

## WESTMINSTER SELECTBOARD MEETING

Wednesday, July 12, 2023 - 6:30 p.m.

In person at Westminster, VT Town Hall

**Selectboard Present:** Katrina Hamilton (chair), Kevin Hughes, Jason Perry, and Stephen Major (vice chair) arrival 6:35 p.m. and Dan Crocker (clerk)

**Staff Present:** Alison Bigwood (Interim Town Manager) Millie Barry (Recording Clerk)

**Others Present:** Mark Anderson, Jessie Haas, Ruth Grandy, Mike Daley, Nathan Dugat and Fletcher Proctor

**1. Call to Order:** Katrina Hamilton called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Information to access a future meeting using a remote connection is available on the Town of Westminster website or by contacting the Westminster Town Hall

**2. Adjustments to Agenda:** None

**3. Acceptance of Minutes:** June 28, 2023 - Kevin Hughes moved to accept the minutes of June 28, 2023, Jason Perry seconded; motion carried by 3-0 voice vote, Dan Crocker abstained due to absence

**4. Communications and Public Comments:** None

### **5. Unfinished Business – Discussion/Action**

A. Policing Discussion – Sheriff Contract – Hamilton said proposed was a 38 hour per week contract with the Town of Putney. Mark Anderson, representing the Windham County Sheriff said the contract averages 38 hours per week, it does not include holidays. Anderson referenced the proposed contract to and said the sheriff would like to formulate a MOU (memorandum of understanding) to codify the relationship between the town of Putney and the Town of Westminster and the sheriff department. The contract is a financial and legal document between Westminster and the sheriff, the MOU is a relational document between the three parties. Anderson said the MOU would spell out the relationship to prevent lapses in communication due to transitions. Stephen Major volunteered to represent the Board to formulate the MOU. Anderson said now he was fully staffed. The sheriff provides 24/7 dispatch service for the Windham County Sheriff, the Bellows Falls police department and the Bennington County Sheriff's office. Jason Perry said in the past a patrolling officer would check in with town office personnel/town garage to check-in and suggested regular dialogue between the sheriff and town as opposed to getting a general patrol invoice. Anderson said he believed this was a relational issue, if there was a daily check-in requirement in the contract the sheriff was required to make that contact. Major noted the town hall was often caught in the middle of townspeople and the department and would like an open line of communication with the

sheriff. Anderson suggested regular meetings be included in the MOU as well as other values important to the town. Perry motioned to move forward to pursue a joint contract with the Town of Putney. This motion was withdrawn. Perry suggested a public forum to know and understand the things important to the Westminster taxpayers. Perry motioned to approve the 2023/2024 contract #24-018 with the Windham County Sheriff's Department for 38 hours of weekly coverage while working with one member of the selectboard, the interim town manager and the sheriff department to develop an MOU for services provided. Major seconded the motion. Motion carried 5-0 by voice vote. Anderson questioned the contract dollar amount proposed of \$104,000.00, below the budget of up to \$120,000.00 voted/approved at town meeting. Major said as the town went forward with the MOU there may be other costs to utilize \$16,000.00.

B. North Westminster Community Hall (NWCH) update – Hamilton noted there were ten people interested in being part of a committee to explore options for the NWCH. This item is tabled to the second meeting in August when the committee presents ideas to the Board.

C. Dog Ordinance Amendment Discussion/update – Tabled due to absence of legal opinion

D. Westminster West Hearse House Discussion – (Information included in packet) - Jessie Haas presented information to the Board regarding the building in Westminster West cemetery. Hunter Jack, a post and beam builder in Marlboro, VT looked at the building and believed the building was repairable. There is a slate roof including some shingles requiring repair and the sills need replacing. He estimated the cost to repair the building to be about \$15,000.00-\$20,000.00 and was willing to work with the VT Historic Preservation for grant opportunities. Kevin Hughes confirmed the Town owned the building and stated it was important to preserve the history and legacy of the Town. He supported the rehabilitation/preservation of the building and pledged \$1000.00 to restoration efforts while recommending to move with intent and speed to secure repair funding. Dan Crocker said he would donate logs, and transport logs to and from the mill. Perry suggested applying to (ARPA American Rescue Plan Act) monies to move forward considering funding/donations from other sources as appropriate.

## **6. New Business – Discussion/Action -**

A. William French Monument – potential grant funding – Jessie Haas – Haas noted the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Westminster Massacre in 2025 saying the historical society would like to restore the surrounding area of monument. To stabilize the monument, the SOV (State of VT) legislature acted in 1904 to have cement put around the monument. Members of the Board noted there were perpetual funds available to cover possible expenses.

B. Fiscal Year 2024 Tax Rate Approval – Information included in packet – Alison Bigwood noted the tax rate went up twenty cents per \$1,000.00 from \$2.3398 Homestead/\$2.3828 Non-Homestead in 2022-2023. On the day of the town meeting Crocker suggested the Board estimate the increase in the tax rate at the time articles are approved. Perry moved to approve the 2023/2024 tax rate of \$2.5469 Homestead and \$2.5713 Non-Homestead rate. Crocker seconded, motion carried 5-0 voice vote.

C. Managers' Report – Information included in packet – Bigwood said Wade Masure from VLCT

(Vermont League of Cities and Towns) said the Town did not have policies in place and SOV fines could result due to absence of policies. Policies include CDL driver qualifications/licensing and drug testing. An adopted policy is reviewed and acknowledged by an applicant with a CDL (commercial driver's license) at the time of hire and recorded in a driver record file. The Board approved the recommendation/requirement (by VLCT) to provide a copy of the highway crew drivers license to the Town office each time the license is renewed. The actual policy will be reviewed and or amended by the Board and sent to legal counsel for an opinion. Bigwood noted per Masure the VLCT workman compensation report for claims was well above the normal of one. Accident claims are also below one or .84 percent.

Major motioned to waive the penalty for late filing of the Homestead Declaration form. Hughes seconded; motion carried 5-0 voice vote.

D. Executive Session – Perry motioned to move to executive session after other business on the agenda for a quick legal update inviting the interim town manager, Crocker seconded, motion carried 5-0 voice vote.

#### **7. Board, Committees and Commissions:**

Major suggested the Zoom invite information be included on the Planning Commission Agenda. The agricultural section of the town plan is nearly done. He noted the SOV has adopted 'Right to Farm ordinances' if people are doing regular agricultural practices.

Hughes said the Solid Waste Commission is discussing PCB (Polychlorinated Biphenyls). These chemicals could influence composting operations and making the environment a better place.

#### **8. Other Business:**

Perry noted he believed the highway department was fully staffed (7 people) questioning the reason there were part time people on the payroll. He stated his opinion highway crew employees be equipped to do the job and have a CDL license when hired opposed to spending resources to train. Dan Crocker noted the cost to train for a CDL license was \$5,000.00.

#### **9. Date of Next Meeting:** Wednesday, July 26, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

The Board moved to executive session at 8:13 p.m.

The Board reconvened regular session at 8:49 p.m.

**10. Adjournment:** Jason Perry moved to adjourn at 8:49 p.m., Dan Crocker seconded; meeting adjourned by 5-0 voice vote.

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Clerk

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Date

