

## Meeting of the Westminster Selectboard

Wednesday, June 10, 2020

*Westminster Fire Station with Zoom Conferencing available through FACTV*

**Members Present:** Susan Harlow (Chair), Kevin Hughes (Clerk), Toby Young and Craig Allen

**Absent from Meeting:** K. Sheldon Beebe

**Others Present:** Russell Hodgkins (Town Manager/Zoning Administrator), Chuck Lawrence, Road Foreman, Nancy Dalzell, Fran Renaud, Woody Fuller, Cynthia Stoddard, Russell Lazarek, Yvette Hendler, and FACTV with 2 men.

**Present by Zoom:** Nate Stoddard and Alice Caggiano

1. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by Susan Harlow, chairperson of the Selectboard at 6:30 p.m. This meeting was held in an open empty bay at the Westminster Fire Station with the overhead door open due to the COVID 19 meeting restrictions with social distancing and had FACTV present to monitor and host the Zoom conferencing.
2. **Adjustments to Agenda:** The Town Manager, Russell Hodgkins expressed the need to add two possible appointments to the Town's Boards & Commissions. The Chair noted the change.
3. **Acceptance of Minutes:** May 27, 2020 - Craig Allen motioned to accept the minutes as printed, Toby Young seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0.
4. **Communications and Public Comments:** Cynthia Stoddard entered the meeting in person when her attempt to participate via Zoom was not working. She expressed her anger at the fact that every other town can function with Zoom and Westminster constantly fails at it. Susan Harlow answered that this is new to Westminster and the Selectboard hired FACTV to monitor & host the meeting so that this wouldn't be an issue. FACTV stated that they were not sure why the raised hand function was not working and asked the public to unmute themselves when they wanted to participate in the conversation. Cynthia Stoddard told the Board that she is contemplating calling the Secretary of State on the lack of compliance on the Open Meeting Law here in Westminster.
5. **Unfinished Business (Discussion/Action) -**
  - A. **Construction of Henwood Hill - discussion** - The TM, Russell Hodgkins stated that in the packet of information was the estimated pricing that was requested from him at the last meeting. The guardrail estimate came in at \$ 9,100 for 475' and the TM added that if 600' was needed it would be just under \$11,000. Traffic lights – two month rental would be \$8,250. The Windham Regional Commission (Jeff Nugent) confirmed the usage of the Grants-IN Aid monies for either option of repair for Henwood Hill as long as it pertains to the criteria of the Act 64 requirements. Mirrors came in at 36" would be \$270 with one post & \$420 for 48" with one post. The TM added that a second post may be required with the sizes of the units and this would add an additional \$100 to each price. And the last item was engineering of the large scope of work. The TM told the Board that it would be just under \$30,000 for the large project and less if a smaller scope of work was needed. Cynthia Stoddard asked for a copy of the letter from Jeff Nugent. Fran Renaud also requested this document. Craig Allen asked about the possibility of a retaining wall on the corner to allow for better visibility because several contractors that he spoke to said this would be a cheaper alternative for this project. Craig requested pricing for this option with possible engineering. Further discussion took place and the TM and Road Foreman, Chuck Lawrence, requested for

a precise scope of work so that planning can take place for the Road Crew, pricing achieved, and contractors lined up. No formal decision was made to resolve the scoping issue.

- B. **Special Town Meeting - discussion** - The Chair of the Board, Susan Harlow, thanked the public for coming out to the meeting and said she thought overall it went well and was well attended.
  - C. **North Westminster Community House – discussion** – Craig Allen told the Board that he would like to set up a committee of volunteers to look at the possibilities for the Community House. This committee would see whether it is feasible to renovate this building or just sell this building. He will work with the TM to create an article for the Gazette to request volunteers.
  - D. **Savage Gravel Pit – discussion** – Craig Allen told the Board that he wanted to meet with Larry Slason (legal counsel) to draft an agreement for the rights to the samples taken and paid for by the Town of Westminster. He continued that if this opportunity (gravel pit) fails than the Town could sell the results of the tests. Also in the agreement with Mr. Savage would be a time frame for which the Town would have to commit to the purchase. Craig asked if Susan Harlow would accompany him to proceed with this task. Craig will line up the meeting.
6. **New Business (Discussion/Action) -**
- A. **Year End Budget - discussion** – The TM, Russell Hodgkins explained that the Treasurers are working on the final movement of monies as appropriate such as the Equipment Fund and Bridge Fund allotments. He continued that the final payments are still coming in for the fiscal year and that at the next meeting a clearer snapshot of the year end position can be communicated. The TM told the Board that in their packet is the latest cost of living figures and the consumer product index to date and that the Board should be prepared to announce their decision on the employees raises if any at the next meeting.
  - B. **Windham County Sheriff - Contractual Matter** – The TM told the Board that a copy of the proposed contract is in their packet. Cynthia Stoddard questioned when the Board received their information on this matter. The TM responded that the packets were emailed and delivered on Monday as per the request from the Chair. Cynthia Stoddard said that this was short notice for a contract like this. Craig Allen asks why the item for the Town’s protection on the hours spent in Westminster was removed. The Manager said that he questioned Sheriff Anderson on this and he said that with the two town (Putney & Westminster) coverage agreement package that this was no longer needed to cover this obligation because it would be easily met. Craig Allen made a motion to place this wording back into 2D of the new contract and authorized the Chair to sign it when completed. Kevin Hughes seconded the motion and it passed 4-0.
  - C. **Executive Session – Contractual Matter** - The Chair requested a motion to go into executive session at the end of the meeting. Craig Allen moved this request and Kevin Hughes seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0.
7. **Town Manager’s Report 6-10-2020**
- 1. The Town Manager explained to the Board that his intention are to write a thank you to all of the people who helped put together the Special Town Meeting. It took a lot of different people helping and their efforts were appreciated.
  - 2. Trash Stickers are being mailed out on June 16<sup>th</sup>.
  - 3. Alice Caggiano questioned the motion to use the money from the Mandich loan for ADA needs at the Town Hall. The Manager gave the Board a new version of the motion and an email from Alice explaining her concerns. Fran Renaud requested a copy of this motion. This item will be discussed at the next meeting as an Agenda item.

