

**TOWN OF WESTMINSTER  
SELECTBOARD MEETING  
February 24, 2016**

Members Present Selectboard: K. Sheldon Beebe (Chair), Paul Banik (V. Chair), Toby Young, Craig Allen and Nancy Dalzell

Others Present: Russell Hodgkins (Town Manager / ZA), Karen Astley (Recording Clerk).  
Thirty three people sign in to the meeting with approximately another 45 people were present from the public.

**1. CALL TO ORDER:** The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

**2. ADJUSTMENTS TO AGENDA:** Russ Hodgkins made an announcement the venue had been changed to the Westminster Institute because of possible attendance and wanted the minutes to reflect this.

**3. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES: February 10, 2016 minutes: There was a clarification and minor revision agenda item 5C change “Community House” to “Town Hall”. Craig Allen made a motion to accept the minutes as revised. Paul Banik seconded the motion. Motion passed.**

**4. COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC COMMENT: None.**

**5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS (Discussions/Action):**

**A. FEMA Buyout – update:** Town Manager (TM) reported – The town attorney has been given the go ahead to proceed with closing documents for the Dupuis buyout. No closing date has been set yet.

**B. Barrett Property- update:** Russ Hodgkins went through the documents he gave to the Selectboard and made available to the public. The Selectboard was able to answer questions that were given to them prior to the meeting and throughout the process leading to this meeting. Sheldon Beebe explained the history of the Barrett property and the details of how the Selectboard received the information and when. Overall the concerns and questions that were directed to the Board consisted of “time”; no notice to the resident’s about this purchase; cost of purchase (assessed value); structural integrity of the building; use for the building; not having enough information; parking lot behind town hall; how much money has been spent to date; what is the legal responsibility for the town; what are the parameters for borrowing the money; concern for the historical society that there is no sprinkler system, roof is an issue and needs repair; will this become a commercial property in a historical district? The Selectboard explained that this property would be a good investment as there are concerns for the town hall such as space for storage, septic system if and when it should fail, and having no land for the replacement area.

Residents would like more information. They would like to see an appraisal done as the real estate market is soft and think they could get the property for less. They would like to know if the town purchased this property would the town hall be utilized to its full potential? Residents felt that the Board should not rush into this purchase and should slow the process down, gather more information and facts. They felt public hearings would be more beneficial. Maureen Young stated she owns the easement (driveway and the land) which abuts tight to the town hall. She does not want a parking lot behind the town hall.

**Sheldon Beebe requested a short recess at 8:08 p.m. The Board reconvened at 8:17 p.m.**

**C. Town Meeting – Facts & Discussion:** Russ Hodgkins went through the Articles to be sure the Select Board was satisfied with the motions and they had enough facts in case they were questioned by residents. Selectboard were good with what was presented. Article 8 Toby Young asked if the cost estimates for structural needs were accurate. She also asked if they would go out to bid. Russ went through the timeline for the Board. Russ Hodgkins also handed out a revised FY 17 Revenue Budget as there was an error but to the tax payers benefit. Property to be raised “\$1,344,645” is correct from \$1,444,645. The “End of Year Surplus” was not applied towards reducing taxation. Russ had mistakenly sent the wrong revenue report to the printer.

**D. Sign corrected “Tree Ordinance”:** This item was tabled as town council had minor changes.

**E. Fire District #5 Legal Update:** Russ Hodgkins stated that Alison Bigwood, Town Clerk; Larry Slason, Town Counsel; and John Jones, Fire District #5 met to discuss options pertaining to billing for this coming year relative to the water services in North Westminster. It was agreed the town would not add billing onto tax bills for water services. Russ Hodgkins will accompany John Jones by going door to door to the twelve delinquent account properties and settle with them. District 5 would clean up debt in order to dissolve Fire District #5 as of yet. A meeting will be scheduled.

## **6. NEW BUSINESS:**

**A. Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association Paul Wilson:** Paul Wilson was present to speak to the Selectboard regarding a grant opportunity that would benefit the Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association. By signing the letter the Board was supporting the project of 13 acres of private residential land being conveyed to the Association as part of the grant. Bordering towns of Athens and Rockingham also supported the project. There was some confusion as to what the Selectboard was actually supporting. Russ Hodgkins stated it was the twelve acres around the camp. He also stated the property owner was still uncertain whether they wanted to move forward with subdividing the property as they may not be able to build in the future. **Toby Young made a motion to support the project. Craig Allen seconded the motion. The motion carried 3-1.**

**B. Sign Certificate – No Appeal or Suit Pending Document:** Craig Allen made a motion to execute the Certificate – No Appeal or Suite Pending as presented by the Lister’s Office, April 1, 2015 grand list. **Craig Allen made a motion to sign Certificate – No Appeal or Suit Pending. Nancy Dalzell seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0.**

**C. Park & Ride – Rules & Regulations:** Russ Hodgkins presented a first draft of rules and regulations. He stated that there have been abandoned cars, rubbish and hypodermic needles left at the Park & Ride. This item was tabled until after town meeting.

## **7. MANAGER’S REPORT:**

**1. Contractor’s Estimate:** Russ Hodgkins handed to the Selectboard four estimates as they relate to the Barrett house. Estimates were requested by the Selectboard. Russ asked that the estimates were information only and they not be read aloud because if the project went to bid someone may have an inside edge.

**2. Sullivan Powers Conclusion Letter:** Russ Hodgkins gave the Selectboard the final letter relative to the audit. He explained the letter was dated January 19, 2016 as all their letters are when an audit is started and completed. He asked the Board to review the letter and get back to him with any questions or comments.

**3. Spring Selectboard Institute – Saturday March 12:** Two Selectboard members are currently signed to go.

**4. Windham County – Finalized Budget:** Russ Hodgkins handed the Windham County budget to the Board. The budget was correct as the “estimated county tax for Windham County is \$.00746” and there are no further changes. Information is for Selectboard’s records.

**8. BOARD’S AND COMMISSION:** Fran Renaud questioned how Nancy Dalzell was appointed to the Selectboard seat without proper notice. She also stated the video from the February 10, 2016 meeting was not on the website. Karen Astley would look into this.

Nate Stoddard questioned the board about Hartley Hill Road and whether the town was looking at a lawsuit. The town is not considering eminent domain and would close the road permanently as one property owner currently denies the town access to maintain a portion of the road. The town has not consulted with the property owner but has tried to contact them.

**9. OTHER BUSINESS:** None

**10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:** Town Meeting Day February 27, 2016 at 9:45 a.m. at Bellows Falls Union High School. The next regular scheduled meeting is March 9, 2016 at the town hall.

**11. ADJOURNMENT: Toby Young made a motion to adjourn at 8:54 p.m. Paul Banik seconded the motion. Motion passed.**

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Signature of Clerk

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Date

Prepared by: Karen Astley, Recording Clerk

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