

MEETING OF THE WESTMINSTER SELECT BOARD

Wednesday, August 12, 2020

Westminster, VT Fire Station (Open Bay) & via Zoom Conferencing

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

Others Present: Russell Hodgkins, Town Manager/Zoning Administrator, Robert Feinberg, Russ Lazarek, Yvette Hendler, Millie Barry, Recording Clerk, Nate Stoddard and Alice Caggliano via Zoom, FACTV (1 person)

1. **Call to Order:** Susan Harlow, Chair of the Board called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. The meeting was held at the Westminster Fire Station and by Zoom conferencing due to COVID 19 pandemic meeting restrictions.
2. **Adjustments to Agenda:** Susan Harlow requested, after other business on agenda - to add 2 personnel matters, one to include the TM (Town Manager) the second does not include TM
3. **Acceptance of Minutes: July 22, 2020** - Craig Allen motioned to accept the minutes of July 22, 2020 as printed. Toby Young seconded, motion carried -
July 29, 2020 - Toby Young motioned to accept the minutes of July 29 2020 as printed. Craig Allen seconded, motion carried.
4. **Communications and Public Comments:**
 - Community Improvement Loan Committee - Susan Harlow requested information from Nate Stoddard regarding Community Improvement Loan program. She said her concern was how to make more people aware of and to apply for the loan (money) available in the program. Mr. Stoddard, a member of the Loan Committee said guidelines for the program were based on State of VT income, poverty level and on need. The application was similar to a home equity line of credit, dollars available at very low or no interest rate funded by the USDA. When the loan is approved/funds disbursed, the Town holds a lien on the property or property deed until the loan is paid. Available currently in the fund is about \$225,000.00. Information is available upon request by contacting the Town office. Mr. Stoddard said that though the committee approves the loan, the ultimate decision is made by the Selectboard. The Board bases their decision on the committee recommendation. No names are disclosed to the Board to protect the confidentiality of applicant. The TM said the Town office has information about the interest rate, dollar amount, payments being made on current loans. Ms. Harlow suggested the information pamphlet and application be posted on the Town website. Craig Allen noted in past years the Committee appeared before the Selectboard for over view purposes once per year. Mr. Allen also suggested an article be written for the Westminster Gazette regarding the availability of loan money.
5. **Unfinished Business** (Discussion/Action) -
 - A. Savage Gravel Pit - update - Information included in packet - The TM relayed to the Board the report (included both set of borings at total cost of \$4,500.00) was received late in the afternoon August 12. The information in the report will be discussed at the next meeting.
 - B. Petition from Kimball Hill Road South - motorize vehicle restrictions - TM noted Kimball Hill Road South is classified as a Class 4, unpassable road by VTrans and Windham Regional. He added the road is unpassable with a deep ravine. The road is very 'walker friendly' but not motor vehicle friendly. The Manager stated he and the road foreman agreed,

for emergency purposes, fire and injury to block the road was a concern as access would be limited. Their recommendation would be to post a sign indicating, 'no motorized vehicles' past a certain point, not block the road. He stated there was not a lot of damage done to the road surface or for erosion purposes by motorcycle traffic. Robert Feinberg stated Kimball Hill Road South was not passable using a four wheel drive vehicles but was passable by motorcycles (dirt bikes and duro bikes). He said his group uses the route about once every two months and would like to maintain the trail for single track transit to the Vast trails.

Petition from Windmill Hill Road South and North - motorize vehicle restrictions - Mr. Feinberg stated his group uses this route more often. Back Country Discovery Route (national organization) has taken the route off their map and has published information **not** to use the route. Mr. Beebe said on Windmill Hill North it was about five tenths of a mile from where the Town stops road maintenance to the last right of way on the road. There are trail signs clearly documenting the Town's responsibilities. He recommended replacing these signs as they were almost unreadable. Mr. Beebe did not see a lot of damage by motorcycle traffic. The TM will contact the landowners that attended the July 22 meeting to let them know the solutions the Board is considering such as a non-motorized vehicle signage and or requesting permission from individual land owners. Nate Stoddard noted there was good information on the Town website under Forms and Policies, Road Policies, Class 4 and Trail Policies. The matter will be addressed at the next Board meeting.

