

WESTMINSTER SELECTBOARD MEETING

Tuesday, January 7, 2025

Remote and in person at Westminster, VT Town Hall

Selectboard Present: Dan Crocker (chair), Jason Perry (vice chair), Katrina Hamilton (arrival 6:45 p.m.), Real Bazin (clerk) and Stephen Major

Staff Present: Millie Barry (clerk), Lou Bordeaux (town manager)

Others Present: Sarah Waldo, Jared Atwood, Michael Wells, Nick Keil, remote-Peggy O'Toole, and others, unidentified.

1. **Call to Order:** Dan Crocker, chair of the Board, called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m. Meeting recorded by FACT TV. 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.
2. **Adjustments to Agenda:** None
3. **Acceptance of Minutes** – December 17, 2024 - Jason Perry motioned to approve the minutes of December 17, 2024, Real Bazin seconded, motioned passed by voice vote (Perry, Bazin, Major).
4. **Communications and Public Comments:** Jared Atwood addressed the board reading information presented at the last meeting. He believed the Board was underestimating the resilience and dedication of community members, and the complexity of state requirements was the reason the Town needed experienced, invested individuals who are elected by and accountable to the residents. Elected listers were already navigating the challenges despite the evolving demands of the job. Mr. Crocker noted the Board was presenting an article to the voters at town meeting to decide the issue.
5. **Unfinished Business (Discussion/Action)** –
 - A. Board of Listers – Sarah Waldo said she highly supported the board of listers continuing as they have for years, elected by the Town. She believed they were dedicated to learning and presented themselves as concerned/qualified people continuing their education in listing and the real estate world. She questioned what had driven this issue to come before the Town. If there were problems, she suggested the Board present what their concerns were. Stephen Major said information would be presented at town meeting about the pros and cons of appointed versus elected listers. In answer to Peggy O'Toole, Katrina Hamilton and Jason Perry noted information from the clerk's office was, there were concerns of inadequate coverage (at times) in the lister office, and the work was not getting done. Nick Keil said the fact the Board was bringing the issue to the Town implied there was an issue that needed to be addressed and there was dissatisfaction with the status quo. Sarah Waldo suggested publishing information in the *Westminster Gazette* about the possibility of a lister change.
 - B. Status of Westminster West Town Hall – In answer to Peggy O'Toole's question why the Board was considering the sale of the WW (Westminster West) town hall, Dan Crocker said when considering a capital plan, input from taxpayers was required about keeping/maintaining buildings. Ms. O'Toole said residents (volunteers) had maintained the WW town hall including painting, floor maintenance, clapboard, and window repair.

The building is used seasonably, and the committee is researching grants to address heat. The annual budget amount of \$1,000.00 is seldom all used. She continued, reading from the town plan, 'West Parish Town Hall is a historical resource, and its maintenance and use are encouraged.' She continued, the building was a valuable resource for the entire town used by the library, individuals and town committees. Stephen Major said a capital plan would include a maintenance plan for all town owned buildings.

- C. Fiscal Year 2026 Budget – second draft discussion – information included in packet –** \$325,000.00 is the amount the budget is increasing considering the general and highway budget. Jason Perry motioned to approve the budget as presented, Katrina Hamilton seconded, motion carried by voice vote (Perry, Bazin, Hamilton, Major).

6. New Business: (Discussion/Action)

A. First draft of town meeting articles – draft included in packet – Board agreed to eliminate Article 12 in the draft warning, 'to offer for public sale, the property known as Westminster West Town Hall'.

B. Town Manager's Report –

- Met with Rockingham town officials about 121 bridge project. There will be a timeline established at the next meeting. Discussion included dredging the riverbed for gravel.
- Attended VLCT (VT League of Cities and Towns) town meeting prep webinar.
- VC3 installed new backup hardware to supplement their cloud backups.
- Sheriff deputy Jake Cohen visited town hall to discuss sheriff operations in town.
- There is meeting schedule 1/8/2025 with Capital Strategic regarding 2025 planning grant.

- 7. Other Business:** Real Bazin said the BDR property is for sale. He noted the property had 10 acres, water, sewer, and was in walking distance of Bellows Falls. Mr. Bordeaux will research possibilities for the site.

In another matter: Mr. Bazin believed there was a Ham radio installation approved for the Town Hall and the radio was never installed. Mr. Bazin recommended the radio be installed at the fire station.

- 8. Executive Session:** (if needed) – Jason Perry motioned to move to executive session to discuss a legal and personnel matter inviting the town manager. Katrina Hamilton seconded, motion carried by voice vote (Perry, Bazin, Hamilton, Major).

9. Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday, January 21, 2025

The Board moved to executive session at 8:03 p.m.

Jason Perry motioned to return to open session at 8:23 p.m., Katrina Hamilton seconded, motion carried by voice vote (Perry, Bazin, Hamilton, Major). In executive session, Jason Perry motioned for Citizen of the Year award and Town Report dedications as approved by the Board. Real Bazin seconded, motions carried by voice vote (Perry, Bazin, Hamilton, Major).

- 10. Adjournment:** At 8:24 p.m. Jason Perry motioned to adjourn, Real Bazin seconded, motion carried and meeting adjourned.

Clerk

Date