

WESTMINSTER SELECTBOARD MEETING

Wednesday, November 8, 2023 - 6:30 p.m.

In person at Westminster, VT Town Hall/Remote by FACT TV

Selectboard Present: Katrina Hamilton (chair), Jason Perry, Dan Crocker (clerk), Stephen Major, (vice chair) and Kevin Hughes

Staff Present: Chuck (Charles) Lawrence (road foreman) Millie Barry (recording clerk), remote: Pauline O'Brien (town clerk)

Others Present: Nancy Olson, Sarah Waldo, Chip (Willis) Stearns, Oliver Brody and 1 person representing FACT TV

1. Call to Order: Katrina Hamilton, chair of the board called the meeting to order at 6:31 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: Ms. Hamilton noted to add Errors and Omissions under New Business I. To strike under New Business H. Executive Session and replace with VT State Ethics Commission.

3. Acceptance of Minutes: October 25, 2023 – Kevin Hughes moved to accept the minutes of October 25, 2023, Stephen Major seconded; motion carried 4-0 by voice vote. There was 1 abstention.

4. Communications and Public Comments:

Sarah Waldo encouraged the board to involve the entire community in welcoming a new town manager and to write a monthly article in the *Westminster Gazette* regarding things happening in town. Jason Perry said possibly the new town manager may write something.

Kevin Hughes said he had the privilege of serving three terms on the Westminster Selectboard. and would not seek a fourth term. He thanked the members of the present board and past boards he served with. Specifically, Alison Bigwood, Chip Stearns, Chuck Lawrence/road crew, members of the town hall, especially Jason Perry, as well as others who served before him. Hughes said it had been a privilege to represent in actual government. He confirmed he believed following the tradition set down by George Washington regarding term limits was a good rule. Change was a good thing and having different people in the role was also good. There had been a complete turnover on the board since his first term and the board had accomplished a lot. He encouraged anyone to come forward to seek a position on the selectboard.

Mr. Hughes noted several years ago the Center for Public Integrity found VT was one of four states that did not have an ethics rule receiving a fail in this category. The now established

commission is hoping to address this category. He was proud of the restoration of the conflict-of-interest policy in Westminster. Everyone he served with had been respectful, professional and with the best interests of the town at heart. Living in VT had given him the opportunity to be a part of real representative government.

Stephen Major noted David Major (town moderator) would like to attend meetings that are relevant to the town budget and town meeting preparation.

5. Unfinished Business: (Discussion/Action)

6. New Business: (Discussion/Action) –

A. Financial Discussion – Information included in packet -

Chip Stearns said there was nothing remarkable about Westminster's financial condition. Of the \$2.7 million in the checkbook at the present time, \$2.075 million is owed to other funds. The town is 33% through the budget year. He noted there was a contingency fund of \$150,000.00 and recently the board voted to take \$2,500.00 from this fund for the town hall roof repair. As there is a building/maintenance category in the general fund of \$20,000.00, removing funds from the contingency fund was not necessary. Ms. Hamilton noted it was the intent of the board to use contingency funds for the repair of the Fullam Brook culvert not for the repairs to the town hall roof. Stearns continued, the State of VT State Aid to Highways has chosen to distribute funds for all four quarters of the fiscal year through October 31 in one lump sum to help towns with cash flow. Ms. Hamilton noted road projects from the storm event July 30, 2021 are complete. FEMA (federal emergency management agency) continues to work on distribution of monies related to administrative costs such as mileage, meeting time and filing paperwork. Mr. Stearns said by closing miscellaneous special bank accounts and consolidating the monies in one checkbook has earned about 15% more interest income. He confirmed \$202,619.28 in the reappraisal fund was specifically for a townwide reappraisal of property. Mr. Major believed it was important to move forward with a reappraisal as soon as possible when the lister recommendation for a firm was available. The board agreed Mr. Stearns will attend a budget session (if necessary) November 29, 2023.

B. Beaver Deceiver Discussion: At a previous meeting the board agreed to place a beaver deceiver on Henwood Hill Road. This deceiver was to be paid for by a grant from the Westminster Conservation Commission. Chuck Lawrence said at the same meeting the board discussed placing a deceiver in the outlet area of the Allen Marsh. Lawrence said he had spoken to all abutting landowners, and all were in favor of the beaver deceivers. He received a permit from the VT Department of Wetlands to place the deceiver and had a permit to alter the level of the marsh from its historic level by two feet. Mr. Lawrence said he had not spoken to Tim Allen but emailed the permit to Mr. Allen confirming an email to all landowners with no response to the email. Dan Crocker suggested approving the Marsh deceiver when written

permission was received. Stephen Major motioned to approve a beaver deceiver on Tim Allen's property, crossing ATG (Advantage Truck Group) land pending written permission and approval from Tim Allen and ATG. Kevin Hughes seconded; motion carried by 5-0 voice vote.

