

SELECTBOARD MEETING
February 13, 2020
Draft Minutes

Present: Allison Hope
Julia Andrews

Nanette Rogers
Callie Hamdy
Greg Barrows

Guests: See Attached

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m.

CHANGES TO AGENDA

There were no changes to the agenda.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mark Drapa brought the three committees that have grown out of the Westford's Future Meetings and suggested at town meeting setting some time aside to talk about the work those committees are doing.

MINUTES

Julia Andrews made a motion to approve the January 23th Minutes as amended. Allison 2nd, motion passed 2-0.

ROAD SCHEDULE

John Roberts, Road Foreman, was not present, but left a road schedule from January 23, 2020 through February 13, 2020 for the board to go over. Julia motioned to approve the road schedule, Allison 2nd, motion passed 2-0.

EXCESS WEIGHT PERMIT

Allison signed excess weight permits for Spence Excavating & Construction Inc, Essex Rental & Sales Center, Spafford & Sons, Barrett's Tree Service Inc, Blairs Trucking Inc, Hinesburg Sand & Gravel Co Inc, Bourne's Inc & Bourne's Propane, and Barrett Trucking Co Inc.

LOAN DOCUMENTS – JOHN DEERE LOADER

Heather Campbell from Union Bank came into the office on Wednesday and gave Greg the loan documents to sign. The board signed the documents.

2nd CLASS LIQUOR & TOBACCO APPLICATION – WESTFORD COUNTRY STORE & CAFÉ

The Westford Country Store & Café has applied for a 2nd Class Liquor & Tobacco license. The board acts on it and then it is sent to the state. Julia made a motion to approve the liquor & tobacco license for the Westford Country Store. Allison 2nd, motion passed 2-0.

2019 GRAND LIST – CERTIFICATE OF NO APPEAL OR SUIT PENDING

This is an annual form that needs to be signed if there are no appeals pending for the grand list. Julia & Allison signed the Certificate.

WASTEWATER SYSTEM – PLANNING COMMISSION

Gordon Gebauer, chair of the Planning Commission, was present. The Planning Commission and their Sub-Committee (1705 Route 128 Steering Committee) were in attendance to show a

Selectboard Meeting

February 13, 2020

Page 2

presentation about a Wastewater System and the property at 1705 VT Route 128. Gordon thinks that these two projects could greatly revitalize the village center. They are at the point now where they are looking for funding sources for the wastewater system. The state of Vermont has offered to give Westford 50% of the costs (approx. 1 million) for the system and they will be looking for additional funding. The state funding would have to be voted on by a bond request by June 2021.

Gordon then moved on to 1705 VT Route 128 aka the Pidgeon Property. The Planning Commission thinks of this property as a cornerstone on the common whose development could mean either very good things for Westford or if done poorly very BAD things for Westford. They are not here to ask the board for a bond vote tonight and they are not here to ask for more money to the budget, but they will be looking for the Selectboard's support to move forward and find funding sources for these two projects which are very much interconnected.

Mark Letorney was present from the Planning Commission to present the Sub-Committee. He presented the members and explained that the sub-committee has met about seven times since their inception in November. They have had the property appraised and have had Committee member Heather Armata walk through the existing house. They are now looking for funding sources.

Mark explained that as the Sub Committee researched the Pidgeon Property, they realized how entwined the project was with the wastewater project and that the two projects could now be combined as a village revitalization project. They are hoping to purchase the property and set a site plan for its development. The idea is to subdivide the property so that there is a multi-use memorial commercial building that could house not just municipal needs, but additional commercial potential like the post office, daycare, etc. The rest of the properties would be mixed use. They would like to put in mixed use residential/commercial with at least one if not more of those residential properties to be an affordable housing building.

Vicky Ross was the presenter of a PowerPoint put together by the steering committee. It was explained that Westford's future of economic development rested on several items: Community Wastewater, TIF, the purchase and subsequent development of 1705 VT RT 128 as well as additional development. But without wastewater none of this would be possible.

Vicky described the current Westford village center with its current form-based code, village center designation and neighborhood development area that was added in the past year. She also described a future where there was a community wastewater system, Multi-use memorial town office facility, affordable/moderately priced housing, mixed-use commercial space, public river access, pedestrian infrastructure and storm water infrastructure & upgrades as items that would greatly benefit the village.

No development can really happen in town without a wastewater system. The current status of the Wastewater Solution was that the town now owns the lands for the leach field after the purchase of the Jackson Farm & Forest Project. They have also acquired conceptual approval from ANR for a conventional soil-based leach field system with an estimated 12,600 gallons per day with the use equivalent of 51 dwelling units. Melissa added that they recently had a meeting with their wastewater consultants looking into pretreatment systems that would double capacity with the same cost as before. Previously the Selectboard has given the Planning Commission permission to do a Step I loan application which is now in the process for the

preliminary engineering report, environmental investigations, financial scenarios, sewer ordinance, user fees, etc.

