

MEETING OF THE WESTMINSTER SELECTBOARD

Wednesday, October 25, 2018

Vermont State Police Barracks, Westminster, VT

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

Others Present: Russell Hodgkins (Town Manager/Zoning Administrator), David Allbee, Nancy Dalzell and David Dupuis. Representing SeVEDS: Kristin Brooks; Christy Betit; Bobby Kilburn and Jen Stromsten. Representing Greater Falls Connections: Scott Sharland and Laura Schairbaum. Also present, Millie Barry (recording clerk) and FACTV

1. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by chairperson of the Board, K. Sheldon Beebe. Due to construction at Westminster Town Hall, the meeting was held at the Vermont State Police Barracks in Westminster.
2. **Adjustments to Agenda:** None
3. **Acceptance of Minutes:** October 10, 2018 - Craig Allen motioned to accept the minutes as printed, Toby Young seconded the motion, the motion carried.
4. **Communication and Public Comments:**
 - **SeVEDS – update – Packet information given to the Board addressed population characteristics in Windham County, and positives of the quality of life. A graph showed Westminster is one of the most concentrated areas. Also, industry characteristics showing a graph of top growing industry job growth and largest industries. SeVEDS has developed a web site, featuring some specific employers to give people a broad over view of a career pathway. Their representatives doing broader outreach, traveling outside the region to to Albany, NY and Springfield, MA to job fairs. SeVEDS is promoting the Southern VT along with job opportunities in the area during these job fairs. A representative is tasked with visiting local high schools one day each week to connect students with work based learning opportunities leading to careers. Their work includes working with students to figure out what they really love and what jobs are available in the local area. SeVEDS is focused on strategic planning, growth and retention of businesses, support for start-ups and work force/training recruitment. SeVEDS receives \$158,000.00 from the State and about four million dollars in grant money for their programs. Chroma Technology and GS Precision (with expansion) adding about 115 jobs since projects have started. They are involved with Robertson Paper Mill Project (working with Bellows Area Development Corp.).
 - **Greater Falls Connection – Laura Schairbaum (Director) and Scott Sharland – The organization works to prevent substance abuse and reduce impact of addiction in the community. Their outreach and education includes working within the schools and supporting families in the community. Their programs include work with the Bellows Falls Restorative Justice Center and Friends for Change youth club bringing people together to discuss the opioid crisis and how substances have affected them. Also, they meet with towns around planning and policies to promote health. Resources for town planning include health equity noting where people live and their access to services and resources can influence people’s future substance use. Town planning around housing, transportation and access to recreational resources impact citizen health. Ms. Schairbaum requested a meeting with the local planning commission. Greater Falls Connection has done assessments of local retailers selling alcohol and tobacco. Their evaluation asses attractive advertising to youth, rating stores for advertising inside and outside retail premises. A parent dialogue night in local schools consists of staff training around issues with alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Their funding is through a federal drug free community grant and through VT Department of Health.
5. **Unfinished Business (Discussion/Action):**
 - A. New Dog Ordinance – Discussion: Board packet includes newest changes made by Susan Harlow and Jan Ameen. After the current changes were made, the document was sent to legal counsel.

- B. Property Sale – Zdunek Property – update if any: The Town Manager (TM) noted there was nothing new to report
- C. Mandich – NH law suite update: The TM has learned Mr. Mandich has relocated to another state and will be pursued in this new location.
In another matter, Susan Harlow asked if the new owners of the slaughter house were doing business. The TM believed the owner would be submitting a business plan and had not done so yet.
- D. Search for Treasurer – update – The TM requested the Board meet in Executive Session to discuss applicants applying for the position. Talking in open meeting could hurt an applicant’s present employment. Craig Allen motioned to move to Executive Session to discuss search for a Treasurer and discuss applications. Susan Harlow seconded the motion, the motion carried. The Board Chair noted the Executive Session would take place after other business on the agenda.
- E. Hearse Building (budget or article) – The packet contains pictures of what a building for the hearse could be or look like. The Manager told the Board the building has to be historic, possible with one or two glass sides and a double garage door. As previously stated, the range was \$16,000.00 to \$18,000.00 with the road crew taking down the present building. The TM asked if the Board would insert this expense in budget for FY 20 or put in front of taxpayers at Town Meeting. Mr. Hodgkins confirmed Ruth Grandy requested the hearse be moved once and the Historical Society would like the hearse out of the present space by summer 2019. Toby Young asked about the \$16,000.00 to \$18,000.00 estimate. The TM stated a contractor had been given building dimensions, including 2 glass sides and a double garage door. The Board decided the item should be put before the taxpayers after more information was obtained. The Board did not feel it has the authority to give it away, but possibly to donate to a place such as the Shelburne Museum. Craig Allen said the article could ask the voters if they wanted to build a building or donate? The hearse will be an item on the next Board agenda. David Dupuis suggested putting something in the Gazette about the status of the hearse or the possibility of someone donating a building where it could be placed.
- F. Financials (as of 10/2019): Information included in the packet due to more questions from the Board on some line items. Susan Harlow questioned the office supplies being over budget. The Manager noted this was due to transfer of tax envelopes from Treasurer to the Executive Department. The two groups, SeVEDS and Greater Falls Connection are believed to be the only organizations petitioning money from the Town this coming year. The Treasurer’s office will show more of a deficit as time goes by as NEMRC is assisting the Town with treasurer/financial responsibilities. Nancy asked if NEMRC would continue cash management when Treasurer was elected. This will be included in the list of job responsibilities.
- G. FY 20 Budget (revenue and expenses) – The TM stated one major change was the Sheriff Department. The proposed rate is increasing from \$70,000.00 to \$81,300.00. This will be calculated by the hour. The Town can opt for 2,000 hours as is the current coverage or less hours at a rate of \$51.00 per hour. Toby Young noted the police presence in Town came when Westminster was sharing coverage with Putney. She believes most of what the Sheriff’s Department was doing now was basically speed control. The TM said most of the work by the Sheriff’s was traffic related. The revenue from traffic tickets issued in Westminster has decreased from 45% to 22% due to the court keeping more of the funds. The Board agreed to invite Sheriff, Keith Clark to come to a Board meeting to discuss coverage and answer questions. Another item was the North Westminster Community

