

SELECTBOARD MEETING
September 21, 2015

Present: Alex Weinhagen Brent Meacham
 Casey Mathieu Sue Adams
 Dave Adams Mary Jane Featherstone
 Linda Hardy

Guests: See List

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

CHANGES TO AGENDA

The following changes were made to the agenda: Added Westford School PTO Newsletter Request to Correspondence and Excess Weight Permit to Road Foreman.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Erik Wammer brought up a dog issue. He claims there is a potentially vicious dog running at large in his neighborhood. Erik registered three complaints with the Dog Warden. The Dog Warden issued the dog owners multiple warnings, however, Erik states the dog is still running at large. Alex Weinhagen made a motion to appoint Casey Mathieu to work with all parties involved to come to a resolution. Dave Adams seconded. Motion passed: 3-0.

Becky Roy had one question and one comment: When the Town hires Sheriffs and/or State Troopers to monitor roads for speeding, where does the revenue from traffic fines go?, and, when a resident addresses a question to the board on Front Porch Forum, she reminded the Board to follow up in a timely manner and to answer questions fully. Alex Weinhagen acknowledged Becky's comment and said he would have to get back to her regarding the traffic fine revenue question. He did clarify that the Town now contracts solely with the Sheriff Department for traffic surveillance.

MINUTES

Casey Mathieu made a motion to approve the September 10, 2015 minutes as drafted, seconded by Alex Weinhagen. Motion passed: 2-0, Dave abstained.

FY'15 BUDGET END OF YEAR REVIEW

The Board reviewed the General Fund revenues and expenditures. Several comments and questions ensued, including: The Treasurer should consult with Nanette about whether we are evenly splitting the cost of plowing the school parking lot. The Board would like the Bookkeeper's feedback on her salary projections. For future budgets, any estimated uncollected taxes should no longer be a line item. Dave Adams thinks we should budget for delinquent tax revenue and expenses given we pay the Delinquent Tax Collector every year. Alex Weinhagen would like to know why we went over the State Police budget when this was a contracted amount. There was lengthy discussion between the Board, Treasurer and Bookkeeper as to the bottom line balances and whether these numbers were true numbers. The Board did not have time to review the Highway revenues and expenditures, and so will review these as part of the normal budgeting process when they get to it in November or December.

TREASURER WORK PLAN

Linda Hardy reported that her work plan is a work in progress. The current audit is taking up most of her time. After the audit, she anticipates her office hours will be more on demand, outside of preparing quarterly reports. She would like to have a bigger role in the budget process. She thinks there may be room to streamline office procedures and better address fixed assets and various

standards of accounting. Alex Weinhagen asked that Linda report back to the Board on her work plan after the budget is complete and the Town Report has been sent to the printer.

JACKSON FARM CONSERVATION PROJECT

As member of the Coordinating Committee for the Jackson Farm Conservation Project, Alex Weinhagen presented the Board with a full update. This project consists of a potential 3 lot, 2 unit subdivision that has a deadline of May 22, 2016 for Purchase and Sales Agreements with the property owners, Dave and Lynn Gauthier. The Coordinating Committee has been working with Bob Heiser of the Vermont Land Trust. Bob helped devise a conceptual plan that includes 133 acres to be conserved as a Town Forest and 42 acres to be conserved as farmland. Of interest to the Town is an open field within the 133 acre lot that has potential to provide critically needed wastewater capacity to the Village Center area. A forthcoming appraisal of the agricultural value of the property will help clarify the subdivision plans and funding sources for the proposed lots. The Westford Conservation Committee has agreed to pay half of this appraisal fee. Dave Gauthier requested a waiver of the application and subdivision permit fees (approximately \$1100). Alex Weinhagen suggested the Board wait until the appraisal is complete before making a formal motion in response to this request.

HEALTH INSURANCE OPTIONS FOR 2016

The Board had previously asked the Town Administrator to research options for health insurance. There are only two Health Exchange options for small employers right now: BCBSVT (which we currently have) and a high deductible plan through MVP. Alex Weinhagen suggested the Town stay with the same carrier as long as employees are happy with it and the cost is within our budget. He would like to know exactly how much we budgeted for health insurance and whether a percentage of rate increase was factored into that number. The Board needs to finalize a decision before the end of November when enrollment paperwork is due if we change carriers.