6. New Business (Discussion/Action):

- A.** Formal Request for Town Facebook Page - The Manager told the Board there had been requests by several individuals to create a Facebook page for the Town of Westminster. Susan Harlow said in the present day people communicate in all kinds of different ways. Many people check or read social media posts several times a day. Anyone interested in being on a social media committee would contact the Town Manager. Russ Lazarek noted social media was a good means to advertise to the outside looking for housing or other area information.
- B.** Draft of New Personnel Policy - Information included in the packet. Craig Allen and Kevin Hughes will be on a committee to review the new policy for updates.
- C.** Fuel Bid Acceptance - Information included in the packet. Toby Young motioned to accept Allen Brothers bid for #2 fuel at \$1.75 and off road at \$1.85. K. Sheldon Beebe seconded, motion carried. Craig Allen recused himself from vote. Bart Energy was low bid for propane. Mr. Beebe suggested the cost of swapping out propane fuel tanks and pressure testing may balance out the higher bid from HB Plumbing & Heating. The Manager will contact Bart Energy re: their low propane bid for more information.
- D.** Raffle - 19.1 acres (Zdunek Property) owned by Town - Information included in packet. The TM will contact the current listing realtor regarding realtor costs as the property did not sell. The Board discussed delaying the raffle, changing realtors/re-listing the property and/or accepting a lower bid for the land. The Board agreed legal counsel's review and process of this raffle was 'lukewarm', and there were many questions to be answered in advance of a raffle. This article will be tabled to another meeting.
- E.** Covid 19 - Municipal Grant Opportunity - Information included in packet. The TM said grant money would cover expenses denied by FEMA. The Town has incurred between \$1,000.00 - \$1,500.00 in unexpected expenses due to pandemic in cleaning, supplies, and conferencing for meetings. The Board approved applying for the municipal grant. The application deadline is September 1, 2020.

F. Cemetery Deed - Approval - K. Sheldon Beebe motioned to approve sale of two burial lots, number 95 and 96 in the new cemetery to Richard and Barbara Taylor. Craig Allen seconded, motion carried.

7. Manager's Report:

1. Property Tax bills were sent 8/6/2020. This is the interim tax bill sent without a set education rate. The education rate will be set by late August/early September 2020 and another bill will be sent to property owners reflecting the set rate.
2. The audit was held on July 30, 31 and went well.
3. Tax Sale - Delinquent property tax sale is set for August 27, 2020 at 11:00 a.m. at the Westminster Fire Station. Information included in the packet. There are eight properties currently slated to be sold. The Manager is currently negotiating with two of the eight property owners.
4. Masks have been ordered through the 'Vermont's Cloth Face Coverings for Everyone' program. There are 700 masks available for free by contacting the Town office. Included in the mask material is copper and silver helping with bacteria.
5. Map and Agreement settled between Town and Kissell Farm/Daigle Road. The Town has settled with the farm owner coming to an agreement to create what she can approve and Town requirements. Maps and other information are available for anyone interested.
6. Property on Davidson Hill - ready to sell - The Town obtained the property due to unsafe conditions of the vacant mobile home. The property has been cleared of debris and the home removed. This property is ready to be sold to include the cost of clean-up. There are four parties interested in purchasing this property.

8. Boards and Commissions - Nothing to report

9. Other Business - Kevin Hughes noted the promissory note for the Town grader has been completely paid. This is the last piece of long term debt in the Town. Mr. Hughes congratulated the Manager.

In another matter: Alice Caggliano asked the Manager to explain the damage on the second floor of the Town Hall. The explanation being a mud wasp nest blocked a drain tube of a new heat pump/air conditioning unit causing water to spew on an organ belonging to the historic society. The organ was completely saturated and ruined. John T's Appliance Service is cleaning the units and creating a screen for tubes. It was noted the specific unit causing the problem had a 90 degree angle in the drip tube. The other unit tubes are straight. The organ needs to be removed and the historical society does not have insurance coverage. Ms. Caggliano said in 1990 the organ was appraised at about \$2000.00. The Manager will research coverage of the organ through VLCT and will inform Ruth Grandy.

Henwood Hill: - No new information. The Town is on the list of a company to have guard rails installed on the corner nearest North Westminster.

10. Date of Next Meeting - August 26, 2020 at 6:30 p.m.

The Board briefly discussed locations for future Board meetings as the weather changes.

Craig Allen moved to go into Executive Session at 7:53 p.m. inviting the Town Manager to one session. Kevin Hughes seconded, the Board moved to executive session.

Clerk

Date

Minutes composed by Millie Barry 8/13/2020