

EMERGENCY SELECTBOARD MEETING
May 8, 2015

Present: Alex Weinhagen
David Adams
Casey Mathieu

Guests: Tony Kitsos

The meeting was called to order by Alex Weinhagen, Chair at 8:45 a.m.

RESPONSE TO A THREAT MADE AGAINST TOWN OFFICIALS

Alex W. explained that this emergency meeting was called to discuss how to respond to threats made by a town resident against Town officials. He explained that on Wednesday (May 6), Ted and Michelle Pelkey were at the Town Office meeting with Melissa Manka (Planning Coordinator) to discuss a development project the Pelkeys are planning. This is related to a project the Pelkeys received approval for some time ago from the Development Review Board (DRB), but a project that hasn't been constructed yet. Mr. Pelkey became agitated, and said something to the effect of, "If I didn't have too much to lose, then I would shoot the lot of you," meaning Town officials. At this point, the Pelkeys left the office. Melissa Manka notified the rest of the staff, and contacted Alex W. Alex W. instructed the Town Administrator to alert the Vermont State Police (VSP), who responded later that evening by coming to the Town Office to take a statement from Melissa.

Senior Trooper James Fox responded later via an email in which he discussed the incident, his meeting with Melissa, and a 2011 incident at a DRB meeting in which the Town notified the State Police after Mr. Pelkey threatened to shoot a Town official (Maurice Rathbun, former Zoning Administrator) if he stepped on Mr. Pelkey's property. In his email, Trooper Fox gave three suggestions: 1) VSP makes contact with Mr. Pelkey to let him know his actions and comment are not acceptable; 2) Issue a no trespass order to prevent him from coming to the Town Office; 3) formally charge Mr. Pelkey for his actions.

Alex W. indicated that on Thursday he contacted both the VT League of Cities and Towns and the Town Attorney (Stitzel, Page & Fletcher) for advice. He also spoke with Trooper Fox Thursday evening after Trooper Fox had been able to pay a visit to Mr. Pelkey. Trooper Fox indicated that Mr. Pelkey admitted that he had made the threatening statements. The Town Attorney also provided written feedback on possible responses. This was distributed to the Board at the meeting.

The Board discussed the incident and the background, and noted the extreme concern and outright fear that Town Office staff felt as a result. The Board also discussed Trooper Fox's observation that the most recent threats seem to be more of an aggressive statement from previous cases he has reviewed, and much more aggressive than the 2011 incident. Trooper Fox recommended in his email that something should be done, and to ignore the problem could lead to bigger problems in the future. The Town Attorney indicated a no trespass order was possible, as long as it was tailored properly. The Town Attorney also outlined the benefit of pressing charges against Mr. Pelkey, primarily to reinforce to both Mr. Pelkey and to Town employees/officials that the Town will not tolerate threats of physical harm.

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Tony Kitsos indicated that as chair of the DRB, he is responsible for running meetings and helping ensure the safety of fellow board members, staff, and interested citizens that attend the meetings. He is concerned about safety should Mr. Pelkey decide to submit additional applications for DRB review. He asked the Selectboard to provide for law enforcement at any DRB meetings that Mr. Pelkey attends.

The Board decided to work with the Town Attorney to issue a tailored no trespass order to Mr. Pelkey, and to encourage the State Police to bring charges against Mr. Pelkey for his actions.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 9:36 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Alex Weinhagen, Chair