

SELECTBOARD MEETING
September 26, 2019

Present: Allison Hope
 Julia Andrews
 Bill Cleary

 Callie Hamdy
 Greg Barrows

Guests: See attached list

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

CHANGES TO AGENDA

An Access Permit on Plains Road, Marilyn Thomas' Conservation Commission Resignation were added.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment

MINUTES

The board had several changes to the September 12th minutes, Bill motioned to approve the minutes from September 12 as amended, Julia 2nd, motion passed 3-0.

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

The Road Foreman was not present, but the board went over the road schedule from September 13th through September 26th. Allison motioned to approve the road schedule, Bill Cleary 2nd, motion passed 3-0.

ACCESS PERMITS

The board approved and signed off on Access Permits for Kimberly Catella on Plains Road and Kassidy Mannings on Brookside Road.

EXCESS WEIGHT PERMIT

The board signed an Excess Weight Permit for Sweet Caroline's Trucking LLC.

CHITTENDEN COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION – ANNUAL REPORT

Charlie Baker and Jason Charest were present from the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission to check in with the town and review the Annual Report, something they try to do every year. Allison expressed her appreciation for the Road Dashboard CCRPC had provided. It made it easy to see which roads were and weren't compliant with current road standards. The first page of the report was a background summary. Charlie expressed it was important that the Selectboard and CCRPC be connected. Julia was curious about the expectation of participation from Selectboard members in terms of CCRPC meetings. Charlie clarified that attendance was not expected at every meeting, but is desired, approximately 10 minutes a year. The board came to an agreement that Allison would attend the meetings. The second page of the review went over what was done in Westford in 2019, it does not include current projects such as road erosion, drainage on the Town Common and culvert projects. There is only one project in the Capital Program currently which is the Route 15 paving.

TRAFFIC CALMING

Charlie and Jason were also present to discuss traffic calming. Allison explained that the topic of traffic calming comes up a lot in Westford. Lots of people, both residents and non-residents, use the town roads as thru roads and drive very fast. The project on Route 15 has driven a lot of people to using the backroads and the Route 128 project from years previous has done the same. With winter

coming, the board expects drivers will go back to using the paved roads. The widening of many town gravel roads had also contributed to the speeding issue.

No data had been collected for the roads in question currently, the board has not seen data regarding traffic on the town roads in some time. Allison explained that people feel the speeds need to be reduced, but the town would need to do a study and have the data to support that decision. Julia added that from the research she had done prior, it is her understanding that reduced speed limits don't necessarily reduce speeds. Jason confirmed this to be correct and explained that drivers tend to drive at the speed they feel comfortable with, vehicles are also getting easier to drive at fast speeds.

Bill asked what other options we would have to slow down drivers. Jason explained that first they would collect data. The CCRPC want to be sensitive to how residents feel, many concerns are likely valid. Then they would ask what is a reasonable speed limit and what is the expectation of that speed limit. Allison asked what the board should prioritize in terms of a plan. The residents want the board to do something, but what is that something? How does the board understand the data that comes up and what is the solution? Jason replied that the CCRPC not only has project requests, but requests for data. This would be a good starting point. The CCRPC would not only provide the data, but a summary for the board's understanding.

Jason explained that the town's toolbox for solutions is limited since the roads in question are gravel. Reducing the width of the roads, which the road crew is already doing, is a good start. The town could also do an education program which is low-cost. Town residents are the strongest players when it comes to education. Residents can help model behavior to other drivers by driving the proper speed limit. This helps others realize how fast they may be going. Bill asked about the relevance of blinking speed signs. Jason explained that it would be important to some extent, although if the blinker remains in one place a long time, drivers can learn to ignore it. Bill had met with a Sheriff in another town and that Sheriff had told him that the blinkers are very effective, especially when the Sheriff is in view. It is a good alert to those who also might not be aware of how fast they are going.

Charlie brought up the fact that traffic calming sounds like a long-term issue and project for Westford. Julia thought that any studies done during winter would not be impactful since this behavior is more warm weather related. Allison thought it would be best to include John in on this conversation since he knows so much about the roads. Lori Miller was present and asked if narrowing roads was a proven traffic solution. Jason replied that it was. Lori was concerned what effect narrowing roads would have on recreational uses since many residents use the roads for recreational uses. Jason explained that it's a fine balance between keeping the road narrow enough to slow traffic and wide enough that recreational users feel safe. Reducing the width of the road reduces sightlines, which reduces speeds.

