

11. Adjournment: Toby Young made a motion to adjourn with Jason Perry seconding. The motion passed at 8:47 PM.

Clerk

Date

Minutes composed by Millie Barry 2/12/2022