

Meeting of the Westminster Selectboard

Wednesday September 25, 2019

Westminster, VT Town Hall

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

Others Present: Russell Hodgkins (Town Manager/Zoning Administrator), Katie Dearborn, Ruth Grandy, Alice Caggiano, Alison Bigwood (Town Clerk) and Millie Barry (Recording Clerk)

- 1. Call to Order:** The meeting began at the New Westminster Cemetery at 6:00 p.m. with the Chair opening the meeting. The site visit was to view the stone wall near the entrance of the cemetery. **At 6:30 p.m. the meeting was formally resumed on the second floor of the Town Hall by K. Sheldon Beebe, Chair of the Selectboard.**
- 2. Adjustments to the Agenda:** The Town Manager (TM) requested to add 6 C, an executive session for a contractual matter. The Board Chair noted the addition.
- 3. Acceptance of Minutes:** September 11, 2019 - Craig Allen motioned to accept the minutes as printed. Toby Young seconded the motion, the motion carried. Note: The minutes of September 11, 2019 as printed read September 12, 2019. Toby Young noted the error. The motion carried to accept as printed the September 11th minutes.
- 4. Communications and Public Comments:**

Historical Society - update and progress - Ruth Grandy, president of the Westminster Historical Society addressed a question by the TM about the disarray at the museum. Ms. Grandy told the board following the changes to the Town Hall and board meetings being held upstairs, about one third of the available display area had to be relocated. Ms. Grandy said the Museum tells the story of Westminster from the American Revolution to modern day with a large display case housing Revolutionary memorabilia to a large drum used to call troops to duty. When the progression of the display was disrupted it required careful planning to regain the continuity of history using the remaining available space. Ms. Grandy said she didn't know if the work in the upstairs of the Town Hall had been completed. The displays were covered due to dust and daylight roaming around the room placing the collection in jeopardy. Toby Young said the positive change from one meeting to the next was amazing. Alice Caggiano told the board she had cleaned and put up some pictures to improve the back drop of the Board meetings. She went on to say historical houses across the State were closing due to lack of visitors. The Society is working with the VT Historical Society for advice to draw people to the museum. She mentioned the Society had spent about \$37,000.00, mostly from donations and grants restoring the Bradley Law Office. The space was unique and drew mostly attorneys and or those interested in old buildings. Also, the Society was renting space at the Westminster Institute to house photos, maps and documents and they had a committee to do a feasibility study/business plan for the Society to include the next five to 10 years. Ms. Caggiano said they had looked at the North Westminster Community House as possible location for the Society. Ms. Grandy and Ms. Caggiano thanked Kevin Hughes for doing a great job maintaining the law office lawn. Ms. Grandy told the board they were not unaware of what needs to be done and were not ignoring the Selectboard. She also thanked the Board for their assistance with the Historical Society Museum.

Katie Dearborn - Mascoma Bank - Ms. Dearborn said the bank was a B Corp, a unique entity, an institution in business putting their employees, customers and communities before profits. Ms. Dearborn said Mascoma has put a progressive approach on banking to support their communities having the best banking rates and service possible. She shared collateralization information as a member of the Federal Home Loan Bank. Mascoma Bank has secured a letter of credit/bond with Federal Home Loan Bank for five million dollars, reviewed and renewed yearly to secure the Town's money. Interest earned on all accounts by the Town for a part year last year totaled \$14,136.00. To date this year \$15,453.00. In addition, the Bank covers/secures Westminster Fire department under a different tax identification number. Ms. Dearborn said the bank employs a municipal specialist that is an asset to herself, local municipalities' in

cash management etc. Also, the Bank gives away about a million to a million and half dollars each year to communities they live and work in. Recently, Mascoma paid \$4,000.00 to Windham Northeast Supervisory District for past due lunches for children in the local area. The bank has a new Income Advance Loan to support full time municipal employees. Employees apply for a loan (their credit score not considered), up to \$1,500.00, zero percent interest, term of up to 18 months.

Alison Bigwood - Education - Ms. Bigwood told the Board she was awarded \$1,075.00 scholarship to attend New England Municipal Clerks Institute enabling her to attend training for a week in July. Ms. Bigwood said the experience was amazing and rewarding. She hopes the Selectboard will approve her budget for continuing education next year but believes she will be awarded another scholarship for continued training. Ms. Bigwood added she was proud to be part of this group and to be educated for everyone in Westminster. Also, she and Ms. Mark (assistant Town Clerk), had recently returned from another training at Lake Morey and in November will be going to Rockport, Maine.

