

SELECTBOARD MEETING
November 12, 2020
Minutes

Present: Julia Andrews Callie Hamdy
 Bill Cleary John Roberts
 Allison Hope Greg Barrows
 Nanette Rogers

Guests: See attached

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. The meeting was held via Zoom. All attendees attended remotely.

CHANGES TO AGENDA

Under Discussion, update to the traffic county study was added and health insurance opt out was removed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

MINUTES

Bill Cleary made a motion to approve the October 22, 2020 minutes as written, seconded by Allison Hope. Motion passed: 3-0.

Bill Cleary made a motion to approve the November 9, 2020 minutes as written, seconded by Allison Hope. Motion passed: 3-0.

ROAD SCHEDULE

The Road Foreman, John Roberts, discussed the October 22, 2020 – November 12, 2020 Road Schedule. Bill Cleary made a motion to approve the Road Schedule, seconded by Allison Hope. Motion passed: 3-0.

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT FY'22 BUDGET REQUEST

The Highway Department is requesting a budget of \$932,933. It was noted that the budget will be updated with salaries, benefits and a few other items. Bill was appreciative that John was able to find savings where he could.

WESTFORD FIRE DEPARTMENT FY'22 BUDGET REQUEST

Steve Willard, Fire Chief, and John Quinn were present. The Westford Fire Department is requesting a level funded budget from current year. They are hoping to recruit new members, however it has become more difficult to find volunteer members. The Department may add funds in next year's budget to compensate members.

Bill appreciated the level funded budget but was still wondering if there was anything extra that could be done to reduce costs for taxpayers for the next year since many are struggling due to the pandemic. Bill had also heard that the Heco Project on the Westford Milton Road had suggested using the barn that needs to be demolished on their property for a training burn.

John Quinn explained that the barn would not be a safe building to practice a burn in. Not every building in need of deconstruction is a good training building.

WESTFORD LIBRARY FY'22 BUDGET REQUEST

For FY'22, the Library is requesting a budget of \$79,450 which is a 1% decrease from FY'21. This budget includes a merit increase for the Library Director, funding for a new Library Assistant role, and the move to separately fund up to \$1,500 of FY'22 expenses if needed for items such as digital materials, staff development and travel. This was done in accordance with the Selectboard's request for level or decreased budgeting for FY'22 due to COVID-19.

During the COVID-19 crisis, the Library has remained at the heart of Westford providing curbside service and many other socially distant activities. During the past year, the Library was a food shelf collection site and partnered with the Winter Wear Share Program. They also began to further their relationship with the Conservation Commission by offering special hikes, story walks and unique trail experiences for Westford hikers. A major impact to the community has been the expansion of the public Wi-Fi network which the Library secured grant funding for. The Wi-Fi provides Internet service to the entire common and allows space and privacy for distance learning, telemedicine and vital Internet usage.

Coming into 2021, the Library is planning to paint and repair the exterior of the building with funding from the Library Reserve Fund. The Trustees recommended that this item be added as a capital budget item in the amount of \$10,000 every 8 years to fund such expenses in the future and to keep the historic building in good condition.

Julia asked if the amount allotted for the assistant assumed the full fiscal year. Vicky Ross, Library Treasurer, confirmed and it would need to be reassessed depending on COVID. Nanette and Greg will add the Library's items to the Capital Budget. Julia applauded the Library's response to COVID and highlighted how important it has been to the community at this time. Bree has done amazing work. Bill was appreciative that even though their decrease was modest, it was still a decrease.

REQUEST TO UPGRADE PORTION OF ROGERS ROAD – FOLLOW UP

Colen Johnson from TCE representing the Czapski's project on Rogers Road was present. Colen provided plans of the proposed upgrades on behalf of the Czapskis. The Town had received feedback from the town attorney. John and Frank discussed removing the pole from the Hasslers and setting a new pole so that drilling could be avoided near the new culvert. The Board did not feel that any work near the culvert would be feasible nor would they want it running down the ditch.

Bill wanted to hear from the Czapski's about the project. Neil Hackbarth, the Czapski's engineer, explored directional drilling but had provided a clearer overview in their plans. Colen explained that the general thought is to upgrade the road to driveway standards for less than seven dwellings. There is a wet spot that was discussed at the last meeting; it's adjacent to the wetland. The proposed access to the property is on the far end because it meets the turnaround for emergency vehicles and the Zoning Regulations. Underground electrical has been proposed but would not disturb the existing culvert. Glenn Rogers was present. He wanted to know where all the poles for electrical would be located. Colen explained all the poles would be on the north side. Frank Hassler, a neighbor, was present to discuss the location of the first pole on the east side of Rogers Brook. His only concern is the location of the pole in relation to the main bedroom in the beautiful old farmhouse that he uses as an Air

BnB. Aesthetically, it would not be great if the pole got in the way of the view. To Bill it seems most of the concern was that there had been some give and take and that the Czapski's team had worked with the Hasslers to reach an agreement. Frank had also been concerned about water quality; his well is very close to the brook. Nobody has lived upstream previously. Bill directed the conversation towards the Road Agreement. Bill asked Neil if he was familiar with any of the other similar road agreements around town? Neil was not. Allison explained the next step is for the Town Attorney to draft an agreement to be recorded in the Land Records.

