

MEETING OF THE WESTMINSTER SELECTBOARD

Wednesday, January 9, 2019

Vermont State Police Barracks, Westminster, VT

Members Present: K. Sheldon Beebe (Chair), Craig Allen (Vice Chair), Toby Young, Susan Harlow (Clerk) and Kevin Hughes

Others Present: Russell Hodgkins (Town Manager/Zoning Administrator), Nancy Dalzell, Laura Shairbaum (Greater Falls Connections), David Dupuis, Rita Langle, David Allbee, Millie Barry (recording clerk) and FACTV

1. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 6:45 p.m. by the Chair of the Board K. Sheldon Beebe. The meeting followed a 6:00 p.m. public informational meeting held to discuss the FY20 Town Budget. This meeting was held at the Westminster, Vermont State Police Barracks due to ongoing construction at Westminster Town Hall.
2. **Adjustments to Agenda:** None
3. **Acceptance of Minutes** – December 12, 2018: Craig Allen moved to accept the minutes of December 12, 2018 as printed. Susan Harlow seconded, the motion carried.
4. **Communications and Public Comments:**

Laura Shairbaum, project director of Greater Falls Connections (an independent coalition), addressed the Board to petition the Town for \$2,500.00 for programming/support work with students/community in substance abuse prevention. Greater Falls Connections work with students in the schools in WNESU district as well as Compass School. They provide speakers within the school/community discussing drug abuse prevention, a student leadership group provides peer support and they involve parents in their programs. The group is about ten years old and receives Federal and State funding. Some of their support and energy is from other social service agencies working together to provide prevention services. Ms. Shairbaum said the \$2,500.00 would help with their goal to become involved in earlier intervention in the elementary schools. In another matter, a resident inquired what happens to stray cats when they are picked up in Town by an animal control officer. The Town Manager (TM) said typically they are held for a day or two in case of Owner inquiry. After being held, they are released to the humane society in Brattleboro. The resident stated she was having difficulty contacting the new animal control person.
5. **Unfinished Business (Discussion/Action)** –
 - A. Budget (if needed) – there was no further discussion.
 - B. Dog Ordinance – (December) – adoption – The newest version of the ordinance, including small tweaks by legal counsel, was included in the Board’s packet. After discussion, Craig Allen motioned to adopt the animal control ordinance dated January 2019 pursuant to Susan Harlow making grammatical and punctuation changes. Toby Young seconded, the motion carried. Susan Harlow recommended an article in the Gazette and on the website to include registering a dog by mail, once an Owner has

- called the Town office for information. The Town rabies clinic, including registration is in March.
- C. Town Meeting Articles – discussion – The Board discussed 16 articles (to date). Specific discussion was about Glebe Lands/Lease Lands – An article requested by the State for all towns to adopt when owners/heirs/others no longer want or claim a small parcel of land, the Town is able to market this property. Also discussed was an article requested by taxpayers to adopt the “Reserve Fund Balance Policy”. Other articles include requests for funding for Westminster West Public Library, Southeastern Vermont Community Action, the Council on Aging and the Westminster (Butterfield) Library.
 - D. Town Hall – Phase III Funding – The TM told the Board there would be a small amount of money left after projects such as the fire alarm and heating system were complete. Legal counsel has advised surplus monies must be requested for a non-emergency need. Projects completed to date in the renovation are the man-lift, the back entrance and new front door. The fire alarm and heating system will also be completed with present funding.
 - E. Hearse – Engineered placement - The TM noted ownership of the hearse was being questioned. The question of ownership has to be publicly posted for a certain length of time before the historical society can claim ownership. Also, hanging the hearse from the ceiling is a very feasible plan from one Engineers perspective.
- 6. New Business (Discussion/Action) –**
- A. Unsafe/Abandoned building ordinance tabled from November – Toby Young said she believes this is not a problem the Town has. Before moving forward, she would like a list of buildings and how they were categorized as unsafe or abandoned. The TM reiterated there definitely was a problem and invited Ms. Young to visit (with him) some of the nearby problem properties. Some properties are unsafe and even though property taxes are being paid, there are complaints from taxpayers regarding conditions. The Board agreed to table this matter to a meeting after Town Meeting.
 - B. Quarterly Budget Report – The six month budget status report was included in the Board’s packet. Susan Harlow inquired about the new website. The TM said payment has not been made and the first draft of the new website was not good. The quarterly budget report item was tabled until the next meeting.
 - C. Town Report – Dedication and honoree (executive session): Craig Allen motioned to move to executive session to discuss the dedication of the Town report. Kevin Hughes seconded, the motion carried.
 - D. Citizen of the year (executive session): Craig Allen motioned to move to executive to discuss the citizen of the year, Kevin Hughes seconded, the motion carried.
 - E. Town of Putney Request: Karen Ashley, Town Manager of Putney has requested to close the East Putney Brook Rd. to through car traffic. The TM told the Board by State law, to close a road owned by two towns must be agreed by both towns. This class four road is an access to the Town forest. The Town of Putney will close their access. The road would be closed after the Isaac Pellerin residence at the turn-around. Craig Allen motioned to close the East Putney Brook Road at the Westminster side.

Susan Harlow seconded, the motion carried. The closing of this road will be publicly posted for 30 days.

7. Manager's Report:

- A. Town Hall Renovation – phase II update – roof is completed over the new entrance, the handicap bathroom is framed and wired with the wiring will be inspected on 1/10/2019. The front door replacement will start next week. A support for the fire escape (placing a new footing) will be completed by moving a gas tank.
- B. State of VT Property Equalization study results are included in the Board's packet.
- C. Mandich – law suit – Westminster Meats – The State and Mr. Mandich are working on an agreement to settle the debt.
- D. Farnsworth Purchase – the purchase is complete.
- E. WSWMD (Windham Solid Waste Management District) – update – No current updates. The budget was passed with the Towns assessment being about \$6,000.00 to \$7,000.00 less than last year.
- F. Selectboard appreciation gathering – January 26, 2019
- G. State wide dog survey and actions – Included in the packet is information on a statewide search for information on why dogs are becoming, on a regular basis, a nuisance. The TM explained the northern part of the country has been spaying and neutering their animals for about 10 years on a consistent basis. Now, there is an influx of southern dogs, some with little known history or back ground coming into the area. Toby Young noted there are other known deliveries of dogs, with papers etc. Noel Hoffmann and Bonnie Peregoy are working on this project.
- H. Special Meeting – New Elementary School District: The State has given the elementary school district a 5 week reprieve before moving forward.
- I. Audit – Just received. The audit will be reviewed and discussed at the next meeting. The manager read from a letter to Sullivan, Powers & Co., P.C. regarding addressing the deficiencies noted in the audit. The audit is available, as requested by the public.

8. Boards and Commissions – Nothing new

- 9. Other Business** – Craig Allen inquired about the Road Crew dealing with storms even due to the lack of snow. Mr. Beebe noted the Crew was doing a great job on the roads. The Manager noted the road problems on Route 5 and I-91 due to the January 9 storm.

10. Date of next meeting – January 23, 2019

The Board moved to Executive Session 8:05 p.m. Upon coming out of Executive Session at 8:17 PM, the Board Chair declared no further business was needed.

- 11. Adjournment** – Toby Young made a motion to adjourn and Susan Harlow seconded. The motion passed at 8:19 PM.

Clerk

Date

Minutes prepared by Millie Barry 1/10/2019