C. Planning Commission Member discussion – Katrina Hamilton confirmed VLCT (Vermont League of Cities and Towns) information selectboard members can serve as full planning commission members assuming there is no town policy prohibiting such. She was not aware of a Westminster policy prohibiting a selectboard member from serving on the planning commission. Jason Perry noted Mr. Major would recuse himself if the planning commission brought something to the selectboard for approval. Kevin Hughes motioned to appoint Stephen Major as a member of the Planning Commission, Jason Perry seconded; motion carried by 4-0 voice vote. Mr. Major abstained from vote.

D. Putney Food Shelf – Information included in packet -Nancy Olson appeared as a member of the Putney Food Shelf board of directors requesting \$2,398.00 as a contribution toward the cost of serving Westminster residents be an article on the March 2024 warning. Information provided by the food shelf indicated there were 953 visits from Westminster households in FY2023 (July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023) reaching a total of 2,460 people. Ms. Olson said most of their food was sourced from the VT Food Bank and as often as possible from local vendors. The board agreed to bypass the necessity of a petition to place an article on the town warning. Kevin Hughes motioned to bypass the requirement by the Putney Food Shelf to gather petition signatures for an article on the town warning and place an article requesting \$2,398.00 for the Putney Food shelf toward the cost of serving Westminster residents. Jason Perry seconded; motion carried by 5-0 voice vote.

E. Route 5 Bike Path Survey – Information included in packet – Ms. Hamilton said the SOV was working on a planning study for a bicycle corridor on or along a route that is roughly adjacent to U.S. 5 for approximately 190 miles between the VT-MA border and the VT-Quebec border. The board agreed to complete the survey by Wednesday, November 15, 2023.

F. Sign the Town Manager Contract – Jason Perry motioned to approve and sign the employment contract for Louis Bourdeaux, Kevin Hughes seconded; motion carried by 5-0 voice vote. Mr. Bourdeaux will begin Monday, November 13, 2023.

G. Road Foreman's Report – From Chuck Lawrence, the road crew continues to blow leaves and grade dirt roads. Work on a turn-a-round on Milenkovich Road also continues. Mark Pickering, SOV engineer has confirmed Westminster will receive a 90% grant to cover the costs to repair the Fullam Brook culvert damage. The scope of work has not been determined. Also, the roller shared with the Town of Rockingham has a check engine light on. A MA company will come

to look at the problem as Nortrax no longer repairs the roller.

H. VT State Ethics Commission – Kevin Hughes said the commission has set up two interactive meetings November 21, 2023 - 9:00 a.m. 11:00 a.m. remote/zoom for selectboard members and other municipal officials and a second interactive meeting for all members of the public November 28, 2023 - 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. to discuss and provide comments on ethics in government. The board agreed Mr. Hughes post informational notices in the *Westminster Gazette* and on the Westminster website about the meetings. Mr. Lawrence will also post a notice on the town highway Facebook page.

Errors and Omissions: Kevin Hughes moved 11/8/2023 pursuant to 32 VSA S4261 to approve errors and omissions dated 10/4/2023, parcel 003094.160, owner Kirk Hutchinson, address 13 Shady Pines Park, current grand list value \$5,900.00, reason for error and omission request - this unlanded mobile home was removed in July 2022. **Note: This error and omission was motioned and approved by the board at the October 11, 2023 selectboard meeting**

11/8/2023 pursuant to 32 VSA S4261 corrected for the grand list 007089.SOL new parcel to be created, owner: Westminster Back Solar LLC, located Back Westminster Road on Parcel 007089.000 current grand list value 0, will be \$717, 910.00 reason for error and omission photovoltaic system was added to this land only parcel.

11/8/2023 pursuant to 32 VSA S4261 to approve errors and omissions 008043.12 owner Roger I. Farnsworth, location Westminster Heights Road, reason for error and omission request - when the parcel was transferred from the Town of Westminster to current owner in 2018 the tax status was not changed from exempt to taxable, current grand list value \$126,100.00. Jason Perry seconded; motions carried by 5-0 voice vote.

7. Boards, Committees and Commissions: Kevin Hughes noted by December 2023 he would hand the Windham Solid Waste representative position to the town manager.

8. Other Business: Jason Perry noted the Westminster Institute will celebrate its 100th anniversary dedication in September 2024. A ceremony has been planned for the anniversary event September 14 or 15, 2024 and an informal committee is planning, in conjunction with the dedication, the first Westminster Community Festival to have a day long event to celebrate artists, farmers, crafts people, local nonprofits, other community organizations as well as the Westminster Congregational Church, Historical Society and Fire department to participate in events coinciding with the festival celebrating Westminster's agriculture, cottage industry and the things that make Westminster great. The committee is looking for public input, to make the event a success and volunteers in all aspects of the event, sponsors (individual and corporate)

to cover things such as trash disposal, bathrooms etc. This information will be posted in the Westminster Gazette and on the Westminster website. Interested people may contact Jason Perry or Susan Harlow for more information.

Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday, **November 29, 2023** at 6:30 p.m. **Note: Change in Date**

Adjournment: Kevin Hughes moved to adjourn, Dan Crocker seconded, meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Clerk

Date

Minutes prepared by Millie Barry