

## WESTMINSTER SELECTBOARD MEETING

*Wednesday, September 28, 2022 - 6:30 p.m.*

**In person at Westminster, VT Town Hall and remote by FACT TV**

**Selectboard Present:** Jason Perry (Chair), Katrina Hamilton (Clerk) Kevin Hughes (Vice Chair) and Craig Allen

**Staff Present:** Alison Bigwood (Interim Town Manager/Zoning Administrator) Charles (Chuck) Lawrence (Road Foreman) and Millie Barry (Clerk)

**Others Present:** Cole Streeter, Paul Guido, Patrick Matteau, Mark Anderson and Ladd Wilbur (Windham County Sheriff Department – 1 person for FACT TV)

1. **Call to Order:** The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.  
Information to access a future meeting using a remote connection is available on the FACT TV Facebook page, Town of Westminster website or by calling the Westminster Town Hall.
2. **Adjustments to Agenda:** None
3. **Acceptance of Minutes:** September 14, 2022 and September 19, 2022 – Katrina Hamilton motioned to accept the minutes of September 14, 2022. Kevin Hughes seconded; motion carried 3-0 by voice vote. Craig Allen abstained due to absence.  
**September 19, 2022** – Katrina Hamilton motioned to accept the minutes of September 19, 2022, Mr. Hughes seconded, motion carried 4-0 by voice vote. There was no discussion.
4. **Communications and Public Comments:** None
5. **Unfinished Business (Discussion/Action) –**
  - A. Emergency Management Director discussion – Tabled to a future meeting - Alison Bigwood suggested Mr. Masure contact the Town office a week prior to a regularly scheduled meeting if he would like to be on the Selectboard agenda.
  - B. Financial Position discussion – company versus in house – A proposal from Rural Solutions regarding town hall staff will be forwarded to all board members to review to discuss at a future meeting.
  - C. FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Administration)/Fire Department – Ms. Hamilton said she was waiting for additional information from Jessica Roderick (FEMA representative) regarding emergency services personnel reimbursement in the event of another disaster involving FEMA. As emergency service personnel are volunteers, Ms. Roderick recommended creating a labor policy. Ms. Hamilton said she did not have the details (yet) for the labor policy. Ms. Roderick said FEMA had sent a check to the SOV for 48.5 fire department equipment hours in the amount of \$4,073.73. The SOV (State of Vermont) takes 2.5% with the balance sent to the Town. Ms. Hamilton said she had not been able to track the check, adding the Town would owe the fire district funds once the check and amount are located. This item will be on the the next meeting agenda.

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

A. Sheriff – Information included in the packet – Sheriff Anderson said there was a discussion with the former town manager before the March 2022 town meeting regarding the specific changes to the sheriff department contract. Mr. Anderson believed from his conversation with Mr. Hodgkins, the Selectboard was aware of the changes and the contract would be reviewed at the March 2022 Town meeting. He said he now realizes there was no discussion at Town Meeting and the Selectboard were unaware of changes. He added, going back several years, the department had maintained a 40 hour a week deputy with the Town of Westminster, the hours had fluctuated from 20, 30 and back to 40 hours. His discussion with Mr. Hodgkins was to combine forces with the Town of Putney as both Towns had a 40 hour/week deputy. An officer on duty in Westminster could respond to a call in Putney and vice versa. This was regionalizing financial and human resource services paying for a 40-hour position and possibly utilizing 80 hours of coverage. As Westminster changed its contract to 20 hours of coverage each week, the VT State Police cover when the Sheriff's Department is not on duty. Mr. Allen said, the Board agreed, as money was owed to the Town, due to lack of coverage, to contract for 20 hours each week. Mr. Anderson said Westminster was credited hours and money was refunded from the Sheriff's department. Mr. Allen added a major problem was the Town had no idea when or where the department was on duty for the present 20 hours per week. Ms. Bigwood mentioned a recent incident early in the morning at the Town office where the sheriff department dispatcher forwarded the incident call to the VT State Police. She said the State Police did not arrive until after the incident had resolved. There was no follow-up from the Sheriff department, and this was a problem for the Board and office employees. Mr. Perry mentioned another incident when someone from Westminster called for assistance and a dispatcher indicated the Town's hours had been used for the week. Mr. Perry said later the same week there was a sheriff patrolling on Route 5. Mr. Anderson said since July 1, 2022 the department had been providing approximately 33.9 hours versus the 20 hours contracted for. He said the department was attempting to respond to the demands of the Town and his department was not going to get things 100% correct all the time. Mr. Perry believed there was an increasing frustration from the public in general about the lack of Sheriff Department presence, suggesting the problem was the Board decision to go with 20/hours per week. Mr. Hughes questioned the specifics of the static deterrence speed monitor/camera on School Street. He believed there was less speeding when the monitor was in place. Mr. Anderson said the monitors were grant funded and effective. He said the department would like more radar, speed feedback devices to mount to street signs, telephone poles, and to utilize the battery-operated devices in various places. Mr. Allen noted in the past, when the Town contracted with the department for 40 hours there was a relationship between deputies and the Town Office. He said the Board would like to improve the relationship, so deputies know what is going on in Town and the Town knew when and where the deputies were patrolling. Mr. Anderson said there was an on-line activity report Ms. Bigwood could

