

WESTMINSTER, VT SELECTBOARD MEETING

Wednesday, February 23, 2022

In Person at the Westminster Fire Station and 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), Paul Harlow (Treasurer), Chuck Lawrence (Road Foreman)

Others Present: Katrina Hamilton, John Jones, Paul Banik, Chip Stearns, Nate Stoddard, Cole Streeter, FACTV and by Zoom - Racheal Scott, Jessie Haas, Cassandra Pedigo

1. **Call to Order:** Kevin 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, the Westminster website or by contacting the Westminster Town Hall.
2. **Adjustments to Agenda:**
 - A. Mr. Hodgkins said members of the Historical Society would be attending the meeting by Zoom and he would like to move this item up to 5A – Meeting Venue.
 - B. Mr. Hughes said a letter of resignation from Treasurer, Paul Harlow would be addressed under Communications and Public Comments.
3. **Acceptance of Minutes:** February 9, 2022 - Susan Harlow motioned to accept the minutes of February 9, 2022 as printed. Craig Allen seconded the motion. Nate Stoddard noted an inspector from FEMA had not reached out to him and he was not aware of an inspection of his property after the July 29, 2021 storm. The Board voted 5-0 by voice vote to accept the minutes as written.
4. **Communications and Public Comments:**
 - A. Mr. Hughes, on behalf of the Selectboard, thanked Paul Harlow for his service to the Town. Mr. Allen motioned to accept the resignation of Paul Harlow, Jason Perry seconded the motion, motion carried 5-0 by voice vote.
5. **Unfinished Business:**

Mr. Hughes noted to move item G., Meeting Venue to the top of the list.

Jessie Haas, President of the Westminster Historical Society Board and Racheal Scott, curator of the Westminster Historical Society museum appeared by Zoom to address the Board regarding the Town Hall second floor meeting room and historical society space. Ms. Scott said the cases could be moved to around the hearse so there would be more open space. She understood and realized the Board was blocked in and the barricade would be moved. Toby Young noted it was difficult to visualize the space without

being there. She asked if moving the cases would accommodate more people. Ms. Scott believed there would be a lot more seating available and the exit door to the fire escape and door to stairwell more accessible. Ms. Haas said at present there was a nice exhibit on the Westminster Massacre. The Board will tour the museum on a future date and there will be assistance provided by the Town to move the cases when it is convenient for those involved. Mr. Hughes thanked Ms. Haas and Ms. Scott for their historical society work and accommodating the Board with additional space.

In another matter, Mr. Hughes thanked Chief, Cole Streeter and members of the fire department for use of their meeting room space during COVID (Corona Virus).

- A. *Hartley Hill Road - next step if any* - Information included in packet - Mr. Hodgkins noted the Board had tabled this item, it was a big step, a costly matter and an option was to bring the matter up at Town Meeting. Mr. Allen believed the next step was legal counsel, Larry Slason and Fletcher Proctor to meet about the matter. He said the length of a meeting may not be more than an hour. The Board agreed to wait for the attorneys to meet before making a decision.
- B. *Budget Separation - Highway/Town - cost to update* - Mr. Hodgkins said the cost to have two separate expenditures would be \$1,400.00 and the change would take place July 1, 2022. Ms. Harlow confirmed this was a one-time expense. Chip Stearns, Mr. Hodgkins and the Board discussed separating the accounts. Mr. Allen motioned to contract with NEMRC (New England Municipal Resource Center) to break out the highway funds at a cost not to exceed \$1,400.00. Ms. Harlow seconded, motion carried 5-0 by voice vote.
- C. *Schedule of Deficiencies - Treasurer Update* - Information included in packet - Mr. Hodgkins said Mr. Stearns will continue work on the financial manual. Mr. Stearns said the rules/policies will change and the manual will evolve with changes. Mr. Hughes confirmed no Town funds were at risk in the stock market and in reviewing the model policy, the Board was not reviewing changes for something as negligent as that type of policy. Mr. Hughes requested an accounting to be sure funds were dispersed in accordance with the safest, most secure manner. Mr. Stearns stated his Westminster account information showed 15-18 accounts with Mascoma Bank, Savings Bank of Walpole, TD Bank and Community Bank, NA., the information did not indicate the investments were anything but liquid. Mr. Hodgkins questioned the Board how to meet needs without a treasurer/assistant treasurer. Mr. Allen motioned to accept the resignation of Assistant Treasurer, Darlene Kelly, effective immediately with approval from Paul Harlow. Ms. Harlow seconded motion, motion carried 5-0 by voice vote. Mr. Stearns said by statute, in the case where a town had neither a treasurer/assistant treasurer, Russell Hodgkins, Town Manager

would be added as signer on accounts and would be responsible for managing the Town's budgets. Mr. Stearns believed the Town could use a person with bookkeeping, procedural processing skills and to read and follow instructions. He said it was expensive for him to undertake procedural tasks and to possibly shift what the role of the treasurer is in the Town of Westminster. Under the Manager there may be an administrative assistant and a financial assistant. The Treasurer position would be a 'figure head' to sign checks. Mr. Hodgkins said Mascoma Bank recommended the Manager and a Board member co-sign checks for the present time. Cash payments on line would be done with a token for Mr. Hodgkins and Mr. Stearns to access accounts on a monthly basis. Mr. Stearns said by statute, the Board should appoint a treasurer for a limited term. This person would sign checks and is required to be a resident of the Town. In answer to Nate Stoddard's question, Mr. Hodgkins clarified Kelly Thayer, as Assistant Treasurer, receives tax payments, coded invoices and processes payroll. Cassandra Pedigo said she was happy to help for two weeks, was an uninvolved party, a resident and accessible to sign checks. After discussion, Mr. Hughes stated Pedigo was running for school board, is a taxpayer and is known to the community. Toby Young motioned to appoint Cassandra Joyce Pedigo interim Town Treasurer and Craig Allen as interim Assistant Treasurer. Mr. Allen to hold one Mascoma token and Willis (Chip) D. Stearns to hold the second token. Jason Perry seconded the motion, motion carried 5-0 by voice vote.

