

## WESTMINSTER SELECTBOARD MEETING

*Tuesday, June 25, 2024 at 6:30 p.m.*

### **In person at Westminster, VT Town Hall and remote by FACT TV**

**Selectboard Present:** Dan Crocker (chair), Jason Perry (Vice Chair), Real Bazin (Clerk), and Katrina Hamilton, Stephen Major was absent.

**Staff Present:** Millie Barry (clerk), remote – Pauline O’Brien (Assistant Town Clerk)

**Others Present:** Russ Hodgkins, Francis (Nancy) Dalzell, Shannon & Justin Fuller, David Dupuis, Anthony Santoriello, John Ewald, Alisa Allbee Daigneault, Kath Kortge, Beth Anderson, Elaine & Norm Beam, Chris Potter, Sam Potter and 1 person from FACT TV – remote – Bryce Hodson, and 2 unidentified people

- **Call to Order:** Dan Crocker, Chair of the Board called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. Information to access a future meeting using a remote connection (when available) is on the Town of Westminster website or by contacting the Westminster Town Hall.
- **Adjustments to Agenda:** None
- **Acceptance of Minutes:** June 11, 2024 – Real Bazin motioned to approve the minutes of June 11, 2024, Jason Perry seconded; motion passed with 3 voice votes (Bazin, Perry, Hamilton).
- **Communications and Public Comments:** John Ewald addressed the Board questioning when the agenda of the 6/11/2024 meeting was posted and his concerns regarding lister salaries. Mr. Ewald asked to be put on the next Board agenda to voice his concerns about lister responsibilities, lister salaries and lister budget. Mr. Crocker said the Board discussed this item, there was a 3.2% salary increase for all employees as of July 1, 2024 and the next salary discussion would be before the next budget was set. Mr. Bordeaux noted Mr. Ewald would be on the agenda for the July 9, 2024 meeting. In another matter: Chris Potter suggested remote attendees be muted until they asked to speak. Norm Beam noted his request to be on the agenda and questioned if he would be allowed to speak. Dan Crocker said everyone would have 3 minutes to speak. Alisa Allbee Daignault suggested a remote user be identified before speaking. FACT TV can control/mute remove a remote user as well as remove if inappropriate.
- **Unfinished Business:** (Discussion/Action)
  - A. B. Peter (Bruce) Murray – Municipal Dissatisfaction – Mr. Crocker noted this item was tabled at the last meeting due to Mr. Murray’s absence. He continued, there was a public request form adopted by the Board 3/13/2024 to request information. Mr. Murray has refused to complete the public records request form when requesting public records. Mr. Crocker noted Mr. Murray actions were moving into a harassment situation of employees, Board members, etc. Jason Perry motioned any further correspondence from Mr. Murray be forwarded to legal counsel for review. Real Bazin seconded; motion carried by voice vote (Perry, Bazin, Hamilton).
  - B. Chris Potter, et al – response to concerns –

- Lot Line Adjustment
- Legal Conflict of Interest
- DRB – nonresident members
- Logging/trucking
- Noise ordinance
- Future use of property

Mr. Crocker said he believed Mr. Potter’s presentation (in the beginning) at the last meeting was difficult to follow. He would address the issues as he understood them.

**Lot Line Adjustment:** This was a zoning issue, not the Selectboard. This lot line adjustment was approved by the Development Review Board (DRB) after a legal opinion was received from town counsel. This opinion was received from town counsel in advance of any perceived conflict.

**Legal Conflict of Interest:** The Board believed there was a legal conflict of interest issue. This will be discussed in Executive session.

**DRB – non-resident members:** There is nothing to say non-residents cannot be on the DRB board. Going forward, if there are issues with non-residents, the Board can appoint another member.

**Logging/trucking:** Mr. Crocker contacted Windham County Forester, Sam Schneski. Mr. Schneski said the SOV (State of Vermont) top forester overseeing large logging projects, looked at the job off Morse Brook Road, it was up to specifications without issues. Mr. Crocker said, at this time, the logging was ‘water under the bridge’.

**Noise ordinance:** The new policy is clear and has been passed by the Board pending legal counsel review/approval.

**Future Use of Property:** Some residents were concerned the property could be used as a quarry. Mr. Crocker said he understood in VT getting an ACT 250 permit for a quarry was next to impossible. He believed there was a ridgeline exemption for logging, covered above 1,100 feet and there was not a lot the Board could do about concerns. In answer to Katrina Hamilton’s question, Mr. Bordeaux said it was statutory that DRB members could be non-residents of the Town.

Chris Potter said he was completely dissatisfied with all decisions made by the Board. Mr. Crocker responded; these were not decisions but what the Board did with what they heard as best they could. Also, that Larry Slason, legal counsel was still working for the Town on other matters not related to this issue. Jason Perry said the loggers had State permits for weight exceeding the limits on Morse Brook Road. Mr. Crocker ended the conversation saying, ‘it was water over the bridge, what had happened had happened and there was nothing the Board could do.’

