

## MEETING OF THE WESTMINTER SELECTBOARD

Wednesday, February 28, 2018

Westminster, VT Town Hall

**Members Present:** K. Sheldon Beebe (Chair), Craig Allen (Vice Chair), Nancy Dalzell (Clerk), and Susan Harlow. Toby Young was absent

**Others Present:** Russell Hodgkins (Town Manager/Zoning Administrator), Millie Barry (recording clerk) and FACTV

1. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by the chairperson of the Selectboard, K. Sheldon Beebe.
2. **Adjustments to Agenda:** The Town Manager requested, under number 5, to reverse items B and C. The chair so noted.
3. **Acceptance of Minutes:** Craig Allen moved to accept the minutes of February 14, 2018 as printed. Susan Harlow seconded the motion, the motion carried.
4. **Communication and Public Comments:** None
5. **Unfinished Business (Discussion/Action):**
  - A. *Articles for Town Meeting* – information needed – Included in the board packet of information were the motions and articles the Board would present to the voters on Town Meeting day, Saturday, March 3, 2018. The Board and Town Manager discussed at length the wording of the articles to be presented, the detail of each article, and FY 2017, 2018 and 2019 as the fiscal year could pertain to the article. Of note (in Article #7) discussion of replacing the 2002 Ford tractor with arm & mower along with replacing the 2012 #5 (1 ton) Dodge truck with a dump body in FY 19. At the end of FY 18 (present year) there will be \$52,296 carry over in the equipment Fund and in July of 2018 a purchase of a 1 ton flatbed pickup and a 20 ton tag-along trailer. Also discussed were replacing the Route 121 bridge (Article #8) and in Article #9, the mistake in adding \$4,200.00 into proposed budget. This \$4,200.00 amount will be removed if the voters so choose.
  - C. *Financial Discussion/Questions* – Mr. Hodgkins explained the details of the recent audit dated June 30, 2017 (included in the packet). The audit is summarized clearly in pages 3-8. Of note, at the end of FY 2017 there is approximately \$401,454.00 fiscal year surplus, just under 20%. A recommended 15% for emergency management purposes and 5% for the working part of the budget. This 5% can be used so the Town does not have to borrow money between raising taxes. The Manager read from page 8 (Economic Factors and New Years' Budget and Rates) relaying the audit information was a 'snapshot', general overview of the total budget and what was done with monies. Next year's audit is a three day audit versus this one day audit. He also noted Westminster General Ledger Current Yr. – Budget Status Report as of 2/23/18 (included in packet). The Town is doing very well in this year's revenue. There is \$65,852.38 in delinquent taxes that cannot be estimated when talking about budgeting revenue. The State Aid to Highways and reimbursement of Parks and Forests (cutting

in Town Forest) also is contributing. Approximate surplus of \$160,000.00 forecast of estimated surplus on revenue side of this fiscal year. In expenditures, the Town over spent on maintenance on North Westminster Community House and the Westminster West Town Hall. Also the overspending on guardrail replacement on the Westminster West Road by \$9,359.96. This money was reimbursed in a highway grant. The Town Manager said he felt total spending would be just under budget, the Town would not go over budget in this fiscal year. Craig Allen talked about gas, fuel and oil costs (Town Garage) relaying he felt the numbers were good as the Town was more than half way through the year. Susan Harlow questioned Town crew overtime. The Manager responded currently the smaller crew was keeping up with dirt road maintenance and winter conditions. Continuing with information on FY 2018 was packet (print out) of delinquent taxes. Delinquent taxes total \$662,567.53. Mr. Hodgkins said the information spanned 10 years and the majority was on the books in the last year. He added some taxes needed to be addressed, letting the Board know three mobile homes with delinquent tax owing, were recently moved out of the Shady Pines Park without the Town's knowledge. Shady Pines is owned by a private housing authority. The Chair asked if the Town had authority to not allow those lots to be filled until taxes were paid. The Town Manager will be in contact with the park manager, Tom Young. Mr. Beebe also noted some taxes were owing over two years and the property had not been put up for tax sale. Other information in the board packet was information on grants for FY 17-18. Total grants received were \$359,770.00. The Town match total was \$45,807.00. In some cases the grants were received but the actual work has yet to be completed.