4. The Manager explained that the Town Clerks received notification that just over \$99,000 will be paid back to the Town as an adjusted overpayment from the schools. This payment is created through the State of Vermont.
5. A third letter was sent to the two year delinquent taxpayers (18) stating that a date of June 26<sup>th</sup> will be the last day for payment agreements before their account is given to legal counsel for tax sale proceedings. The Tax Sale will be scheduled for late August.
8. **Boards and Commissions** - There is a letter from Bari Shamas to join the Planning Commission in the packet, stated the TM. Toby Young made a motion to appoint Bari Shamas to a position on the Planning Commission. Craig Allen seconded the motion but questioned the term of her appointment. The motion passed with the directive to ask Bari which term she would prefer. The motion passed 4-0. The Manager told the Board that a letter of interest for the Westminster Community Improvement Committee came in to fill the third position on this committee. Fran Renaud is the interested party. Kevin Hughes made a motion to appoint Fran Renaud to the Community Improvement Committee and Craig Allen seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0.
9. **Other Business** – Fran Renaud stated that she went to the Town’s website to look at the DRB’s minutes and agendas and found that 2020 had no items recorded in either of these items. Cynthia Stoddard declared that this is illegal not to have the agendas and minutes posted in a 5 day period and that the town is very close to being in big trouble with the State. Russell Hodgkins told the Board that he would address this issue and mentioned that the website is under construction and that improvements are being added such as the ability to post workable links to the front page. Susan Harlow told the meeting that the website is a disappointment at its present state. Fran Renaud stated that she would hope to see all of this cleaned up before the next meeting as it doesn’t take long in her experience. Russell Lazarek said that we should create a drop in folder so that the Town would be in compliance and workout the permanent details as time permitted. Woody Fuller again requested that this information be completed in the website soon and added that a “Nerd Committee” should be created to take over the website duties such as updates and information input. This would take this off of the Town Offices plate. The Manager will check the website and do what he can by the next meeting.
10. **Date of Next Meeting - June 24, 2020** - The next meeting will be held at the Fire Department either in the meeting room or in a bay of the garage and will offer a Zoom conference link connection upon request. Nate Stoddard requested the Board look into holding the meetings in a different place other than a large garage with tall ceilings. It’s very hard to hear, he said. Alice Caggiano told the Board that it’s very hard to hear when people are talking through their masks. Russell Lazarek asked why the Board doesn’t just use Zoom. Susan Harlow explained that it is hard to get all of the parties involved and the Board wanted to meet face to face. Alex Straddling (Owner of FACTV) came into the meeting and stated that he will be in touch with the TM to correct the problems that occurred this evening and to get the sound corrected by using table mics. He stated that this will cost more per meeting. \$100 per meeting instead of \$50. Cynthia Stoddard recommended to spend the extra money as it might help.

Susan Harlow asked the Board to reconsider going into Executive Session for the contractual matter because Sheldon Beebe has valuable information needed to complete the task. Craig Allen made a motion not to go into executive session at this time and Toby Young seconded the motion and it passed 4-0. The Chair declared the contractual matter and evaluation tabled. Cynthia Stoddard asked what the contractual matter consisted of and the Chair told her that it was the Town Manager’s contract and evaluation.

- 11. Adjournment** – Toby Young motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:45 p.m. Craig Allen seconded the motion to adjourn and it carried.

---

**Clerk**

---

**Date**

**Minutes prepared by Russell Hodgkins 6/11/20**