House roof. The Board requested the TM contact Stetson Roofing to ask if the roof continues to leak due to wind and rain or leaks with a build-up of ice and snow. Craig Allen noted his belief the contract with Golden Cross Ambulance was a good choice as their rates had not significantly increased. The TM said the Town has signed a new three year contract with the company. Health Insurance for Town employees was also discussed. MVP has not estimated their rates for FY 20. The Manger believes the increase will be between eight and ten percent. On revenue, the Town will receive the full payment on the State Police Barrack building which will make the PILOT \$44,451.00 for the coming year and the Current Use Program income will increase to about \$94,000.00 from the State of Vermont.

6. New Business (Discussion/Action) –

- A. Unsafe Building Ordinance – The Board packet included an Unsafe Building Ordinance from Bellows Falls. The TM said there were a significant number of buildings, two within the Historic District on the tax role in poor and unsafe condition. The Town has no right to enforce work or public safety on a non-owned Town buildings. In some cases the copper has been stolen and the buildings are open. The tax base is significantly reduced due to the condition of these buildings.
- B. Treasurer Position – Job Description – Included in the packet was town treasurer and financial department job descriptions. The Board discussed at length the Treasurer job description as opposed to a financial dept. description. At the present time, Mr. Hodgkins said there were gaps in completing responsibilities/duties in the office during interim until a Treasurer was appointed. The office had recommendations regarding tasks. The tasks/duties were not complicated but a system was required to know the responsibilities of each person doing a task. By State law an elected treasurer is required in the Town. Some of the gaps are collection of taxes and delinquent taxes. At present the Town Manager is collecting taxes. Another gap is the processing of payroll, withholding taxes, and other reports from the withholdings. The Manager asked the Board how to manage the financial end of the office until a Treasurer was elected.
- C. WSWMD (Windham Solid Waste Management District) Representative Resignations – new appointment needed. The packet included the resignation of Jan Ameen and the newest Town assessment in draft form. Mr. Hodgkins recommended the Board appoint Russell Hodgkins, for the present time, as the representative. He believes his knowledge and being active in the District could benefit the Town financially. Toby Young motioned to appoint the Town Manager, Russell Hodgkins as the representative of WSWMD. Craig Allen seconded the motion, the motion carried. Craig Allen motioned to appoint K. Sheldon Beebe as the alternate, Toby Young seconded the motion, the motion carried.
- D. Photo Purchase: An aerial, 20x28 framed picture of a portion of the Town of Westminster was available at the meeting to purchase for the Town Hall office. The aerial photography is by Greg Cromer. The picture taken by a drone two plus weeks ago. Susan Harlow questioned if the picture could be used on the website or for other Town purposes. The TM will ask about pictures of other parts of the Town and the negatives. This photo is available to the public. Call the Town Hall if interested.

7. Manager's Report:

- 1. Town Hall Renovation – phase II update: The first inspections by Fire and Safety have been completed as well as exact measurements taken for the elevator. Susan Harlow recommended pictures of the construction work be published in the Gazette.

2. Town Report Dedication by the Board needs to be thought about. Nominations will be due soon.

3. Citizen of the Year -

Will be advertised in the Gazette. These nominations are by the public.

4. Brattleboro Reformer article – “Peace and Quiet Disrupted” – Toby Young asked about an article last meeting. The Town Manager told the Board that it was in regards to a power request on Deer Run. The article was about adding electrical service to Deer Run Road, a road off Streeter Road. The five to six families in the area living off the grid, believe development will impact their peace and quiet.

5. The Manager’s Report listed the full road crew. Mark Lund has been contracted to work for the Town with the road crew through the winter to help train the new Road Foreman, Chuck Lawrence.

8. Boards and Commissions: The Planning Commission needs two people

9. Other Business – None

10. Date of Next Meeting – November 14, 2018 – The Manager will request, from the State Police, for the meeting to be held at the barracks again. The Selectboard thought this was a better venue for their meetings.

The Board moved to Executive Session at 8:31 p.m. **Upon coming out of Executive Session at 9:02 PM, Craig Allen made a motion to hire Paul Harlow as the interim Treasurer to finish out the term which will end in March of 2019. Toby Young seconded the motion. Susan Harlow abstained from the vote for obvious reasons. The motion passed 3-0.**

11. Adjournment: Craig Allen made a motion to adjourn at 9:07 PM. Susan Harlow seconded the motion and the motion passed.

Clerk

Date