

# MEETING OF THE WESTMINSTER SELECTBOARD

*Wednesday, April 14, 2021*

## Meeting by Zoom Conferencing

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

**Others Present:** Russell Hodgkins, Town Manager/Zoning Administrator, Alice Caggiano, Nate Stoddard, Cynthia Stoddard, Fran Renaud, Russell Lazarek, Millie Barry (Recording Clerk) and FACTV

1. **Call to Order:** Kevin Hughes, Chair of the Board called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. This meeting was held with remote attendance due to Covid 19 pandemic and State of Vermont recommendations regarding attendance at public meetings.
2. **Adjustments to Agenda:** Kevin Hughes noted under new business, C. Executive Session - personnel matter is removed.
3. **Acceptance of Minutes:** March 24, 2021 - Susan Harlow motioned to accept the minutes of March 24, 2021 as printed. Toby Young seconded, motion carried.
4. **Communications and Public Comments:** None
5. **Unfinished Business - Discussion/Action -**
  - A. Town Meeting Articles - Who is doing what article? Information included in packet - Board members volunteered to bring the individual articles on the Town Meeting Warning forward at Town Meeting, May 15, 2021
  - B. Selectboard Appointment (Interim School Board) - update if any - Susan Harlow noted the interim school board, with the assistance of legal counsel is working on a presentation to the State of Vermont (SOV) Board of Education. David Major will make the presentation to the State Board for Westminster to withdraw from the forced merger on April 21, 2021. Ms. Harlow and Kevin Hughes will attend this meeting, time to be announced.
  - C. Website Renewal - update if any - Susan Harlow said Russ Lazarek continues to work on updating the website. The finalized version will be available for the board to preview before the next meeting.
  - D. Collaborative Finance Processing Manual - update if any - Mr. Hodgkins noted there had been continuing discussions but nothing formal had been written. A meeting of the original committee will be held when all parties are available.
  - E. Town land off Davidson Hill - update - Mr. Hodgkins noted three parties were interested in purchasing the land. Next steps are advice from legal council about the process to proceed with sale.  
In another matter: The land off Pine Banks Road is under contract. The closing tentatively scheduled for 4/23/2021.
6. **New Business - Discussion/Action -**
  - A. Third quarter financials - Information included in packet - In answer to several questions from the board, Mr. Hodgkins said he would have answers at the next meeting. Susan Harlow questioned where legal fees were coming from for work on withdrawal of the forced school merger. Mr. Hodgkins said monies were coming from regular legal expense service line. He noted he hoped for reimbursement of these monies. Also, some figures need to be adjusted. Cynthia Stoddard mentioned, in the absence of the treasurer, a NEMRC (New England Municipal Resource Center) employee could move and adjust numbers. Third quarter financials will be on the next meeting agenda.

- B. Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) - Selectboard representative - Mr. Hodgkins said the plan was updated every five years. Representatives from numerous Town organizations are required. At present a representative from the Selectboard is needed as well as two people from Westminster West, another person from the central station north and south areas of Town need a representative. Toby Young volunteered to represent the Selectboard. Also, two sources, in case of need, for quick or bulk food are Stacey and Tim Allen of Allen Brothers and Paul Harlow of Harlow Farm. The time commitment is not large and there will be meetings for public input.
- C. Executive Session - personnel matter - None
- D. Liquor License request - Harlow's Last Stand - Information included in packet - Toby Young motioned to renew Harlow Farm Last Stand liquor license. Jason Perry seconded, motion carried. Susan Harlow abstained from vote.

**7. Manager's Report:**

- 1. Damage to Town Forest and East Putney Brook Road - Mr. Hodgkins said due to entry from private property new forest growth is being damaged. On the advice of Tim Morton, VT Fish and Game Warden, a plastic sign (displayed at the meeting) stating the statue, will be posted at the point of entrance. The fish and game department will monitor the property. Mr. Hodgkins noted he is working with the Town of Putney on the issue. Jason Perry questioned the vehicles and other junk on the class four road last fall. Mr. Hodgkins noted the property is in the process of being sold and the debris should be removed before the sale is final.
- 2. Delinquent tax update - Since February \$346,543.38 has been collected in delinquent taxes. There are 18 properties receiving 3 delinquent tax notifications with no response. These properties will be contacted by legal counsel beginning 4/15/21. There are four properties where the owner does not want the property. These will go to tax sale.
- 3. Zoom event April 26, 2021, 6-8 p.m. with Jens Hilke representative from the State of VT. A blue card is being mailed to tax payers regarding the Planning Commission "A Community Mapping Event".
- 4. The health order on Our road is moving forward. The fire department will burn the remnants of the building and other debris will be cleaned up by Town Road Crew. Substantial expense for clean-up of the site and back taxes will be reimbursed to the Town from the estate.

- 8. Boards and Commissions:** Mr. Hodgkins said there were two immediate openings for Windham Regional Commission representatives, Long time representative Bobbi Kilburn has stepped down due to personal reasons. The commitment is a monthly meeting and representatives can attend sub-committee meetings. The openings will be advertised in the Westminster Gazette. Craig Allen, as Selectboard alternate will attend the meeting April 19 at 12:00 p.m. Toby Young volunteered to be a representative for Windham Regional Commission.

**9. Other Business:**

- Dangerous structures in Town - Information included in packet - Mr. Hodgkins said some progress had been made regarding these properties. The owners of listed properties have been notified of a hazard. Kevin Hughes said no one was attempting to be intrusive or selective about any particular property and the Town Manager was working on legal and ethical standards to be sure properties carry the least amount of risk for the general public. Nate Stoddard questioned who determined what was a dangerous property? Mr. Hodgkins said often one or more neighbors or public citizens (from personal observation) made a complaint.

- Toby Young questioned if the speeding in Westminster West Village was being addressed. Mr. Hodgkins said the sheriff department has logged quite a few hours on the Westminster West road and in the Village.
- Jason Perry questioned the plan for the wall on Kurn Hattin road just before the entrance to the New Cemetery. Mr. Hodgkins said the Town has received prices from Carroll Concrete for three different stone types. The Board has chosen a stone and the project is on hold. The wall will be taller to eliminate some maintenance. Mr. Hodgkins said the Board has discussed the Town Road Crew replacing the cemetery wall, doing the work in sections.
- Jason Perry questioned status or completion of the work on Forest Road. Mr. Hodgkins said re-seeding, erosion correction would be addressed later in the spring

**10. Date of Next Meeting:** April 28, 2021 - The meeting will be held with (Zoom conferencing available) at the Westminster Fire Station (inside) if there is no conflict with the fire department. Zoom meeting information will be available on FACTV website, the Town website or by contacting the Westminster Town office.

**11. Adjournment:** Toby Young motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:32 p.m. Susan Harlow seconded, motion carried.

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Clerk

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Date