

Meeting of the Westminster Selectboard

Wednesday April 22, 2020

Remote Tele-Conferencing – 6:30 PM

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

Others That Joined the Call: Russell Hodgkins, Town Manager/ZA, Nate Stoddard, Cynthia Stoddard and Molly Banik

1. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by the Chair at 6:32 PM.
2. **Adjustments to Agenda:** The Town Manager requested that an Executive Session be placed in the meeting under 6D for the reason of negotiating a real estate transaction.
3. **Acceptance of Minutes: April 8, 2020** - Toby Young motioned to accept the minutes of April 8, 2020 as presented. K. Sheldon Beebe seconded the motion and it carried with a 5-0 vote.
4. **Communications and Public Comments:** None
5. **Unfinished Business (Discussion/Action):**
 - A. **Special Town Meeting – discussion w/ fact sheets-** Susan Harlow asked the Board if they had a chance to review the facts presented for each Article. Craig Allen asked if the Articles were going to be read by the Board in its entirety or is the Moderator going to do this. The Town Manager told the Board that the proceedings for the “Special Town Meeting” would mimic the regular meeting as this is Fletcher Proctor’s preference. He continued that the fact sheets presented in the packet showed that each article will be responded by the Board member to read “I move the Article as warned” and the Moderator will take it from there. The Chair moved the meeting to the next item and asked if we had heard from legal counsel about the State’s opinion for the meeting. The Town Manager told the Board that in a discussion the day before, no word had come from the Secretary of State’s office to reply to Larry Slason’s request for meeting clarification. Larry Slason did reply that the outdoor meeting was not going to comply with the State’s order as of right now but this Friday, the Governor is supposed to address Municipal meetings and how they can resume. Cynthia Stoddard asked the Board if they had given any thought to postponing the meeting to June. The Town Manager asked the Board if they would be in favor of having an emergency meeting of the Board to discuss the options after Friday’s press conference. The Chair told the Board that she thought postponement would make the most sense to ensure resident participation. After a short discussion, Craig Allen made a motion to postpone the “Special Town Meeting” to June 6, 2020 at 10:00 AM at the Bellows Falls Union High School. Toby Young seconded the motion and it passed 5-0. Susan Harlow then told the Board that she would alert the Gazette and let them know of this change. The Manager will call the rest of the people that need to be notified of this change such as Fletcher, Larry, and the recording clerk.

- B. **3rd Quarter Financials – tabled from 4.8.2020** – The Chair asked the Board if they had any questions about the third quarter financials. Hearing none she asked the Town Manager if he had any concerns or comments and he explained that the budget looked good on both the Revenue and Expenditure side of the budget to date. Susan Harlow asked for the Manager to explain the Equipment Fund expenditure line on the last page of the print out that was in the packet. The Manager told the Board that this line item was not a complete look at the Equipment Fund activity. Susan Harlow asked for the complete Fund printout for the next meeting.
- C. **Delinquent Taxes – Small amounts & System Forgiveness** – The Town Manager directed the Board to a print out in their packet of 12 items to be addressed. The list was explained as system under payments that are produced throughout the year by many factors such as payments passing through the mail at the same time as interest is being applied. The first line was different than the rest, he explained, as this delinquent tax was created by a death. Stanley Kissell is deceased and his trailer at Shady Pines Trailer Park did not have enough equity to pay the back taxes and get rid of the trailer off the site. The Town’s agreement with the Housing Authority is that in this situation, the cleanup comes first and then the past taxes will get paid with the remaining equity in the trailer. Craig Allen made a motion to remove this delinquent tax account off of the docket. K. Sheldon Beebe seconded the motion and the motion passed to remove this delinquent account off the Town books. The vote was 5-0. The Town Manager told the Board that one motion would be appropriate for the remaining 11 items, if they so choose, to forgive the small amounts for the listed delinquent taxes. Craig Allen made a motion to forgive the 11 accounts presented and K. Sheldon Beebe seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

