

WESTMINSTER SELECTBOARD MEETING

Wednesday, January 24, 2024 - 6:30 p.m.

Westminster, VT Town Hall – Remote by FACT TV

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

Staff Present: Lou Bordeaux (town manager), Jacklyn Atwood (lister), Millie Barry (recording clerk)

Others Present: Cole Streeter, David Major and 1 person from FACT TV, remote – Sarah Waldo

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:** None
3. **Acceptance of Minutes:** January 10, 2023 – Kevin Hughes motioned to approve the minutes of January 10, 2024 as written. Jason Perry seconded; motion carried by 4-0 voice vote. Stephen Major abstained from vote due to absence.
4. **Communications and Public Comments:**

Cole Streeter questioned if politicians could present information and answer questions before the actual town meeting to not to take away from town meeting time. The board agreed the time could be changed on the warning or there could be notice to Westminster residents if representatives/politicians were available to present information/answer questions before the actual meeting start time.
5. **Unfinished Business:** (Discussion/Action) - None
6. **New Business:** (Discussion/Action) –
 - A. Town Meeting Articles – Information included in packet – Mr. Bordeaux said the information had been sent to legal counsel for approval. The board agreed to have Chip Stearns available at town meeting to answer questions regarding the budget and input possible changes that could affect the tax rate. David Major mentioned the school portion would be presented first at town meeting. Jason Perry motioned to approve the warning for the annual meeting March 2, 2024. Kevin Hughes seconded; motion carried by 5-0 voice vote.
 - B. Sheriff’s MOU (memorandum of understanding) for Westminster and Putney – Information included in packet. Stephen Major confirmed Putney and Westminster were spending the same amount for Windham County Sheriff service. In answer to Jackie Atwood’s question, Ms. Hamilton said Westminster was spending \$104,000.00 for sheriff department coverage and the increase in the budgeted amount was approved at the 2023 annual meeting. Kevin Hughes

- motioned to approve the Windham County Sheriff MOU between Putney and Westminster and to authorize the town manager to execute on behalf of the Town of Westminster. Jason Perry seconded; motion carried by 5-0 voice vote.
- C. Dissolution of the ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Committee – Ms. Hamilton said at present, applications for repair of the New Cemetery stone wall and potentially painting the town hall had not been presented to the board for approval. The board has approved funds for the Hearse House repair and moving funds for paving/retreatment. The projects approved and those not yet approved, would essentially use the remaining funds. Ms. Hamilton read a letter from Paul Banik, chair of the committee, confirming a January ARPA meeting was not needed, requesting the board dissolve the ARPA committee as the selectboard had decided to spend the remaining funds on town expenses. Ms. Hamilton said all of the remaining ARPA funds had not been approved or obligated to specific projects by the board. Stephen Major confirmed the ARPA committee wished to be dissolved. Jason Perry motioned to dissolve the ARPA committee with thanks for their hard work. Kevin Hughes seconded; motion carried by 5-0 voice vote.
- D. Planning Commission Options – Information included in packet – Ms. Hamilton said as a planning commission member had resigned there were not enough members for a quorum. Mr. Bordeaux said the Windham Regional Commission relayed the selectboard could go to a three-member commission as an option. VLCT (Vermont League of Cities and Towns) information is selectboard members can serve as voting members on the commission. Ms. Hamilton said approving a three-member commission would make a commission quorum adding the board was past the time frame of accepting the Town Plan. A plan is required to apply for grants and aid. Mr. Bordeaux confirmed his understanding that the existing plan would be approved by the planning commission and the selectboard then the plan would be presented to the regional commission for approval. Accepting the previous version would give time for a new plan to be drafted. He added information from Mike McConnell (Windham Regional Commission), there was not a current town plan for Westminster. Jason Perry suggested making a three-member commission for the purpose of approving the town plan and then go back to a five-member commission later. Referring to VLCT information included in the packet, Kevin Hughes said the memorandum was riddled with conflict of interest, adding there was a reason for a five-member planning commission, and it would be folly for the sake of expediency, to change to three members. He added his belief now there was a new, excellent town manager people would step forward to serve on the commission. The memorandum clearly stated to him there was a conflict of interest with a selectboard member serving on the commission. Ms. Hamilton suggested