- access. He continued he would like to bring the area town representatives together to propose and recognize the benefits of regionalizing policing, while recognizing individual town budgets. He added the department was already building the model with the shared program between Westminster and Putney. The current policing practices were what towns were comfortable with and knew most about. Paul Guido noted he had filed complaints in August regarding scrap/salvage areas on Morse Brook Road and questioned the reasoning there was no follow-up from the department? Mr. Anderson said different agencies could be involved with dumping and/or scrap/salvage and believed the investigation was on-going. Mr. Anderson will re-send to Ms. Bigwood the five-year data report between Westminster and the Sheriff department. The Board and Ms. Bigwood discussed Westminster's junk ordinances previously forwarded to the sheriff department and concluded the Town is not comfortable/satisfied with the 20 hours the department is currently providing. Mr. Perry said there were small towns surrounding Westminster, mostly in New Hampshire, with their own police force. Mr. Allen said the Town might want to re-visit coverage by the Bellows Falls police force.
- B. Cemetery Deed – Mr. Hughes motioned on September 28, 2022, the Town of Westminster remise, release and quit claim unto to Janet Heffernan and Crystal Morse, 3 burials in Westminster New Cemetery, Section E, Row 3, 141, 142 and 143 for \$610.00. Mr. Allen seconded; motion carried 4-0 by voice vote.
- C. ARPA (American Rescue Plan ACT) Mission Statement Approval – Information included in packet – Jim Matteau said the statement was to layout for the public a better understanding of how the system is supposed to work and the process to propose use of funds. Mr. Allen motioned to adopt the memo (mission statement) as presented by the ARPA committee, Kevin Hughes seconded, Mr. Matteau requested to add the Mission Statement is the MEMO dated September 21, 2022. Motion carried 3-0. Katrina Hamilton abstained as she composed the Memo/Mission Statement.
- D. ARPA Fund Proposals – discussion – Information included in packet – Cole Streeter presented a proposal to the Board for a commercial washing machine to wash gear, including installation at a total cost of \$9,412.69. Mr. Hughes motioned to accept the proposal from the ARPA committee for procurement of a fire gear washing machine at \$7,822.00, installation of \$1,590.69 totaling \$9,412.69. Mr. Allen seconded; motion carried 4-0 by voice vote. Mr. Perry questioned the procedure if costs of the machine or installation exceeded the approval. Ms. Bigwood said the invoice would be presented to the Board before payment. Mr. Hughes motioned to approve payment of the invoice for installation (including labor and material) of the emergency generator for the Westminster Fire Station in the amount of \$3,348.04, invoice #2835, Mr. Allen seconded; motion carried 4-0 by voice vote.
- Mr. Lawrence said he had submitted a proposal for a bridge deck over East Putney Brook (wooden deck bridge owned by the Town), the deck to be replaced with cement. SOV will not assist with costs due to the Town's ownership. Mr. Lawrence said of the three contractors contacted to look at the project, Kubricky Construction was not interested in bidding, Cold River Bridge submitted bid of \$119,000.00 and