5. Unfinished Business (Discussion/Action):

- A. Treasurer's Follow-up - Model Policies - item tabled
- B. Mandich Lawsuit - update if any - Packet included information from date of loan to present. The current amount due \$539,120.28 being reviewed by Mr. Mandich. The next court date is set October 28, 2019. The TM relayed the parties were hoping to settle the lawsuit out of court, the State of VT making final decisions.
- C. Manager's Evaluation - Executive Session - Item tabled
- D. Assisted/Senior Housing - Gazette and update - TM relayed there was more interest including Windham Regional. The TM will organize the committee and first meeting.

In another matter, the TM relayed to the Board, Kissell Hill Fire District septic line had plugged and backed up into a personal home causing significant damage. There was controversy among residents of Kissell Hill regarding reimbursement clean-up costs to the homeowner.

- E. Henwood Hill - soil samples - The Manager contacted certified civil engineer Phil Savoy and relayed to the Board the base soil at the bottom of the slope would wick moisture and be less likely to freeze tight and heave. The next steps will be how to proceed and putting the work out for contract. If engineering is required, it will extend project for at least one year. When the work is done, the road will be two way.
 - F. Island Corp - land gift - Included in packet was letter/maps/tax information regarding the potential of the Island Corporation (owner Stewart Reed) gifting to the Town of Westminster a parcel of land. This land connects the trail system from the mill in Bellows Falls to Saxtons River. The Board discussed potential problems in accepting the land gift. Kevin Hughes noted (in full disclosure) he may have a conflict, preventing him from a vote on this matter. Item tabled to meeting October 23, 2019.
 - G. FY21 Budget -discussion and update - Included in packet, draft budget worksheet report and revenue budget. TM relayed there were few changes to date. The Board and Manager discussed health insurance cost increases of possibly of 6-8 percent. Budgeted was an increase of 11 percent. TM relayed salt prices have decreased, sand prices have increased significantly. The Town has purchased sand for the coming winter.
- 6. New Business - discussion/action -**
- A. New Cemetery - discussion from site visit - Included in packet was pricing from Redi - Rock Walls of New England pricing two different style blocks. Susan Harlow suggested explaining the project in advance as an information item at town meeting. TM stated this project could be delayed, the present stone could be sold reducing the cost of the project. The Town Road Crew would do the work replacing the current wall in sections. To cover the cost of blocks, Craig Allen suggested residents donating blocks and having their name engraved on a block.
 - B. 2020 Census - update and plea - TM relayed the importance of the census after a meeting with someone from the US Government. Also his belief the current census was not correct. There will be an article published in the Westminster Gazette with more information regarding the census.

- C. Contractual Matter - Executive session - Toby Young motioned to move to executive session to discuss a contractual matter, Susan Harlow seconded, motion carried. The Board Chair noted the executive session would be after other business on the agenda.

7. Manager's Report:

- 1.) Final bound audit included in Board packet
- 2.) Emergency Management - Incident follow-up and role discussion - After a conversation with the Emergency Management Regional Coordinator, a meeting to include the FBI, VT State Police, Windham Northeast Superintendent of Schools and Windham County Sheriff to discuss the Zachary McAllister chase will be held September 30, 2019. Participants will discuss incident miss-steps and non-communication during/after the event.
- 3.) Manager at a regional emergency management round table in Putney October 1.
- 4.) Paving began 9/25/2019 in Putney on Westminster West Road, Westminster sections has been ground and hopefully paving will continue.
- 5.) Nicon will be crack sealing on Patch Road and Westminster West Road starting 9/25/2019

- 8. Boards and Commissions** - Susan Harlow motioned to appoint Seroya Pauline Crouch to the Planning Commission. Toby Young second, motion carried.

- 9. Other Business:** None

- 10. Date of Next Meeting:** October 9, 2019 at 6:30 p.m.

The Board moved to executive session at 8:12 p.m. Upon coming out of executive session at 8:25 PM, Kevin Hughes made a motion to extend the Paving contract date of completion to no later than May 15th (weather permitting) for the Back Westminster Road with Bazin Bros. Toby Young seconded the motion and the motion passed.

- 11. Adjournment:** Toby Young made a motion to adjourn at 8:32 PM and Susan Harlow seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Clerk

Date

Minutes prepared by Millie Barry 9/26/2019