before the next board meeting, February 14th, to recruit planning commission members. If members were not recruited, consider decreasing the commission to three members. Stephen Major disagreed with Mr. Hughes reading from VLCT information that nothing prevented a selectboard member from holding any position simultaneously. He added, it was an extremely common precedent in small town government for people to serve in multiple offices as there was a limited pool of people willing to serve. He believed the mentioned conflicts would not be an issue if there were many volunteers for town offices. He confirmed the planning commission should consist of five members to get useful work done. Mr. Hughes stated the board should adopt the renewal of the Town's conflict of interest policy at the next meeting, which was enacted as state law in 2009. The Planning Commission was to act in an advisory role to the select board suggesting from an independent standpoint what the board should be doing. Ms. Hamilton confirmed the consensus of the board to try to recruit members and to contact previous members to see if they were interested in serving again and to address the actual number of members at the next meeting. Item tabled to the next meeting.

- E. Town Health Office appointment – Jason Perry motioned to appoint the town manager, Lou Bordeaux as the Town health officer. Kevin Hughes seconded; motion carried by 5-0 voice vote.
- F. Windham Solid Waste Board of Supervisors appointment – Kevin Hughes motioned to appoint the town manager, Lou Bordeaux to the Board of Supervisors of Windham Solid Waste Commission for the Town of Westminster. Jason Perry seconded; motion carried by 5-0 voice.
- G. Road Commissioner appointment – Kevin Hughes motioned to appoint town manager Lou Bordeaux as Westminster Road Commissioner. Jason Perry seconded; motion carried by 5-0 voice vote.
- H. Collector of Delinquent Taxes appointment – Kevin Hughes motioned to appoint town manager, Lou Bordeaux as the collector or delinquent taxes for the Town of Westminster. Jason Perry seconded; motion carried by 5-0 voice vote.
- I. Cemetery Deed – Kevin Hughes motioned the Town of Westminster remise, release, and quit claim in the amount of \$310.00 1 burial unto Norton and Barbara Garber in section B, row 14, bounded on the east by Nickerson, the north by Dow, empty on the west, and by King on the south in the Westminster West Cemetery with perpetual care subject to restrictions imposed. Jason Perry seconded; motion carried by 5-0 voice vote.
- J. Town Manger Report –
 - Attended a Windham Solid Waste Management District (WSWMD) Meeting: January 11, 2024. One item of interest reported was the town of Vernon solicited bids for their curbside pickup. The one response received of 12 possible bids was about three times the current budget.

The Manager said Westminster's current contract with Ruggiero went through the end of FY2025 (June 30, 2025) and Westminster had some to think about

different options.

- Rockingham Walk and Bike Committee Meeting: The committee was not chosen to receive a Municipal Planning Grant. Grant requests were received for nearly double the amount of funding available.
- Sheriff Department Update: Access to the Stars platform, due to log in difficulty has been resolved. Ashley Pinger, ACO (animal control officer) let the Manager know according to the town ordinance, the animal control officer responded to an incident on Daigle Road. The incident on Daigle Road has been closed. Also, the Town Clerk has requested periodic deputy presence at town meeting voting day. Per Lieutenant Howard, there will be coverage as requested.
- Beaver Deceivers: After numerous meetings, Skip Lisle said a deceiver could be grant funded from Bonnyvale to help with a potential project in Westminster West. The Manager believes the Henwood Hill issue was settled as Mr. Allen is not interested in a deceiver installation behind his business. Stephen Major noted Henwood Hill involved two deceivers. Mr. Bordeaux said the problem installing second deceiver, not on Allen Brothers property, was a liability issue. Jason Perry said the Town had a right of way on Henwood Hill Road and if there was a need, a deceiver could be installed there.
- An RFP (request for proposal) to paint the Town Hall will be sent to 17 commercial painting contractors and advertised in the *Commons*.

K. Executive Session (if needed) – None

- 7. Boards, Committees and Commissions:** Kevin Hughes suggested the board consider moving their meeting to a Tuesday or Thursday due to conflicts with other Town boards. The meeting day will be determined when the board reorganizes after town meeting.
- 8. Other Business:** Stephen Major questioned the status of holding the annual town meeting at BFUHS (Bellows Falls Union High School) due to the recent water damage in the auditorium. Mr. Bordeaux said this matter was yet to be determined.
- 9. Date of Next Meeting:** Wednesday, February 14, 2024 at 6:30 p.m.
- 10. Adjournment:** Jason Perry moved to adjourn at 7:31 p.m., Dan Crocker seconded; motioned carried by 5-0 voice vote.

Clerk

Date