

MEETING OF THE WESTMINSTER SELECTBOARD

Wednesday, September 9, 2020

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

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

Others Present: Russell Hodgkins, Town Manager/Zoning Administrator, Chuck Lawrence, Road Foreman, Alison Bigwood, Millie Barry, Recording Clerk, 2 Fact TV personnel, Nate Stoddard, Adam Grinold, Sarah Lang and others (not identified) via remote Zoom conferencing

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 fire station with room for 6 feet social distancing due to State of VT meeting requirements caused by Covid 19 and by Zoom conferencing
2. **Adjustments to Agenda:** The TM (Town Manager) requested to add under 6. (New Business) E. a third errors and omissions. Susan Harlow noted to add under (Unfinished Business) B. Town Clerk position - update, an executive session.
3. **Acceptance of Minutes:** August 26, 2020 / September 2, 2020 - Craig Allen motioned to accept the minutes of August 26, 2020 as printed. K. Sheldon Beebe seconded, motion carried. Craig Allen motion to accept the minutes as printed of September 2, 2020. Kevin Hughes seconded, the motion adopted.
4. **Communications and Public Comments:** Kevin Hughes shared an email from Michelle Bos-Lun regarding Henwood Hill Road. Her email noted the guard rail and traffic mirror installation (near her home) were an improvement. In the communication she inquired about the possibility of reducing speed to 15 MPH at the narrow area and or adding a sign in both directions 'dangerous curve', in addition to the present signage. Mr. Hughes suggested her recommendations be taken into consideration, if feasible. TM noted the present speed limit was 35 MPH. The board was able to regulate miles per hour from 35 to 50 per, not lower or higher. Susan Harlow suggested contacting the SOV to reduce the speed to 15 MPH and for State recommendation for signage. The board will meet for a site visit at 5:30 p.m. on Henwood Hill (where guard rails were installed) on the next meeting date, September 23, 2020.
5. **Unfinished Business (Discussion/Action)**
 - A. Savage Gravel Pit - update if any - Mr. Beebe said the committee had not yet met. The Manager noted a decision/answer for Hanson Savage would be appropriate in the next two weeks.
 - B. Town Clerk Position - update - The Manager noted an employment ad was placed in the *VT Journal/Shopper* and *Brattleboro Reformer* newspaper for the clerk position. Craig Allen motioned to go to executive session to discuss the position being advertised for personnel reasons inviting Alison Bigwood. Kevin Hughes seconded, motion carried
 - C. Tax Sale Results - Information in packet - TM noted Christian Blake property did not sell for a second year. Legal counsel will be consulted as there is a process to follow when a property does not sell on two occasions. Taxes plus interest/fees were paid by family members for John Shadis properties. There has not been communication from people buying Hutton and Brian McAllister properties.

- D. Petition Signatures for Allocation - update - Information in packet - The Manager noted there were multiple requests (correspondence in packet) to waive the signature requirement (due to Covid) for monies allocated by the Town/Westminster select board. The official response from the Secretary of State is the select board does not have the authority to waive the signature requirement. The State is looking at changing the requirement but has not done so. Alison Bigwood stated Westminster followed policies from the VT Secretary of State. A change had not been made by the legislature as of yet. Adam Grinold spoke to advocate for the ability to not require signatures for petition. Susan Harlow read from communication from the VT Secretary of State (included in board packet). Mr. Grinold said they would do more research and report to the board.
- E. Draft of New Personnel Policy - update if any - Craig Allen said he and Mr. Hughes were still reviewing the policy.
- F. Winter Road Policy - update - new information included in the packet. TM requested the board read the policy to discuss/change/adopt at the next meeting.

6. New Business (Discussion/Action) -

- A. Venue for Winter Meetings - TM stated the VT State Police Barracks are closed (due to Covid 19) until 1/1/2021. The board agreed to hold meetings in the present location at the fire station, with permission, until further notice.
- B. Town Land (19.1 acres) - new offer - information included in packet. K. Sheldon Beebe motioned to accept the offer by Kyle Spaulding of \$24,500.00 for the former Zdunek property off Pine Banks Road. Kevin Hughes seconded, motion carried.
- C. New Tax Rate - Information included in packet - TM noted the assumed 3% Homestead tax rate increase came in at 5.2% increase or \$1.7779. In February, residents will receive an adjusted tax bill to reflect the increase. Non-Homestead tax rate increased by 6.1% to \$1.6602.
- D. Town Reappraisal - option - Information included in packet - Communication from Ed Clodfelter (NEMRC) New England Resource Center, suggesting an update to place new tables (cost tables, depreciation, land, site improvements) rather than complete a full town reappraisal. An update would be about half the cost of a complete reappraisal. This as COD, coefficient of dispersion at 19.81 and CLA, common level of appraisal at 98.06. TM noted both listers were in favor of completing a new appraisal. The board agreed to meet with Mr. Clodfelter at a future date.
- E. Errors and Omissions (3) K. Sheldon Beebe moved due to error and omission to correct the current grand list value for parcel 003079.00, owner, John and Gloria Cook, address, 164 Church Avenue to \$150,900.00 to correct grand list value. Craig Allen seconded, motion carried. This change does not have adverse effect on grand list. Craig Allen moved to correct the current grand list value for parcel 003080.000, owner, Adam Gearhart, 137 Church Avenue change grand list value to \$182,200.00. K. Sheldon Beebe seconded, motion carried. Craig Allen moved due to error and omissions to correct current grand list value for parcel 3015.000, owner Eddie Cutler, address, 1644 Route 121 to change the grand list value of \$116,500.00. Kevin Hughes seconded, motion carried. This correction does not have adverse effect on grand list.

7. Manager's Report 9/9/2020 -

1. Henwood Hill Road guard rail was installed in entirety as approved by board.
2. Town Questioned for Dumping Fill in Wetlands - SOV (State of VT) visited a site with the manager and road foreman determining that fill was dumped in a Class 3 wetlands area. It is illegal to dump fill in a Class 1 or 2 wetland area.
3. Masks through "Vermont's Cloth Face Coverings for Everyone" program. Reminder these masks are available at the town hall upon request. There are also black masks available for residents.
4. School Bus in Town Forest - The bus has been removed, the trash was left. The town is prepared to clean up the mess and invoice the appropriate parties.

8. Boards and Commissions: None

9. Other Business: Mr. Lawrence reported 'no unauthorized motor vehicle' signs are up on Kimball Hill Road, south and Windmill Hill Road, north and south

In another matter, Nate Stoddard questioned the purpose of the executive session. Susan Harlow noted they would be discussing the pay for the interim town clerk and assistant town clerk. Mr. Stoddard noted both salaries were budgeted, voted by residents. Mr. Stoddard asked to note in the minutes he did not believe this discussion was an appropriate executive session. Susan Harlow read from advice from town counsel re: salaries.

10. Date of Next Meeting - September 23, 2020 at 6:30 at Westminster Fire Station. The board will meet at site of Henwood Hill Road where new guard rails have been installed at 5:30 p.m.

Board moved to executive session at 7:20 p.m. Upon coming out of the executive session at 7:45 PM, the Chair announced that no decisions were made and that no further business was necessary.

11. Adjournment: Craig Allen made a motion to adjourn and Kevin Hughes seconded. The motion passed.

Clerk

Date