Chapin Kaynor was present and had some concerns. The road has been Class IV since 1974 so the trees on both sides of the road have expanded and grown. The way the improvements are drawn on the charts would disrupt that row of sugar maples on the north side. Bill wondered if power goes underground to the property. Is that underground construction within the Town right of way? Colen confirmed it was. Chapin knows the trees are in the right of way but is concerned that since this road has not been touched for 50 years, the disturbance to the trees would disrupt the classic view on the road. John asked Colen if this is the area where they were hoping to take down the slope and would thus have to take out said trees. Colen confirmed that yes there would need to be some tree removal. Chapin also mentioned that the two proposed pull offs on his area of the road would also take down trees. Chapin has owned his property since 1975. He doesn't have a legal standing about the trees since they are in the right of way, but he does feel like they are part of his property considering they have been undisturbed for so long and nobody except VAST has used the road.

Anne Brown was present and was concerned where run off was going to go and wanted to make sure that it didn't create a wetland near her residence. She also didn't want to see trees removed. Bill explained that this is why we have Zoning Regulations. Glenn wanted to discuss the rumor that this was eventually going to be subdivided and have two houses built on it. Colen confirmed that the lot had been subdivided in the 1980s and that the Czapskis own both lots and only one house has been approved in the far corner.

What Bill has garnered at this point is that there is concern from neighbors about how things will look and how things will be accomplished. Bill suggested a walk-through site visit for concerned parties with the engineer. Frank Hassler wondered how trash pickup will occur with this new residence since the section is still Class IV. He explained that current residents haul their trash down to the corner of Old Stage and Rogers Road. John was hopeful with the improvements that have been made that the trash haulers will be going back down the road soon.

2021 TOWN MEETING

Governor Scott has signed an act that makes temporary changes to some of the laws for Town Meeting due to COVID-19. These changes include not requiring signatures for candidates to be placed on the local ballot. Any municipality may apply the Australian ballot system to any or all municipal meetings held in the year 2021 by vote of its legislative body. The Secretary of State may waive statutory deadlines or other provisions related to a municipal election as necessary in order for the municipality to apply the Australian ballot system to its meeting. The Board will continue to discuss options as Town Meeting gets closer.

REQUEST FROM GIRL SCOUTS TO HOLD TREE LIGHTING IN GAZEBO

The local Girl Scout Troop is requesting permission to hold a tree lighting and caroling in the gazebo the first weekend in December as they have done in previous years. Rogers Tree

Farm will be donating a tree. Julia feels positive about the event since people have been respectful about distancing. Allison made a motion to allow the Girl Scouts to have the tree lighting as long as whatever the Governor's guidance for COVID at the time of the gathering is followed, seconded by Bill. Motion passed: 3-0.

TRAFFIC STUDY UPDATE

Charlie Baker from CCRPC provided an update on the traffic study being done around town. The CCRPC has completed gathering data on Woods Hollow Road and had gotten good data. They had attempted to gather information on Brookside Road, but the data was not good, and they needed to re-do it. Studies on Cambridge Road and Old Stage Road are in progress. This traffic study is the first step to knowing if and where changes would need to be made on our roads.

Traffic has been a topic of conversation lately in Westford. The way the contract with the Sheriff is written, the Selectboard don't get to direct their work, but they are working with them to ensure roads with traffic issues get attention. The Roads and Trails Committee has also been looking into items and will speak at the next meeting.

CORRESPONDENCE

Calef Letorney suggested that some emergency barrels of sand be provided on the hill areas around town to ensure that people don't get stuck. Julia feels it is a simple and low cost solution to helping people this year. She was curious of John's thoughts. John was concerned they would be buried in the snowbanks and would be taken out by the plow. Dave Lavalley has done similar things in the past and the sand just freezes so would be unhelpful.

COMMUNICATION

There were no communications.

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE & PAYROLL WARRANTS

Greg went over the accounts payable and warrants. The Selectboard members will come into the office to sign them.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Julia Andrews, Chair
Selectboard

Callie Hamdy
Assistant Town Clerk

GUEST LIST

Buddy Meilleur, LCATV
Dave Lavallee
Vicky Ross
Sean Cushing
Pat Hechmer
John Quinn
Frank Hassler
Glenn Rogers
Steve Willard
Colen Johnson
Jennifer Hopper
Bree Drapa
Jonathan & Sally Czapski
Chapin Kaynor
Scott Rogers
Anne Brown
Neil Hackbarth

TOWN OF WESTFORD HIGHWAY DEPT.
ROAD SCHEDULE
October 23, 2020 – November 12, 2020

Work to be done

- Grade roads when we can.
- Plow and sand when needed.
- Continue to cut brush.

Work completed

- Graded Plains Rd, Cambridge Rd., Allen Irish Rd. Bill Cook Rd., Sections of Old Stage Rd., Sections of Woods Hollow Rd., Osgood Hill Rd., Brookside Rd., Learned Dr.
- Filled pot holes on Old # 11 and Covey Rd.
- Added gravel to the No. end of Cambridge, a section of Old stage Rd., a section of Osgood Hill Rd. a section of Huntley Rd. First section of Bill Cook Rd., Brookside Rd. and Learned Dr.
- Hauled in gravel for road surface work.
- Serviced the chipper and F-550.
- Cut brush on Machia Hill Rd.

Approved at the 11/12/20 Selectboard Meeting.