

WESTMINSTER SELECTBOARD MEETING

Wednesday, November 9, 2022 - 6:30 p.m.

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

Selectboard Present: Jason Perry (Chair), Katrina Hamilton (Clerk), Kevin Hughes (Vice Chair), Craig Allen - Nathan Dugat appeared by Zoom

Staff Present: Charles (Chuck) Lawrence (Road Foreman), Alison Bigwood (Interim Town Manager/Zoning Administrator)

Others Present: Joe Ruggiero, Adam Grinold, Jennifer Stromsten, Richard Parker (Planning Commission) 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 Westminister website or by calling the Westminister Town Hall.

2. Adjustments to Agenda: Kevin Hughes motioned to move to Executive Session under New Business section E. to discuss personnel, contractual matter and to share information with the public (if any) at the conclusion of executive session. Craig Allen seconded; motion carried 5-0 by voice vote.

3. Acceptance of Minutes: October 26, 2022 – Mr. Hughes motioned to accept minutes of October 26, 2022 meeting as submitted, Mr. Allen seconded; motioned carried by 5-0 voice vote

4. Communications and Public Comments: Richard Parker reminded the Board there will be a housing forum Tuesday, November 15, 2022 at the Westminister Institute at 6:30 p.m.

5. Unfinished Business (Discussion/Action)

A. Ruggiero – trash and recycling update – Mr. Perry questioned tonnage was the Town over or under – Mr. Ruggiero said recycling may be over due to boxes from shipments etc. Ruggiero said there were about 40-50 residents using food waste pickup, the waste is taken to Windham Solid Waste Facility in Brattleboro for disposal. Currently the best price for disposal of trash is in NY, disposal sites vary depending on trucking available. Ruggiero said the price to dispose of recyclable material was higher than the current price he is charging the Town due to China being the biggest consumer of recyclables and their continual lockdown. Perry read from an

article stating Windham Solid Waste was currently separating glass as opposed to single stream recycling. Ruggiero said his company was not sorting glass due to convenience.

B. Radar Speed Sign Trailer Discussion: Information Included in packet – Chuck Lawrence said Traffic Safety Warehouse was the best price for equipment provided and includes a data collection system showing number of cars, speeds traveled etc. for \$8,105.00 versus others costing over \$10,000.00. Mr. Hughes said the Board should consider the information to compare costs of radar speed signs as opposed to police service cost. Mr. Lawrence believed one unit was sufficient for the Town and to move the unit to different locations.

6. New Business: Discussion/Action

A. SeVEDS (Southeastern Vermont Economic Development) – Information included in packet – Adam Grinold, Executive Director of SeVEDS addressed the board requesting to be on the Town Meeting Warning and to talk about the work they are currently doing. Jennifer Stromsten highlighted a local housing needs conference hosted by SeVEDS December 1, 2022 to compliment local town housing forums to include VHFA (Vermont Housing Finance Agency) and other State agencies. The forum is to bring towns together to talk and learn from each other. She noted there would be energy grants available of up to \$500,000.00 for local town deep energy retro fit building. Ms. Stromsten also provided detailed information about the work SeVEDS is doing in local high schools working with guidance counselors to encompass students working in any program or direction (personal learning). Recently SeVEDS hosted a mini version of a larger reality fair held at Leland and Gray High School at (BFUHS) Bellows Falls Union High School focusing on financial literacy. Details included real jobs, volunteers sharing information regarding local job opportunities and salaries. Presented at the fair was information on housing, living costs, and balancing a budget as well as actual jobs available in the local area. She noted the Board could access the SeVEDS annual report online. Mr. Grinold talked about the economic development district, part of the EDA process, CEDS (comprehensive economic development strategy), allowing SeVEDS to apply for economic development district between Bennington and Windham Counties and requesting a letter of support from every municipality in the two counties. This allows access, if they become EDD (Economic Development District) for the two counties access to receive annual funding for regional strategies for communities, businesses, and individuals to prioritize focus on youth, increasing wages, and other priorities in the region to have thriving communities. Mr. Grinold requested the Board waive the required petition signatures for the Town Meeting Warning. The Board believed the signature requirement was waived due to COVID (Corona Virus).

