

# MEETING OF THE WESTMINSTER SELECTBOARD

*Wednesday, September 23, 2020*

## Site Visit at Henwood Hill work Area – 5:30 PM

### Westminster, VT Fire Station (Meeting Room) and via Zoom Conferencing

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

**Others Present:** Russell Hodgkins, Town Manager/Zoning Administrator, Chuck Lawrence, Road Foreman, Jason Perry, Millie Barry, Recording Clerk, 1 Fact TV person, Nate Stoddard and Ed Clodfelter by Zoom Conferencing

1. **Call to Order:** The meeting began at a site visit to Henwood Hill Road where new guard rails and traffic mirror have been installed. Susan Harlow called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM with all 5 Board members present, Town Manager Russell Hodgkins, Road Foreman Chuck Lawrence, Michelle Bos-Lun, Jason Perry, and Rohr Cook. The Chair declared that the site visit was to look at the sharp corner and determine whether more work was needed. K. Sheldon Beebe requested that the corner be trimmed and large stone be placed on the disturbed slope for stabilization. Craig Allen agreed and made it into a motion with Kevin Hughes seconding it. Further discussion, Russell Hodgkins asked that the motion be adjusted to say “time permitting” for the Road Crew as Chuck Lawrence had already told the Board that he wasn’t sure that he had enough time in this season to get this done. Craig adjusted the motion to include “time permitting” and Kevin again seconded the motion as amended. The motion passed 5-0. The Chair then told everyone present that the meeting would resume at 6:30 in the Fire Station. At 6:30 the meeting resumed in the Westminster Fire Station with FACTV zooming the meeting.
2. **Adjustments to Agenda** - None
3. **Acceptance of Minutes** - September 9, 2020 - K. Sheldon Beebe motioned to accept the minutes as printed, Craig Allen seconded, motion carried. Toby Young abstained from vote due to absence from the meeting September 9, 2020.
4. **Communications and Public Comments** - None
5. **Unfinished Business** ( Discussion/Action)
  - A. Savage Gravel Pit - update if any - K. Sheldon Beebe stated the committee had met and agreed the Rockingham site gravel pit was not a good purchase for the town at this time due to the cost of removing the buildings to get to the gravel and the result of the test borings. Mr. Beebe motioned not to purchase the Savage property gravel pit. Kevin Hughes seconded, motion carried. As Craig Allen knows Mr. Savage he will personally convey the town’s decision and a letter will be written thanking Mr. Savage for opportunity to purchase and the town’s reasons.
  - B. Town Reappraisal - option - Ed Clodfelter, NEMRC - Information included in packet. Mr. Clodfelter appeared via Zoon speaking at length explaining COD (coefficient of dispersion and CLA (common level of appraisal). COD is measure of uniformity measuring the disparity between the set value and the sale price. As COD is 19.81 the town was close to being ordered by the State to complete a reappraisal if COD reached 20. Mr. Clodfelter said there was a fair amount of disparity/inequity built in the grand list that properties were probably not accessed as they should be. If the town was ordered to do a reappraisal, an update would not be an option. Updating would be driving by all properties and recalibrating all values. A full reappraisal would require measuring, interviewing and videoing properties, much more

costly. The TM stated the last reappraisal was in 2013. There were different listers at that time and the current listers would like to have a complete reappraisal as opposed to an update. A full appraisal would correct errors from the past. NEMRC would complete either an update at approximate cost of \$86,000.00 or full reappraisal at about \$156,000.00. Mr. Clodfelter will submit a written estimate of cost, The Manger will research the amount currently in the reappraisal fund and a full reappraisal/update will be discussed at a future meeting.

- C. Petition signatures for allocation update - Updated information included in packet from Will Senning, Director of Elections and Campaign Finance, VT Secretary of State's Office. The Manager explained it was at the board's discretion to require petitions. A request can be put on the warning without taxpayer signatures. Letters from those organizations requesting allocations and the amount requested will be required soon, time to be determined by the town office. Craig Allen motioned any organization requesting an allocation make a request in writing to the Selectboard, waiving the requirement for signature for this year only. Kevin Hughes seconded. The motion carried with one dissenting vote made by Mr. Beebe. The Manager will send letters to all organizations currently receiving an allocation.
- D. Draft of New Personnel Policy - update if any- Craig Allen said he and Kevin Hughes were working on the policy. There would be more information at the next meeting
- E. Winter Road Policy - Adoption - Information included in packet - K. Sheldon Beebe motioned to adopt the Winter/Spring Road Maintenance Policy as printed. Craig Allen seconded, the motion carried. The new policy is required to be posted 30 days, then there is an appeal period.
- F. New Tax Rate - Adoption - 2020-2021 Tax Rate information included in packet - K. Sheldon Beebe moved to set the Homestead rate for FY21 at 2.4864 and Non Homestead rate at 2.3677. Kevin Hughes seconded, motion carried. The Manager suggested taxpayers contact school board members to explain the increase in the education rate at 5.2% higher than the previous year