Renaud Brothers bid was approximately \$100,000.00. The road closure will be one day. Mr. Lawrence added he was proposing to use ARPA funds as Goldies Bridge needed paving and a membrane repair, and the East Putney Brook Bridge needed replacement. As repair to the bridges is scheduled the same time the Route 121 Bridge in North Westminster was repaired, there was not enough money budgeted to cover all three repairs. Mr. Hughes confirmed the ARPA committee approved the expenditure. Mr. Hughes motioned to approve ARPA fund use for Renaud Brothers to remove existing wood deck and beams, replace with precast deck, pier caps, and install bridge rail to include material and labor at total expenditure not to exceed \$100,000.00 for East Putney Brook Road bridge deck replacement. Mr. Allen seconded; motion carried 4-0 by voice vote.

Mr. Lawrence requested ARPA funds for a 3 head saw (mounting to the tractor) for trimming tree limbs and roadside maintenance at a price of \$27,400.00 from Champlain Valley Equipment. Mr. Allen motioned to authorize up to \$27,400.00 to purchase from Champlain Valley Equipment a 69" saw blade head that attaches to roadside mower. Mr. Hughes seconded the motion. Mr. Lawrence said Champlain Valley Equipment would train highway personnel once the purchase was final. Mr. Allen questioned sharing use of the saw with other towns. Mr. Lawrence said the saw could be shared if the Town wanted to let another town use the roadside mower.

- E. Road Foreman's Report – Mr. Lawrence said the School Street project was complete and the paperwork has been submitted to FEMA for reimbursement.

Bazin Brothers has started the Piggery Road project and the road will be closed daily from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

The culvert on Windmill Road South (Better Roads Grant) is in place, the job is not complete.

Mr. Lawrence stated Kubricky Construction, company working on the I-91 bridge over Route 121 in North Westminster has offered the Town material from the bridge (about 2,000 yards). J.A. McDonald, Inc. has offered the Town about 3,000 yards of ledge product delivered free of charge to the Town garage from their I-91 road project.

Lawrence said the new truck was done.

- F. Manager's Report – Ms. Bigwood said after inspection by K. Sheldon Beebe, Beebe Plumbing and Heating, Mr. Beebe determined the Town Hall furnace was 'junk.' The furnace had been leaking for some time and due to corrosion, the hot water heater required replacing as well. Ms. Bigwood contacted Streeter LLC for a proposal to replace as well as three other local companies. At the time of the meeting, she did not have a cost proposal.

Ms. Bigwood noted there was also a rat problem in North Westminster especially in the areas of Oak Hill Terrace and Cooperman's Mill. When contacting SOV she was advised this was an individual resident problem controlled by trapping, limiting bird food at feeders, chicken feed and controlling trash and compost. Using poison could affect other wildlife and had environmental concerns.

- G. Executive Session – Mr. Hughes motioned to move to executive session to discuss consideration of the appointment of a fifth selectboard member as required by statute.

The appointment will be until the March 2023 town meeting. Mr. Allen seconded; the motion carried by 4-0 voice vote. The Chair noted there could be a decision at the end of the executive session.

7. **Boards, Committee and Commissions** – None
8. **Other Business:** Mr. Guido suggested Ruggiero write an article for the Westminster Gazette detailing accepted recyclable material. Mr. Guido also questioned where the Towns waste stream was going. Mr. Hughes suggested inviting someone from the Rockingham transfer station to address the Board regarding items the station takes. Mr. Perry noted it was a good reminder to residents, trash/furniture/waste at the end of the road or turnaround marked ‘free’ it was the resident’s responsibility to dispose/discard. Mr. Lawrence questioned the possibility of changing/creating an ordinance so people disposing of trash illegally would be fined if caught.
9. **Date of Next Meeting** – October 12, 2022 – 6:30 p.m.

The Board moved to executive session at 7:59 p.m.

The Board returned to regular session at 8:20 p.m. Craig Allen motioned to appoint Nathan Dugat to fill the Selectboard position vacated by Toby Young. This term will end in March 2023. Ms. Hamilton seconded; motioned carried by 4-0 voice vote.

10. **Adjournment** – Kevin Hughes motioned to adjourn at 8:25 p.m., Craig Allen seconded, meeting adjourned.

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Clerk

Date