Vicky describes that they could next apply for a CWSRF Step 2 loan for final design and permitting with a 100% forgiveness rate and they also apply for a CWSRF Step 3 construction loan with a 50% forgiveness rate and a \$1.25 million cap. In order to access the \$1.25 million in funding we would need to complete Steps 1-3 and have an approved bond vote prior to June 30, 2021. Melissa explained that the service area would be from the Jackson Property towards the common and then would stop when it hit waterbodies such as rivers.

The Planning Commission explained that the Community Wastewater Solution is important because the lack of a wastewater system is currently a severely limiting factor on economic development and growth of the grand list in Westford. A new wastewater system would remove limitations on number of bedrooms in a residence and support expanding housing options. It would also free up land for multi-use development, parking, drinking water and stormwater solutions. A new system would resolve the existing wastewater issues for town properties such as the Town Office, Library, Red Brick Meeting House and the White Church on the Common which are all ticking timebombs when it comes to wastewater.

Something to consider was that installation and management of a public potable water source solution may prove to be necessary as the town proceeds with the project. The project would also have to conform with the State's expedited application timeline and pass a successful bond vote and do a successful bond vote. Allison asked Mark to expand on the Potable water source. Mark explained that because of the brownfields they are unsure if each property could have its own well or would need the public system. Seth Jensen explained a public water system is a system that serves more than 25 people.

Greg asked if they have an idea of the status of the brownfields. Melissa explained that Phase 1 looked at historical documents for potential contamination. There was the potential for contamination with the Pigeon property and a tank was found underground. The Phase 2 funding that was just received will bring further answer. Phase 3 would be a potential correction plan if contamination did occur. The town could be critical to this because they have access to grants that a private citizen would not. Mark explained that the appraisal that was done on the property was in relation to a "clean" property and doesn't reflect any potential brownfields issues.

1705 VT ROUTE 128 PROPERTY – PC SUB-COMMITTEE PROPOSAL

The Planning Commission has a Sub-Committee that is dedicated to the 1705 Route 128 property in town and its development. The property in the village center has recently become available for purchase but has a potential brownfields issue as previously described. As a prospective buyer, Westford has applied for and been approved by CCRPC for 100% funding of a Phase 2 ESA (2Q2020). Depending on the findings of this, clean up may be required. The goal is to receive BRELLA liability protection. The current owner may be willing to hold the note for financing of the sale to the town.

The benefit for purchasing this property is that the property could be subdivided and developed for mixed use commercial, affordable/moderately proceed housing, recreational river access below the falls from the village center and a location for a future multi-use memorial municipal facility including a new town office. This could provide opportunity for

Westford to achieve several long-held goals for the village center while also stimulating economic development in Westford.

There are some considerations. The subdivision would require a separate critical path of activities to solve for: potable water, storm water, traffic flow, sidewalks, lighting etc. It is assumed that capturing full value appreciation of the property depends on a wastewater solution and other municipal infrastructure improvements. Voter approval would be required for initial purchase of the property and financing terms. Subsequent voter approval would be required to approve bonding for the comprehensive economic development package (community wastewater, satisfaction of property acquisition note, securing project based TIF etc.).

The Planning Commission is proposing making the project a memorial to Roland Pigeon who used to live on the property until his passing and was a big part of the Westford Community. Roland served the community with his school bus service for 50 years and was an active volunteer in town.

John Doane touched on that the intent of the conceptual plan would be that parking for the buildings would be in the back of the buildings allowing for ease of parking and ease of walking in front of the buildings. It would be a communal strip of parking all buildings and those in town could use. Park once and have pedestrian facilities residents could walk to.

Vicky then went on to describe an opportunity the town had to take advantage of: A Vermont Project Based TIF. TIF is a tool to fund infrastructure necessary for new development. It uses the newly created incremental tax revenues to pay off the cost to construct those solutions. The state reached out to the Planning Commission to propose a new "project-based TIF" to fund rural economic development and revitalization. They are excited about working with Westford as the model project. A benefit of this TIF would be that this would provide the funding for the balance of the community wastewater project which is not covered by the CWSRF loan funding services. When Julia hears "newly created incremental tax" is that the tax revenue created by the new properties? Vicky explained that yes, that was the case. It doesn't take anything away from where money currently goes, but the additional money made is directed back to the project. The committee explained they have been meeting with other towns that have Vermont project based TIFs to see how they have dealt with these financials. Melissa explained its easier for a small town to do this because they aren't created an entire new downtown, it's just a couple small properties, a smaller scale and scope. While this is a key component of the Governor's rural agenda it does need to go to the legislature for approval which the Planning Commission is hopeful for 2Q 2020.

The Planning Commission describes that they are hoping to use multiple funding sources for the projects such as Public Funding (investigate grants and deferred loans that support land acquisition and/or infrastructure), Municipal Funding (investigate project specific bonding), and Private Funding (investigate private donations, investments and/or partnerships).

The Planning Commission is asking the Selectboard if they will agree to support and investigate funding options for construction of the community wastewater infrastructure necessary for this future vision to emerge and for revitalization to occur.