- B. *Other Town Meeting Prep (if any)* – Mr. Hodgkins talked about possible questions from the floor at Town Meeting regarding overspending. Of note were the Westminster West Town Hall and the North Westminster Community House maintenance repairs. Craig Allen talked about repairing the roof and use of the building. He suggested (if there was interest) in North Westminster to form a committee for further discussion about maintaining, renovating the building? The Town Manager has requested information on fire safety lighting and cost of a wheel chair ramp. Susan Harlow asked about further discussion with the Town regarding paying for the Westminster Town Hall renovation. Mr. Hodgkins believes doing the work in stages is a good plan. After receiving an invoice for \$8,000.00, he contacted Arnold and Scangus to stop the firm from doing further work. The invoice was for a report on estimates and dollar amounts for the renovation of the Town Hall. This information will be very useful as Town Hall projects move forward in phases after the handi-cap access and front door projects are completed. Next discussed was Town proposed budget information, FY 2019 revenue, (information included in packet). The differences in proposed budget FY 19 and this year's budget is an increase of \$87, 031.00 due to non-taxable revenue i.e. State Aid to Highway, more in Pilot Taxes and VT State Home Harmless. Susan Harlow questioned the Zudnek property under tax revenues. The manager explained \$20,000.00 (approximate) will be generated from the eventual sale of this property. The Town will reimburse themselves more

money by owning this property. In addition. In answer to questions by Craig Allen, the Manager said the budget was up by 4%. There is no tax rate created at this time but an approximate calculation could increase property taxes by \$83.00 on a \$100,000.00 property. This increase could change when the State rate is set equalizing the amount. In expenditures, increases are an assumed increase in employee salaries of 3%. This percentage will be determined in June when the State of Vermont sets the cost of living rate. Increases also include 5% for health insurance with MVP as a new carrier. Mr. Hodgkins noted the previous carrier increase was estimated at 22.5%. There is a 5% increase on property, casualty, workman's compensation and unemployment insurance. This year the audit will cost \$25,000.00 as opposed to cost of most recent audit of \$10,000.00. There is an increase in lister salaries and hours lessening the need for an assessor. Also, the road crew is at six and a quarter positions and the road budget proposal is over by \$50,000.00 due to Act 64 mandates for roads. Trash and recycling is up 3%. The total sum is over by 4%, \$87,031.00. Nancy Dalzell inquired if the Town would hire an assistant treasurer. This position is included in the budget. The Board discussed information (included in packet) which Craig Allen requested for the salaries (Town office positions). This worksheet included salaries from 2010 to 2017. The Board noted the Lister were being paid more because there was currently no Lister Administrative Assistant position. In addition, the Board discussed (at length) information (included in packet) from VLCT - **Section 10 Model Fund Balance Reserve Policy**. This explained about setting a limit to the reserves the Board designates for emergencies. Mr. Hodgkins noted 5% is typically left (as a reserve in the general fund) for maintenance of general fund and 15% is for emergency management. The restrictions and amount set are what the Selectboard designates. Mr. Hodgkins said the Board can and should put this matter before the taxpayers to decide a model fund balance reserve policy. In another matter, the Board and Manager discussed a letter from Cynthia Stoddard (letter and responses included in packet). Chad Hewitt, CPA from Sullivan, Powers & Co. also responded in more detail to Ms. Stoddard's questions. In Mr. Hewitt's final comments he notes: "Westminster reports on the cash basis of accounting – money in and money out. Putney (where Ms. Stoddard worked), uses the modified basis of accounting, just different concepts".

**6. New Business (Discussion/Action):**

A. Roger Farnsworth – Land Purchase Update – The Manager relayed to the Board there had been multiple contacts to Mr. Farnsworth in January and February regarding completing the land transaction. There are no new updates about the transaction. As Mr. Farnsworth has been plowing the road during the winter, the Board instructed the Town Manager to lock the gate to the property until there is further communication from Mr. Farnsworth.

**7. Manager's Report:** The report contained updates previously talked about.

- 1). Westminster Meats Public Sale is scheduled for March 8, 2018 at 11:00 a.m. The Town Manager will attend the sale to represent the Town's interest in the property.
- 2). Spring Selectboard Workshop registration forms are available to sign up if Board members are interested in attending.

- 3). The back door construction at the Town Hall is nearly completed.
- 4). The Manager distributed the draft LEOP Plan (local emergency operation plan). This Plan makes an emergency easier to monitor while it is happening including contact information for resources and designations. The Manager requested the Board read the draft in the packet to possibly adopt at the March 14 meeting.
8. **Boards and Commissions:** Mr. Hodgkins told the Board if Kevin Hughes was elected to a position on the Selectboard there would be openings on the DRB and Planning Commission because he was on both. The many openings in Town positions are advertised in the current edition of the *Westminster Gazette*.
9. **Other Business:** Susan Harlow moved to accept the resignation of Town Road Foreman, Ronald Clace effective March 31, 2018. Craig Allen seconded the motion, the motion carried. Russell Hodgkins made special note that the meeting was Board member Nancy Dalzell's last Selectboard meeting. He emphasized how much he appreciated all the assistance Nancy had given the Town office and the extra work she had done for the Town.
10. **Date of Next Meeting:** Town Meeting on March 3 at 10:00 AM & regular meeting on March 14, 2018
11. **Adjournment:** Craig Allen moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:58 p.m. Susan Harlow seconded the motion, the meeting was adjourned.

---

Clerk

---

Date