B. Truck Purchase and trade – Mr. Perry noted there was a purchase and sale agreement for the new truck. In answer to Mr. Perry's question regarding financing, Mr. Allen noted there was \$175,000.00 line item in the budget under equipment to cover the truck purchase. Required is the title for the truck being traded and the Board to authorize the Town Manager to sign

paperwork. Mr. Hughes asked the status of the loan for the truck financed in 2022. Ms. Bigwood believed there were two more payments or about \$43,000.00 in December 2022 and December 2023. Perry read minutes from a prior meeting stating, "budget amount left in the equipment fund for a two year note payment of \$44,017.88 each year." The Board discussed having money in the equipment fund budget for this year's payment. Mr. Allen said this was for a backhoe not a truck and someone needed to investigate where the money was put for the loan. Ms. Bigwood said she was not able to locate the funds. Hughes made a motion to authorize the Chair of the Board to execute the title on behalf of the Town of Westminster to sell vehicle #5KKHAVDV8ELFY8630, 2014 Western Star model 999, Hamilton seconded; motion passed 4-0 voice vote, Craig Allen abstained. Ms. Hamilton motioned to have Alison Bigwood, Interim Town Manger sign paperwork to purchase the new truck. Mr. Hughes seconded and asked to confirm the money was available in the budget for the full purchase without any indebtedness. Ms. Hamilton offered to read from minutes from December 8, 2021 meeting. Mr. Hughes confirmed for the record and taxpayers the money is available and the Town is not assuming any additional debt. Motion carried 4-0, by voice vote. Craig Allen abstained. Mr. Allen believed the truck would be available 11/10/2022.

C. Manager's Report – Ms. Bigwood noted she contacted the Sheriff's department two different days for a resident requesting support to evict a tenant. As there was not a sheriff available, she advised the tenant to contact the State Police for assistance. In addition, the town clerk requested the sheriff drive-by the polls on election day at intervals of 8 a.m., noon, 4 and 7 p.m. due to possible contention at the polling place. Ms. Bigwood said if there was a drive-by, the sheriff did not come into the polling place. Ms. Bigwood indicated coverage had been confirmed by the sheriff and the town clerk believed there was no sheriff presence. Ms. Bigwood said the animal control officer, Ashley Pinger had a busy month with dogs and has reached out for some assistance with residential issues. Ms. Bigwood said Pinger had been very helpful with animal problems. In answer to Perry question addressing the 'trash' situation, Ms. Bigwood said there was no sheriff response. Three emails to Deputy Fisher have gone unanswered except the deputy noted he was having difficulty with his email. Ms. Bigwood requested the deputy come to the Town Office to have a conversation. Perry questioned how to change the procedure of patrol in the Town believing there was no accountability by the department to detail when or where they are patrolling. Mr. Hughes said as a client, the Town was not getting service for the money paid. The Town had the same complaint for four years, is not happy with how the service is provided. Mr. Allen noted when Westminster and Putney had shared service, he believed there were regular check-ins and patrol services were better. He added, from his knowledge locally, there was very little local coverage to address vehicle break-ins, theft etc.

Ms. Bigwood said she would be delivering letters to Post 37 veterans and other local veterans

Homes from students in Amanda Mayo's class at Westminster Center School. The Town office and Town highway crew will not be available November 11, 2022 due to Veterans Day holiday. The local American flags have been picked up and delivered to Post 37 for disposal. Kelley Thayer has started working on the Town Report and budget information should be available at the next Board meeting. She noted Mr. Lawrence and Ben Masure (highway department) are also working on budget items. The lists will soon be on-line with tax maps to work in conjunction with the town clerk's land records.

D. Road Foreman Report – The bridge is finished on East Putney Brook Road. Two new highway crew members have been hired and will begin in the next two weeks. The two part time positions will be retained to make the seventh position. The guardrails on the west end of bridge number 5 have been replaced and the reimbursement received will cover the replacement of guardrails on Piggery Road to replace Jersey barriers. Truck #1 (1 ton) needs front end rebuilt; parts will be available mid to late December.

E. Executive Session – The Board moved to executive session at 7:19 p.m. reconvening regular session at 8:04 p.m. The outcome of executive session was the board made an employment offer to a candidate for manager/financial position that was accepted pending his attorney reviewing the contract. Motion made by Hughes, seconded by Allen, to approve the manager/financial candidate, motioned passed 4-1 voice vote. Hamilton voting no. Ms. Hamilton questioned the managerial experience of the candidate. Motion made by Hughes, seconded by Hamilton to authorize the board chair to sign the employment contract on behalf of the Town. Motion passed by 4-1 voice vote. Perry abstained as the chair/signee of contract.

7. Boards, Committees and Commissions – None

8. Other Business: None

9. Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday, November 29, 2022

10. Adjournment: Kevin Hughes motioned to adjourn, Craig Allen seconded, motion carried by 5-0 voice vote, meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Clerk

Date

Minutes composed by Millie Barry 11/11/2022