Allison thought that there was also an aspect of personal responsibility to this issue. People need to be more aware of driving for the road conditions and be aware of others using the road. In Lori's opinion, it is often the same vehicles committing offenses. Jason replied that there are always going to be a few specific people that make poor driving decisions regardless of what traffic calming methods are in place.

RECREATION COMMITTEE ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The Recreation Committee was present and introduced themselves. Present was Tonya Calley, Chuck Medick, Lori Miller, Pat Cribb and Doris Birttruf. The board welcomed Pat Cribb to the Committee. Allison began by stating there were things that she noticed about the Recreation Committee's organization that worried her as a Selectboard member. The lack of Chair, Vice Chair,

Treasurer and the lack of signing off on invoices were still not happening. Allison asked what the selectboard can do to help. The Committee felt that Allison had an unfair assessment of what they have been doing. Pat explained that the committee wanted to elect a chair and vice chair to run each meeting instead of having an official Chair and Vice Chair, allowing who is running the meeting to change as needed. They do go over budget items and the Recreation Coordinator's salary during meetings.

Allison reminded them that this was about checks and balances. There is little proof things were gone over, such as the lack of signing off on invoices. The Committee gets a budget report via the bookkeeper MJ. Tonya clarified that these had been requested fairly recently, the new treasurer (Pat Cribb) will be going over budget items each meeting, but he's very recently appointed. Anything Tonya purchases goes through both Pat and MJ. Lori is the secretary so she is responsible for the minutes. The committee feels like since they are all volunteers with other obligations that they would choose who was running the meeting each time, they will post the agenda on FPF and in the town office. Allison agreed that these were great steps. She reiterated that every board and committee in town is volunteer but acknowledged that this was an improvement that the Recreation Committee took. This brought Allison to the subject of a pay increase for the Recreation Coordinator, Tonya Calley. Tonya is budgeted for 15 hours a week, but most of the time she works less than that. Chuck explained that half of the salary is funded by the town and the other half is fundraised by the Committee. Allison replied that \$12 an hour is still significantly below the rest of the town employees. Chuck said that the budget has \$5,000 for the Recreation Coordinator. Many events and programs the Rec Department does do not make money and enrollment is down. Allison feels that if the Recreation Department has extra funds in their budget, which they currently do, it seems responsible to raise the pay of the Recreation Coordinator. Chuck asked Allison what she suggested as an hourly rate to which Allison replied \$15 an hour.

Greg Barrows suggested reaching out to other towns to see what they pay. The position and responsibilities have changed over the years. In Julia's opinion, it is a poor aspect of the town for there to be such a disparity in pay. Allison asked if they did raise the pay of the Coordinator to \$15 an hour if their budget would change. Chuck says this is hard to predict due to participation fluctuations in programs. They are currently in the middle of a fiscal year. In terms of making the transition to a \$15 an hour pay easier Tonya suggested a bonus be assigned for this fiscal year and then making the \$15 an hour official the next fiscal year. The Rec Committee can do the raise however they wish, Allison just thinks that \$12 an hour is much too low for the position. If Tonya went from \$12 to \$15 and was maxing out her hours each week it would a \$2,400 cost. The Committee is in a different position than they were under the previous coordinator and that Tonya does deserve a raise. The Committee wanted to be sure they have the budget to give her a raise so the department can function. Allison explained that she does want the Recreation Department to function, but the conversation is that if we have to pay our Recreation Coordinator \$12 to function what is the bigger issue? Does the rec department need to pull back on their offerings? Tonya agreed there was a sustainability issue that needed to be addressed.

TOWN COMMON PARKING PROPOSAL

Lori Johnson of the Common Committee and Melissa Manka, Planning Coordinator, had contacted the Selectboard regarding expanding the parking space on the Town Common. Expanded parking is currently a goal in the Westford Town Plan. Allison personally sees this as a DRB/Planning Commission issue. There are two aspects to the request, parking and paving. Julia feels like the parking is a PC issue. Allison feels like paving any current gravel areas would not be popular with residents, especially those living on the common. Julia explained that it is a small section, Jeff Hutchins has offered to do so free of charge since the paved area will be in front of his store. In Julia's opinion this potentially creates maintenance issues and she does not think that this is in the board's authority. Bill acknowledged that the common does need more parking. Allison would not be

comfortable with giving approval without talking with John about what potential maintenance issues could occur. It would be free of charge now, but later when it needs repair it would cost the taxpayers money. Regardless if an entrance is paved or not, she feels people will continue to use Common Road. Allison would like to talk about this further with the Planning Commission during their meeting on 9/30.