ACT 148 & DUFFY HILL ROAD GARBAGE

Alex Weinhagen did a site visit of the area. He asked the Underhill resident to stop putting her garbage in with Duffy Hill residents' garbage and found an alternative location alongside VT Route 15 for those Westford residents to put their garbage and recycling. The Town Administrator is to check with Gauthier Trucking about this location and, if Gauthiers approves, send letters to those residents explaining this location change.

MUNICIPAL PLANNING GRANT APPLICATION

Dave Adams made a motion to approve an MPC grant application for phase two of the Jackson Farm and/or United Church of Westford wastewater projects, as described in an email from Melissa Manka, Planner, dated September 14, 2015. Casey Mathieu seconded. Motion passed: 3-0.

SHEEP AT LARGE ON DUFFY HILL ROAD

The Town has received several complaints of sheep at large on Duffy Hill Road. The state statutes provide few provisions the Board feels are worth using. The Zoning Administrator reports this issue is not within her purview. As such, Alex Weinhagen will call the owner of the sheep urging him to resolve this nuisance issue.

UNREPORTED WORK HOURS

Becky Roy brought to the Board's attention liability and safety concerns she has about the unreported work hours of the Road Foreman, Brent Meacham. Alex Weinhagen clarified that the Town's insurance policy covers Brent whenever Brent is doing town work. The real liability concern has to do with labor laws and whether the Town is liable for not paying Brent for all overtime hours

worked. Alex recognizes that Brent has a strong work ethic and wonders whether his position of Road Foreman should be salaried. The Board agreed this is worth looking into.

ROAD SCHEDULE

Dave Adams made a motion to approve the Road Schedule for September 21, 2015 – September 31, 2015, with an amendment to include storm water drainage work to the library parking lot. Alex Weinhausen seconded. Motion passed: 3-0.

WESTFORD SCHOOL PTO NEWSLETTER REQUEST

Deb Hazel, Secretary of the Westford School Parent Teacher Organization, asked permission to include a monthly PTO submission in the town newsletter. The Board granted this request.

EXCESS WEIGHT PERMIT

The Chair signed an excess weight permit for Craig Bushey Enterprises LLC.

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE & PAYROLL WARRANTS

The Board approved the accounts payable. The payroll warrant was not ready and will be included with the next pay period's warrants.

CORRESPONDENCE

Dave Adams took issue with a Front Porch Forum posting by Dick Lavallee about Brent Meacham. Alex Weinhausen agreed to respond with a follow up post on Front Porch Forum in order to address some misinformation on Brent's behalf. Discussion ensued about the complexity of using Front Porch Forum since it does not comply with open meeting laws. The general public may be forgetting that the Board must comply with these laws and that the best way to have a discussion with the Board is face to face at a regularly scheduled meeting. Other good options for communication are a phone call or an email to a specific Board member.

Dave Adams reiterated a phone conversation he had with Tom Charland about the way the Town pays for garbage and recycling. Tom does not like that the trash hauler fees are embedded within our taxes because it sets up an unfair distribution when residents pay based on their property assessments. Tom would rather see this expense as a flat rate shared evenly among residents and be billed separately from taxes. The Board agreed this issue is worth consideration, however, not until closer to June 2016 when the Town's contract with Gauthier Trucking is up for renewal. Dave will call Tom to let him know this.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Alexander Weinhausen, Chair
Selectboard

Sue Adams
Assistant Town Clerk

TOWN OF WESTFORD
SELECTBOARD MEETING
GUEST LIST

Date: September 21, 2015

Name (please print)

Address

David Gauthier

140 Huntley Rd Westford

Dick Lavelle

39 Old Number 11 Road

Erik Wamner

1489 Old Stage Rd

Becky Roy

143 Old #11 Road Westford

ZAN BLANCHARD

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