6. **New Business:**

- A. Cemetery Commission restructuring – Mr. Crocker said the Commission had been somewhat non-functional and Mr. Bordeaux has proposed an ad hoc committee of two Selectboard members, a Town volunteer, and two cemetery sextons. Required was a motion to dissolve the current Commission. Katrina Hamilton motioned to dissolve the

present Commission and restructure as an ad hoc committee. Jason Perry seconded; motion carried by voice vote (Hamilton, Perry, Bazin). Ad hoc committee will be Katrina Hamilton (volunteer selectboard member), Stephen Major (pending his approval), Shell Beebe (community volunteer), Chris Potter and Norm Wright (Cemetery Sextons).

- B. Pilot Project – change Town Hall hours – Mr. Bordeaux said after monitoring foot traffic at the Town Hall over the past few Fridays there was not a lot of need for staff to be present on Friday. There were 2 people on 5/24, 6 on 5/31, 3 on 6/7, 5 on 6/14 and 5 on 6/21. He noted the numbers could be inflated due to dog license renewals instigated from a letter sent by the animal control officer and requests for trash tags as residents run out tags. He was advocating for a pilot program for a 90-day trial period. Hours of operation would change to 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Additionally, a Friday closure would result in reduced energy usage at the Town Hall. Mr. Bordeaux said he planned to monitor feedback on the schedule change and report to the Selectboard at the 9/24/2024 meeting. Town Clerk, Millie Barry said she was not in favor of closing the Clerk’s office on Friday and was willing to work from 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. if Mr. Bordeaux believed it was important the Clerk be present with other staff. She added in the first four months of the year, one business generated about \$10,000.00 in fees. In addition, from July 2023 to present there was more than \$10,000.00 worth of fees generated on Fridays in trash tag sales and general clerk fees and the Clerk’s office is required to be open the Friday before the August primary election. Pauline O’Brien (Assistant Clerk) said she supported the 90-day trial proposed by the Manager noting other local Town Clerk offices (Bellows Falls, Putney, Walpole), were closed on Friday and often people came to Westminster for clerk services. Ms. O’Brien said the clerk’s office was willing to help with trash tags when open Friday and Town Clerk hours were registered with the VT Secretary of States office. Jason Perry noted the clerk’s office dictated their schedule and hours. Dan Crocker suggested the office might be open later one day and early one day. It was decided the hours, when finalized, be posted so people would know when the office(s) were open.

C. Town Manager’s Report:

The Manager participated in the district’s recent solid waste meeting. The district is expanding their composting program primarily grant funded and will be constructing a facility to comply with SOV requirements. Compost is \$7.00 per bag.

Mr. Bordeaux noted at the last meeting Chris Potter provided a document on the Town’s Harassment policy. He has reviewed all the Town policies and believes quite a few would appear to be a part of the Town’s Personnel policy such as drug free workplace, equal employment opportunities, smoking and tobacco, and safety and health. He suggested in the future these policies be incorporated into the personnel policy.

Meetings attended were VC3 regarding computing services and cybersecurity.

Another with Scott Pickup, Glen Shreider and Chuck Lawrence regarding repairs needed for the 2017 shared roller due to constant vibration causing sensors and mechanics in the machine to fail. In the last 18 months, Mr. Pickup said \$13,000.00 was spent in repairs. Half of the \$13,000.00 expense is paid by Westminster.

A meeting with Sandri Energy regarding fuel and a fuel monitor system for the Town. Information from the SOV was posted on the Town website regarding a rabid skunk in Westminster.

- D. Road Foreman's Report – None
- E. Executive Session – Jason Perry motioned to move to Executive Session to discuss legal counsel after Other Business on the agenda. Katrina Hamilton seconded; motion carried by voice vote (Perry, Bazin, Hamilton).
  - **Boards, Committees, and Commissions:** None
  - **Other Business:** Chris Potter questioned the Board about their understanding of the information he presented at the last meeting. Also, if the Selectboard was familiar with Town zoning and ordinances? Mr. Potter believed his presented information was vague but none of the Board questioned anything in the packet. He added serving on the Selectboard took a ton of time and the Board determined the end result of everything that happened in the Town.

The Board moved to Executive Session at 7:18 p.m. Mr. Perry motioned to exit Executive Session at 7:48pm. The Board reconvened regular session; no action was taken.

- Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday, July 9, 2024 at 6:30 p.m.
- Adjournment: Mr. Perry moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:49pm. Ms. Hamilton seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned.

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Clerk

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Date

Minutes composed by Millie Barry 6/30/2024