

MEETING OF THE WESTMINSTER SELECTBOARD

Wednesday, March 11, 2020

Westminster, VT Town Hall

Members Present: K. Sheldon Beebe (chair), Susan Harlow (vice chair), Kevin Hughes (clerk), Toby Young and Craig Allen

Others Present: Russell Hodgkins (Town Manager/Zoning Administrator), Cynthia Stoddard, Nate Stoddard, John Jones, David Dupuis, Rita Langle, Darlene Kelly, Millie Barry (recording clerk) and FACTV

1. **Call to Order** - The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by the TM (town manager) to re-organize the board required at the first regular meeting after Town Meeting.
2. **Re-organization of the Board** - The TM took nominations for chair-person of the board. Toby Young nominated Susan Harlow, Craig Allen seconded nomination. K. Sheldon moved nominations be closed. Susan Harlow was elected chair of the board. As chair of the board, Susan Harlow asked for nominations for vice chair. Toby Young nominated K. Sheldon Beebe, Kevin Hughes seconded, K. Sheldon was elected vice chair of the board. Craig Allen nominated Kevin Hughes as clerk, K. Sheldon Beebe seconded, Craig Allen moved nominations be closed. Kevin Hughes was re-elected clerk of the Selectboard.
3. **Adjustments to Agenda:** Craig Allen requested to add an executive session after “other business” on the agenda to discuss a personnel matter. Ms. Harlow noted the addition, stating the board move into executive session before adjourning the evenings meeting.
4. **Acceptance of Minutes: February 26; February 29; March 4, 2020** - K. Sheldon Beebe motioned to accept the minutes of February 26, 2020, Craig Allen seconded, motion carried. Craig Allen motioned to accept the minutes of February 29, 2020 select board meeting as printed, K. Sheldon Beebe seconded, motion carried. Craig Allen motioned to accept the minutes of March 4, 2020 meeting as printed, K. Sheldon Beebe seconded, motion carried.
5. **Communications and Public Comments:** None
6. **Unfinished Business (discussion/action):**
 - A. Allocation approval for FY 19 surplus - TM noted the first 6 documents in the packet are supporting documents regarding allocation with Attorney Slason’s draft warning of the upcoming Special Town Meeting.
Craig Allen requested to clarify an issue. He read from Article 21 of the Town Meeting warning regarding monies for Henwood Hill. He stated the board never approved borrowing \$170,000.00 stated in the article for the estimated \$300,000.00 project. He continued that the board agreed to spend \$37,500.00 each year, for as long as the project might take, 3-5 years, and to utilize the Town road crew to do as much of the work as possible. Cynthia Stoddard asked how the Town would do the project without borrowing the money. The board, TM and Ms. Stoddard discussed the project at length including the probable increase of traffic on the road in summer of 2022 when the Route 121 bridge was repaired. John Jones stated under Title 17 there was grant money available and suggested requesting AOT (VT Agency of Transportation) look at the road for value added engineering. The TM said at a recent site visit an engineer from VTrans (VT Agency of Transportation) agreed raising the road with the land owners permission was a great solution but more expensive. The engineer’s suggestion was to dig into the bank from the brook, stabilizing with stone as a more economical fix. It was not possible to figure out grant money without appropriating the

money for the project. Mr. Jones stated, from a tax payer platform, another visit from the State and/or more communication would be advisable. Ms. Stoddard wanted to be clear that from the Town Manager's view there was an urgency to complete the project and costs would be more than \$37,500.00 this year. The TM stated it was his assumption the money for the project would be borrowed and the urgency for repair to the road, discussed previously, would not be met immediately. Ms. Stoddard said she had stated previously that it feels things are done backwards. It would seem that the project should be scoped out to figure out the total estimate, do the engineering work, and apply for grants. After eligibility of grant dollars are known the project is presented to figure out the town portion of expense.

The Board discussed and answered questions on the draft warning (included in packet) created by legal counsel.

Article 1, - *in part* - to authorize the sum of \$170,000.00 transferred from fiscal year 2018-19 general fund surplus into capital improvement fund for continuing renovation of the Westminster Town Hall. The board deliberated specifics of the Town Hall renovation including costs (information included in packet) and the work remaining to be done (information included in packet).

Article 2: *in part* - Shall voters authorize sum of \$30,000.00 transferred from 2018-19 general fund surplus to the bridge rehabilitation fund for preservation of bridges.