The Planning Commission is asking the Selectboard if they will agree to support and investigate acquiring the 3.6 acre property located at 1705 VT RT 128 as a catalyst for

Selectboard Meeting

February 13, 2020

Page 5

economic development and revitalization of the village and to help maximize the benefits of the newly proposed project-based TIF.

Mark explained they met with Green Mountain Engineering to see if it was a feasible timeline. The conclusion was that it is possible, but they would have to be very focused and they must get started right now. They would need to know if the selectboard approves of what the committee is doing. Julia asked if the town be well served to work with a real estate agent to represent us in that negotiation. Allison is looking at Heather Armata as the real estate agent on the committee. Allison also would like to have a selectboard member on the committee going forward. From the first initial proposal months ago to now Allison is very impressed with the talent and focus to bring this where it is today.

Mark asked if the town had a line of credit. The town does not currently have one, but Mark explains that going forward the town WILL need one if the project is to continue. One of the committee's consultants recommended they get a line of credit for 250,000 so that we have money available for engineering costs because there's going to be a time period between awarding of money and availability that we would still have to be spending money. This could be paid back if the voters vote to approve the bond.

Mark thinks the town would want to have the conversation with their banker now to see what they can secure. What amount they're willing to give? Allison asked what the timeline was for spending the 250,000. The board had concern where the 250,000 was coming from as a number. A consultant regarding the wastewater system had suggested getting extra from what is really needed which is 150,000. The thought is that any extra can also cover construction costs. Melissa explains by the end of the summer they will have more information. Melissa explains that the line of credit would be gotten in the fall.

Vicky asked if the selectboard had guidance on steps 1 and 2. Allison agrees with moving forward on both items and eventually it is going to be up to the voters. Vicky explained that the way the committee laid out they assumed voter approval would be required both to purchase the Pidgeon Property and the bond vote for wastewater. You must sell the total package together to the voters. She agreed it was a hard sell. Having one vote for everything is their goal. Broadly speaking Julia feels very supportive of the ambitious project. She thinks it is of massive value to the town. She does have a concern that since Bill is not here, he will come back after his vacation and be shocked at what has happened if they made a massive decision then. Allison suggested that Bill can watch the meeting video which is a large aspect of why the meetings are taped.

Mark explained that the committees are meeting constantly so as soon as they appoint a selectboard person to be represented they are ready. Allison and Julia agreed that Allison would be the representative.

Julia thinks its going to be a massive sell to the voters and they need to be as thoughtful as they have been with everything else when they talk about it so that voters can be exited about the project. Heather Armata was on the committee that did the outreach for the Jackson Farm and Forest Project so she will consult her documents on that. She's ready to do that again. Julia thinks there's already a vibe in town that some people are against the wastewater system but on the flip side buying the property might feel different to those people. It is all going to come down to public outreach. Mark explained based on the input they got when they

Selectboard Meeting

February 13, 2020

Page 6

researched the form-based code this project would give the residents everything they requested at that time.

Next steps are for Bill to watch the video and for Allison to join the conversation about the purchase details for the Pidgeon Property. Gordon explained as a follow up that they have a joint meeting with the bus committee on money to talk about next steps. Bob Bancroft will be there.

CORRESPONDANCE

Julia noted that the board had received some concerns about road maintenance on Seymour Road and Julia is working with John to get answers.

The selectboard received a thank you card from the Gather at the Table Committee for the donation made by the board. They were very grateful.

Nanette emailed Brad at the Town of Fairfax about their trash & recycling contract. As Westford moves forward, they will have Fairfax's contract as reference.

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE & PAYROLL WARRANTS

Accounts payable and payroll warrants were approved.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Allison Hope, Chair
Selectboard

Callie Hamdy
Assistant Town Clerk

TOWN OF WESTFORD HIGHWAY DEPT.

ROAD SCHEDULE

Jan. 23, 2020 – Feb. 13, 2020

Work to be done

- Plow, sand and salt when needed.
- Work on the break room remodel.
- Repair brakes on 17' Western star.

Work completed

- Plowed, sanded and salted roads several times.
- Work on the trucks. (Coolant hose, radio antenna, tire chains, greased)
- Worked on break room remodel.
- Repaired the plasma cutter.
- Hauled in more winter sand.
- Moved a shop airline.
- Moved the radar sign.

TOWN OF WESTFORD
SELECTBOARD MEETING
GUEST LIST

Date: February 13, 2020

Name (please print)

Vicky Ross
Gordon Gebauer
Melissa Hanrahan
Marc Fyrberg
Mark Drapka
Heather Attwells
Michael Smith
Francois Ross
Suzi Jensen
Ann Pigeon
Koi Boynton
MARK LEROUEN
John Doane
PAT HALLER

Address

25 Kilburn Lane
388 Old #11 Rd.
113 Rte 128
20 Town Line Lane
51 North Rd
Deer Run Lane
191 ~~old Rd Westford 21~~
25 Kilburn Rd
274 ~~Wm Wicks Rd~~
344 Old #11 Rd
5 Wildberry Lane
139 ~~Wicks Rd~~
5 Manley
123 Brookside Rd