

## WESTMINSTER SELECTBOARD MEETING

Wednesday, November 29 - 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), and Kevin Hughes, Stephen Major (vice chair) arrival 6:40 p.m.

**Staff Present:** Louis Bourdeaux (town manager), Chuck Lawrence (road foreman), Jackie Atwood (lister), remote – Pauline O’Brien (town clerk)

**Others Present:** Chip (Willis) Stearns, 1 person representing FACT TV

1. **Call to Order:** Katrina Hamilton, chair of the board 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:** November 8, 2023 – Kevin Hughes motioned to approve the minutes of November 8, 2023 as printed, Jason Perry seconded; motion carried by 4-0 voice vote.
4. **Communications and Public Comments:** None
5. **Unfinished Business (Discussion/Action) –**
  - A. Budget – information included in packet – Chip Stearns suggested reaching out to companies to confirm individual town contracts and amounts. He added in reviewing budget numbers, salary lines would need adjustment as well as insurance amounts and VMERS (Vermont Municipal Employment Retirement System) was dependent on salary. Building maintenance lines could need adjustment and commitments/timelines for ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds. Kevin Hughes confirmed at present, there was no outstanding debt.

In other business: Kevin Hughes welcomed the new town manager, Louis Bourdeaux and noted there would be an event to meet Mr. Bourdeaux on Tuesday, December 5, 2023 from 5:00-6:30 p.m. at the Westminster Institute.

6. **New Business: (Discussion/Action) –**
  - A. Town Meeting Location – information included in packet - Ms. Hamilton noted it was possible to use the BFUHS (Bellows Falls Union High School) as the building was now fully open. The board discussed the poor acoustics in the auditorium. Pauline O’Brien noted modifications could be made for sound and recording purposes. Mr. Perry motioned to approve the 2024 Westminster town meeting be held at BFUHS and authorize the town manager to sign the facility use form. Kevin Hughes seconded; motion carried 5-0 voice vote.
  - B. Dedication and Citizen of the Year – To be discussed in executive session.

- C. Community Policing Initiative – Mr. Bourdeaux noted in meetings with Sheriff Anderson, the sheriff’s plan to introduce to Windham County towns, without a police department, a pilot program to give residents better service/value at about the same cost. Anderson is asking for a letter of support for the program for special legislation and State permission to run the pilot program. Mr. Bourdeaux noted essentially the town would not run out of coverage hours and ensure a deputy on duty in town. He continued; his understanding was the VT State Police would be the primary coverage for any emergency. Kevin Hughes moved to accept a letter (included in packet) of support for the pilot program, Stephen Major seconded; motion carried by 5-0 voice vote. In answer to a question regarding the amount of time it took for the state police to respond, Mr. Bourdeaux noted he understood at present there was a problem with state police dispatching.
- D. Cemetery Deed – information included in packet - Kevin Hughes motioned in the Town of Westminster, VT for the sum of \$1,660.00 remise, release and quit claim unto Howard Dietz, and his heirs and assigns ten burials in Section E, row 3, graves 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, and 145 in the Westminster New Cemetery and perpetual care thereon subject to restrictions imposed by law on November 22, 2023. Jason Perry seconded; motion passed by 5-0 voice vote.
- E. Reappraisal Update – Jackie Atwood noted there were two responses from appraisal firms contacted. One firm essentially provided none of the services requested by the listers. NEMRC (New England Municipal Resource Center) was the second proposal providing all requested lister appraisal services at a cost of \$167,000.00. Kevin Hughes noted he would be more comfortable with a more definitive cost to include grievance hearings and other costs associated with the reappraisal. Stephen Major confirmed \$167,000.00 was the bid and NEMRC the firm the listers recommend. Mr. Major noted the bid was over the \$10,000.00 bid limit purchasing policy. Ms. Atwood said in her review of town policies, she believed there was an exception for technical support/services. Stephen Major motioned to approve the NEMRC bid for reappraisal process and make an exception to the town’s purchasing policy due to the two bids received. Kevin Hughes seconded; motion carried by 5-0 voice vote. Mr. Major said he was troubled by information presented interior home improvements might be exempt unless people were at home. He continued, many people at home could be retired, questioning the general principle of the burden of increased property values on those presumably retired. Ms. Atwood said a card would be left when a property was visited if no one was home and an appraisal correctness would never be 100% accurate. Jason Perry motioned to authorize the town manager to sign a contract for NEMRC for a town wide appraisal when the contract is presented. Kevin Hughes seconded; motion carried by 5-0 voice vote.

F. Mangers Report - Mr. Bourdeaux said he had met with Sheriff Anderson, the town hall staff, and the highway department employees. He looked forward to a long relationship with the Town of Westminster.

G. Road Foreman's Report -

- Mr. Lawrence said the new heating system was running in the town garage.
- Bazin Brothers began work this week on Pine Banks Road in the vicinity of the culvert loss due to the beaver pond overflow.
- He is working on a Better Roads grant for Wellington Hill Road west in the vicinity of the narrow metal culvert. The work requires a hydraulic study.
- He is researching options for plowing in early winter and late spring when roads are very soft. Gravel is lost from the side of the road and the soft roads/plowing creates damage to plows.
- Also, working with Everett Hammond to generate a road service maintenance system to create a schedule (for budget purposes) of asphalt maintenance for more asphalt longevity. Engineering costs to create a maintenance system will cost between \$5,000.00 to \$6,000.00. Presently budgeted is one mile of asphalt repaving per year. He stated his belief the road department needed to add to the budget about \$50,000.00 in asphalt maintenance. Mr. Perry said he would support additional monies for asphalt maintenance with tracking of monies used in the maintenance of asphalt. Stephen Major motioned to approve the road foreman's report, Kevin Hughes seconded; motion carried by 5-0 voice vote. Jason Perry recommended having written reports by the road foreman/town manager for the board to approve at meetings.

H. Executive Session (if needed) – Kevin Hughes motioned to move to executive session and include the town manager to discuss the dedication of the town report and citizen of the year nomination. Jason Perry seconded; motion carried by 5-0 voice vote.

The board moved to executive session at 7:41.

The board reconvened regular session at 7:57. No action was taken.

**7. Boards, Committees and Commissions:** None

**8. Other Business:** None

**9. Date of Next Meeting:** Wednesday, December 13, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

**10. Adjournment:** Dan Crocker moved to adjourn at 7:58 p.m., Jason Perry seconded; meeting adjourned by 5-0 voice vote.

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Clerk

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Date

Minutes composed by Millie Barry 12/3/2023

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