Article 3: *in part* - Shall voters authorize sum of \$250,000.00 transferred from the fiscal year 2018-19 general fund surplus into the contingency reserve fund pursuant to the reserve fund balance policy approved by Article 14 at the annual meeting March 2, 2019. After considerable debate the wording, "**Expenditure of emergency capital by the Selectboard shall require notice and public hearing**". The board approved the article with the verification or correction by legal counsel the approval for spending was or was not required by Town vote.

Article 4: *in part* - Shall voters authorize total General Fund expenditures for operating expenses of \$2,102,411.00 of which 1,547,481.00 shall be raised by taxes and \$554,930.00 estimated revenues for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2020, ending June 30, 2021. This article includes returning \$100,000.00 to taxpayers. The article corrected from legal counsel's draft.

Article 5: to transact any other proper business.

- B. Special Town Meeting Warning with date and approval - Toby Young moved to accept the warning with the possibility of legal counsel correction, of provisional Board wording on Article 3 and correction of amounts on Article 4.
Date of special Town meeting to be Monday, April 20, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.at the Bellows Falls Union High School. Craig Allen seconded the motion, motion carried.
- C. Contractor response to continuing contract - TM stated Matt Brennan is very willing to continue the work when he is free from other work projects.

7. New Business - discussion/action:

- A. Joint meeting with Fire District #3 - discussion - The Board agreed to schedule this meeting in May 2020
- B. First Draft of Yearly Appointments of Record - Information in packet - Toby Young will remain the alternate member of Development Review Board. K. Sheldon Beebe will remain the alternate member of the Planning Commission. Craig Allen motioned to appoint Bobbi Kilburn to a one year term of the Windham Regional Commission, Kevin Hughes seconded, motion carried. Craig Allen motioned to appoint Susan Harlow as alternate representative to Windham Solid Waste Management District, Kevin Hughes seconded, motion carried. Craig Allen moved to approve the list of town committees and boards with corrections and updates, Kevin Hughes seconded, motion carried.

8. Manager's Report:

- 1. Emergency management/ fire chief seminar will be held at the Westminster Fire Station on April 15 at 5:30 p.m. The Manager will confirm the date. The selectboard welcome to attend with prior notice.
- 2. Assisted living/senior housing - No update
- 3. Broad band survey update - 37 written surveys returned thus far. The survey can be completed on line. The deadline to complete a survey is soon.
- 4. State wide action involving COVID-19 attached - information included in packet. The State is not recommending closures at this time but is recommending if people are experiencing symptoms to call 211 or your local doctor. Craig Allen recommended putting information on the Town website with a link to the State website.
- 5. Stetson Roofing will be repairing the broken slate on the Town hall roof. The money for this repair will be taken from the maintenance fund.

9. Boards and Commissions: None

- 10. Other Business** - Kevin Hughes spoke regarding Henwood Hill. His understanding (after board discussion and a site visit) the road was an immediate concern and did present a clear and present hazard. The road was not as safe as it could be. He stated as a tax payer, he didn't think the Town had the right to just automatically take out a loan. This is a policy decision the board and taxpayers would discuss. Mr. Hughes wanted to be clear the board as a whole believed the road was really dangerous now even though there was time before it sustained additional, increased traffic due to the bridge closing.

In another matter, Mr. Hughes requested to review strengthening the Towns books and records policies, reviewing the conflict of interest policy, not for variations but for review so that things could be strengthened and or and everything discussed was in the record and/or disclosed.

Mr. Beebe stated there were temporary options for Henwood Hill such as placing a stop light on the corner, making the road one way from either way at the light, or to access from one end or the other. Ms. Harlow asked these items be put on an upcoming meeting agenda with the Community Improvement Fund.

Mr. Beebe said there had been no response from emergency management regarding the McAllister incident several months ago. Susan Harlow stated Representative Mike Mrowicki indicated to her it was a dispatch miscommunication that caused problems and realized the Board was waiting for a report.

Nate Stoddard suggested the Board agenda include more detailed information regarding what was actually happening at the meetings for more taxpayer participation. Mr. Stoddard also clarified the voters gave permission for the gravel pit exploration as of July 1, 2020. Mr. Beebe stated the article voted on and approved at Town meeting was very specific.

11. Date of next meeting: March 25,2020

The Board moved to executive session at 8:05 p.m. Upon coming out of Executive Session at 8:22 p.m., the Chair declared no further business was necessary at this time.

12. Adjournment: Craig Allen made a motion to adjourn with Kevin Hughes seconding the motion. The motion was passed and the meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m..

Clerk

Date

Minutes prepared by Millie Barry 3/12/2020