VCRD COMMUNITY FORUM

The board discussed the Community Forum Visit. Julia thought very positively about the meeting. There were many people participating that she doesn't normally see. In Bill's opinion, the moderator gave a lot of attention to younger children who were in attendance in a disproportionate manner. Overall, he found the meeting very interesting in how it was broken down and organized. He also felt like the attendance was diverse and the meeting well attended. Julia was very excited to see what would come of the visit and it makes her feel less overburdened and more excited about the future.

The board voted to approve childcare at the next VCRD Community visit on October 22. This will also be provided by the barn school. Allison Hope moved to approve of the childcare for the October 22 visit, Bill Cleary 2nd, motion passed 3-0.

TOWN HEALTH OFFICER

Julia Andrews moved to recommend Martha Bennett to the Vermont Department of Health for appointment as Westford's Town Health Officer. Bill Cleary 2nd, motion passed 3-0.

COMMUNITY FUND CLEAN UP

Gerry has been picking up tires left on the school property and disposing of them on his own dime. Allison explains that this is a town issue because the town has funds to be reimbursed by the Community Clean Up Funds. Julia asked if the board needed to get a receipt from Gerry and then reimburse him. Allison agreed, and mentioned that John should also be involved. Bill's fear is that if we keep cleaning up trash that is not necessarily ours for free that tires will continue to be placed at the school.

FY'21 BUDGET SCHEDULE

The board discussed the schedule for the FY'21 budget talks, the second meeting in November falls on Thanksgiving and the 2nd meeting in December falls on the day after Christmas.

CONSERVATION COMMISSION RESIGNATION

The board approved Marilyn Thomas's resignation from the Conservation Commission with much appreciation. Julia Andrews motioned, Bill Cleary 2nd, motion passed 3-0.

CORRESPONDENCE

Bill contacted Linda Will in regards to the conversation about her road at the Sept. 12th meeting. Bill thinks that fixing the issue will not be difficult, the resident merely wants the radius coming down Covey Road reinstated. John will need to be part of this as he will best know the correct radius for him to make the corner properly.

In regards to some conversations on Front Porch Forum, Allison wanted to remind residents that Front Porch Forum is not an official correspondence with the Selectboard.

The selectboard had also been contacted by the Burlington Free Press that wants to be in touch with the town to see what's going on in town to expand the areas they cover.

The discussion on Opioid Exclusion Request form was tabled until Nanette was present and could provide context.

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE & PAYROLL WARRANTS

The Board approved the accounts payable and payroll warrants.

Greg mentioned that we are running higher than expected on the highway deficit and that is due to the purchase of the new truck, the expense has yet to be transferred from the equipment fund, but things should balance out once they have transferred.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Allison Hope, Chair
Selectboard

Callie Hamdy
Assistant Town Clerk.

TOWN OF WESTFORD HIGHWAY DEPT.
ROAD SCHEDULE
Sept 13, 2019 – Sept. 26, 2019

Work to be done

- Grade roads when needed.
- Procure bids for the Rogers Rd. culvert replacement.
- Continue to haul in winter sand.
- Roadside brush cutting.
- Start Rogers Rd. "Better roads grant" work.

Work completed

- Graded and put chloride on Osgood Hill, Cambridge Rd., Plains Rd.,
- Hauled in winter sand.
- Replace a culvert on Old # 11 Rd.
- Hauled in 25 loads of gravel to build up Old # 11 Rd.
- Brush cutting on Old # 11 Rd.
- Swept intersections.
- Had radios installed in the new truck and excavator.
- Made repairs to the 2014 Western Star. (coolant lines)
- Changed the oil in the grader.

Approved at the 9/26/19 Selectboard Meeting.

TOWN OF WESTFORD
SELECTBOARD MEETING
GUEST LIST

Date: September 26, 2019

Name (please print)

Address

DORIS BITTRUF

27 WILD APPLE LN.

Lori Miller

43 Mountain Spring Ct.

CHARLIE BAKER

CERPC

Jason Charest

CERPC

Dave Havellee

#11 RD.

Chuck Mebich

49 Timber double lane.