6. New Business (Discussion/Action):

- A. **Appointment to SEVCA Board** - The Town Manager explained that the Selectboard has received a request to accept Nathan Stoddard as the Town’s representative to the Southeastern Vermont Community Action (SEVCA) Board. Toby Young made a motion to appoint Nathan Stoddard to the SEVCA Board and Kevin Hughes seconded. The vote was 5-0. Nathan thanked the Selectboard for this opportunity.
- B. **Adoption of the Local Emergency Management Plan (LEMP)** – Russell Hodgkins told the Board that this plan in their packet was a short form of the complex plan submitted last year with no changes in personnel. He went on to explain that he continued to use K. Sheldon Beebe as the Selectboard representative in this plan. Russell Hodgkins told the Board that the State had already approved this document and that he needed this Board to approve it formally. Kevin Hughes made a motion to accept this document as presented and Craig Allen seconded the motion. The motion passed 5-0.
- C. **Green-Up Day – May 30th (public requests)** - The TM told the Board that with the pandemic and the stay home order, some people have requested to clean up their sections of road this coming weekend. The TM told the Board that people need to have a release for their families and that this would help the Town as well. He explained that

he wasn't going to advertise this as he did not want to cluster people up for safety reasons but has given permission for the folks that called, to place the picked up trash in their own bags and place a trash sticker on them and he would replace the sticker to the individual. The TM asked Ruggiero about this endeavor and both parties agreed that this would be acceptable up to 6 bags per household. K. Sheldon Beebe agreed with the process because another concern, he said, was in a month ticks will be active and a larger health issue with the taller grass. The Board agreed with the process.

- D. **Executive Session** – Kevin Hughes made a motion to go into executive session to negotiate a real estate transaction. Toby Young seconded the motion and the motion passed with the Chair declaring the Board will go into executive session after other business on the agenda.

7. Manager's Report:

- a. The TM told the Board to look at the stone wall at the new cemetery when they are going by. It has fallen in three spots since the Board looked at it last fall at a site visit. This wall will need to be addressed in the near future.
 - b. Town Hall is still closed to the public but is meeting the resident's needs through the mail or mail slot. The researchers are the ones that are inconvenienced because of the tight areas due to construction and the lack of cleaning supplies to let them in yet but Ali is doing a great job in helping them complete their needs.
 - c. The School (teachers), Fire Department, 2 Road Crew trucks, and Windham County Sheriffs are having a parade for the students of Westminster to show support for their sacrifices of the school closures. This parade will be this Friday at 5:00 PM.
- 8. Boards and Commissions** – The TM told the Board that there is nothing to report.
- 9. Other Business:** Cynthia Stoddard asked about the process of the Henwood Hill funding. She reported that in the Selectboard packet last meeting, there was a document from a bank with a lending rate and it was told that the project was estimated at \$300,000 and yet the request at Town Meeting was for only \$37,500 per year for five years which equals \$170,000. Where is the other funding coming from and how can you ask for money without having all of the other funding secured. The Chair told Ms. Stoddard that at the last meeting the Board concluded that this road work will not be a loan but done by the year with the money that was approved. Cynthia Stoddard told the Board that it was her opinion that the project needed to be done in one year and that the funding approved should be a loan, but still questioned where the rest of the money is coming from. K. Sheldon Beebe explained that funding had been pending for this project but will be done over time. The Chair, Susan Harlow, told Ms. Stoddard that answers will be clear at the May 27th meeting which will be after the site visit on May 13th.

Executive Session: The Chair brought the Board into executive session by placing the public into the chat room so that they could be brought back into the meeting when it was over if they chose to. The Board invited the Town Manager in to the session at approximately 7:35 PM. Upon coming out of Executive Session at 7:42 PM, K. Sheldon Beebe made a motion to accept the \$28,000 offer for the land off of Pine Banks Road that the Town received at tax sale. Toby Young seconded the motion and the Chair opened it up for discussion to the public. Nathan

Stoddard asked about the offer and how was the loss of received money going to effect the Town. He said that he thought the Town needed \$30,000 to meet the costs of the Town with delinquent taxes, legal fees and real estate agent. The TM responded with the facts of the transaction and the loss of expected revenue was going to be the burden of the real estate agent. Earl Buffum agreed to a lesser amount for his work to help the Town. The Town will be eligible for complete reimbursement if legal counsel agrees to the terms. The TM will contact Larry Slason as soon as possible for his blessing.

10. Date of Next Meeting - May 13, 2020 – Site visits at Henwood Hill Road at 5:30 PM and then continuing to Daigel Road for a drainage issue. Meeting will adjourn after the visits.

11. Adjournment: K. Sheldon Beebe made a motion to adjourn at 7:45 PM with Craig Allen seconding the motion. The motion passed 5-0.

Signature

Date