**6. New Business - (Discussion/Action) -**

- A. FY22 Draft Budget - First look - Information included in packet (FY2022 - 1<sup>st</sup> draft) - Susan Harlow suggested looking at two pages of the budget, item by, beginning with the next meeting to answer questions and discuss items.
- B. FY 2021 Equipment Purchase - 10 wheel dump truck - The Manager said there was an issue with what was left in the equipment fund from last year, \$527.55 and adding \$130,000.00 received from the voters at town meeting. A new 10 wheel dump truck has been estimated at \$157,527.55, leaving a deficit of \$27,000.00. Craig Allen noted the original cost was a 6 wheel for 6 wheel, the new estimate was a 6 wheel to a 10 wheel. He believes other towns are changing to a larger truck as the bigger truck carries a bigger load, cutting down on the number of trips the truck is required to make. Mr. Hodgkins said, if the Board approves the over-spending, the town would over spend the funds in the equipment fund and be frugal with the town highway budget. Mr. Lawrence (highway foreman) said he felt the dump truck was absolutely necessary. Mr. Beebe commented he wasn't sure spending \$27,000, monies the town didn't have, was absolutely necessary for a 10 wheel dump truck. Craig Allen said the dump truck was not put out to bid as no one would bid due to the competitive pricing by his company. The company had committed this pricing to some of the area towns. Susan Harlow said she believes the truck should be put out to bid, even if no one bid. Nate Stoddard stated the town had a purchasing policy and best practice was to continue with the policy currently in place. Kevin Hughes motioned, per the town policy, the Town Manager would immediately send out a bidding process to solicit bids for the proposed 10 wheel

dump truck. Also, for the Town Manager to provide a basic schematic on how \$27,000.00 or other deficit would be made up. K. Sheldon Beebe seconded, motion passed.

- C. Delinquent taxes to date: Information included in packet - Total delinquent taxes for 2019-2020 were \$162,264.46. Delinquent amount to date, (first half of payments) 2020-2021 is \$335,745.65.
  - D. Driveway access refusal - John Derby, Jr. - Information included in packet - The Manager explained last winter Mr. Derby put in a driveway to service a new shed on his property. The new drive way onto Westminster Heights Road has not been closed in. The Manager stated he had sent two letters requesting Mr. Derby submit the required permit and fees to the town for the driveway. As Mr. Derby has not completed the permit process the matter has been referred to legal counsel. K. Sheldon Beebe authorized the letter, (included in the packet) be sent: adding on or before November 1, 2020 the driveway be blocked etc, Craig Allen seconded the motion, motion carried.
  - E. Hold Harmless Agreement - Chris Harlow/Bettina Berg - The Manager explained the owners of the property where the windmill is located have requested a 'hold harmless agreement' releasing the owners of any liability for the antennae attached to the windmill. The antennae is for radio contact purposes by the road crew, Westminster Fire Department and sheriff's department. Legal counsel is drafting a letter per request.
- 7. Manager's Report:**
- 1/. Continued use of Windmill Hill Road - class 4 - A few people have continued to use the road by failing to observe the signs. The Manager said he had received notification from E.M. Richards confirming Back Country Discovery Route organization has made good progress to stop the motorcycle traffic as requested by local people.
  - 2/. Pine Banks land - The deal fell through. The property is back on the market, being advertised in the Westminster Gazette.
  - 3/. Davidson Hill Property - formerly owned by Trevarrow has been cleaned up at a cost of \$7,440.20 (one acre of land). The site formerly held a mobile home and included trash and rubbish. Mr. Beebe complimented the road crew on a job well done. There are three or four people interested in this property.
  - 4/. Masks have been ordered through the "Vermont Cloth Face Coverings for Everyone" program. These masks are available for taxpayers at the town hall.
  - 5/. School bus in Town Forest - bus removed but trash left - road crew - The bus has been removed as well as some of the debris. Mr. Hodgkins asked if the road crew was to complete cleaning up the site before winter. Mr. Beebe stated he believed the town should send a letter requesting the local people (related to those responsible) complete the clean-up.
  - 6/. Emergency Health Order - William Lyon property - There is no next of kin or will. Legal Counsel is assisting the Manager with an emergency health order to be submitted to the State of VT to recover the cost of cleaning up the site.
- 8. Boards and Commissions:** Nothing
- 9. Other Business:** Craig Allen noted his company, Advantage Truck Group recently purchased Freightliner of NH. He noted the company was now the largest dealership network on the East Coast. This purchase was positive adding more employment opportunities for the local area. Mr. Allen said the company offered employees the option to move to another site and four new families had moved to the area to work at this dealership.

**10. Date of Next Meeting** - October 14, 2020 – Westminster Fire Station

**11. Adjournment:** Toby Young moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:05 p.m. K. Sheldon Beebe seconded, the meeting was adjourned.

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Clerk

Minutes by Millie Barry 9.25.2020

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Date