- D. *July 29, 2021 Storm - update* - Information included in packet - Mr. Hodgkins said two projects had been approved by FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency), two are going through the stringent process, and one is being put together by the Town FEMA Representative. He reviewed out of pocket costs, Selectboard approval of funds, including line of credit, working capital and balances. The balance of unallocated expenses is \$363,322.24, the Line of Credit spent is \$225,000 with the final total of \$588,322.24 still pending. Anticipated FEMA reimbursements of \$834,375.00, the State of VT portion (twelve and one half percent) of \$139,063.00, with total paid expenses of \$973,438.00. The Town expects its first reimbursement check soon, other reimbursement stretched out over several months. Net unreserved surplus to cover expenses totals \$271,472.00 to be presented to voters at Town Meeting. Mr. Hodgkins said number/dollar details would probably change by April 30, 2022 Town Meeting.
- E. *USDA (United States Department of Agriculture Grant) - Funding* - Information included in packet - Mr. Hodgkins said there would be a great deal of paperwork to extend the grant for the Piggery Road project. He asked the Board to confirm their approval to move forward with the grant.

F. *Adapting Road and Bridge Standards* - Susan Harlow moved to approve the Certificate of Compliance for Town Road and Bridge Standards and Network Inventory, seconded by Craig Allen, the motion carried by 5-0 voice vote. Mr. Perry asked if Board members had read the 'orange book' containing the standards and suggested new Board members be given the book to review.

G. *Meeting Venue* - Discussed previously

H. *WCECD (Westminster Commerce and Economic and Community Development) Committee update* - Information included in packet - John Jones reviewed the organization of the committee members determined during a meeting February 16, 2022.

6. **New Business (Discussion/Action) -**

A. *Bridge #5 Repair Over Saxtons River* - update - Information included in packet - Mr. Hodgkins told the Board information from the State of VT was the low bid from two contractors was over three point five million dollars due to material cost inflation, shortage of material, trucking of material and labor costs. The change in estimate would make the Town's portion about \$100,000.00 opposed to \$56,000.00 as first estimated.

B. *Appointment List - First draft* - Information included in packet - Mr. Hodgkins said the list was a work in progress and will be adopted at a future meeting.

C. *Legal Documents - authorize to sign*. Information included in packet -

1. William H. Lyons, III Estate Property Expense - there are no heirs or interest in the property. Toby Young motioned the Selectboard authorize the Town manager to sign documents including petition to open decedent's estate, written statement of claim etc. to continue the process of reimbursement to the Town for out of pocket expense. Mr. Allen seconded, motion carried by 5-0 voice vote.
2. Mr. Allen motioned to authorize the Town Manager to sign documents for the estate of William Trevorrow, Mr. Perry seconded, motion carried by 5-0 voice vote.
3. Kissell/Daigle Road Drainage legal opinion - no action required

7. **Manager's Report:**

1. The Town Hall entrance floor has been sanded and work continues on walls.

2. Voting will be held at the Town Hall on March 1, 2022 from 10 a.m. to 7:00
3. Special Notice: The notice was attached to trash receptacles and distributed to residents to minimize road damage from trash trucks during mud season. It states to bring trash receptacles to end of roads designated on notice. Mr. Lawrence said updates regarding road conditions are posted on the Town of Westminster website and/or Facebook page. Ms. Pedigo noted she appreciated the effort and believed the contract with Ruggiero should include their responsibility to pick-up trash, use a smaller truck etc. to accommodate residents unable to move receptacles to the end of designated roads. Mr. Lawrence said he believed the contract included highway trucks will pick-up trash on these roads during mud season. Mr. Allen noted he had received many calls regarding the matter, had no prior knowledge and asked in the future the Board be notified about future notices to residents.

8. **Boards and Commissions:** Paul Banik identified himself as the new chair of the ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) committee.

9. **Other Business:** Mr. Hodgkins said the ARPA Committee has approved the recommendation for the purchase of a new generator for the Westminster Fire Department as the current generator is failing. Ms. Harlow moved to approve \$28,545.64 on recommendation of the ARPA Committee to purchase a generator for the fire station. Mr. Perry seconded, motion carried 5-0 by voice vote.

In another matter, Mr. Lawrence requested to explore options for a new Town Garage as the heating system is in need for repair. He will assemble a committee to look at possibilities.

10. **Date of Next Meeting** - March 9, 2022 at the Town Hall at 6:30 PM.

11. **Adjournment:** Susan Harlow motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:39 p.m., seconded by Jason Perry, meeting adjourned.

Selectboard Clerk

Date

Minutes composed by Millie Barry 2/25/2022

Page 5 of 5

Westminster Selectboard Meeting 2.23.2022