

SELECTBOARD MEETING
September 9, 2021
Minutes

Present: Bill Cleary (chair) Callie Hamdy
 Lee McClenny Greg Barrows
 Nanette Rogers John Roberts

Guests: See attached

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. The meeting was held in person and via Zoom.

CHANGES TO AGENDA

Added Planning Commission Project Update, removed Access Permit for Rogers Road

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

MINUTES

Lee McClenny made a motion to accept the August 5, 2021, minutes as amended, seconded by Bill Cleary. Motion passed: 2-0.

Lee McClenny made a motion to accept the August 16, 2021, minutes as amended, seconded by Bill Cleary. Motion passed: 2-0.

ROAD SCHEDULE

John Roberts, Road Foreman, was not present. Lee McClenny read the Road Schedule from August 6, 2021 – September 9, 2021. Bill Cleary made a motion to approve the Road Schedule, seconded by Lee McClenny. Motion passed: 2-0.

Bill commented on the quality of the new chloride trailer and the quality of the work that was done on Old Stage Road.

A resident requested permission to ditch at the top of Machia Hill Road. John explained that while the road ends before this 300-foot section, the Road Crew maintains and plows the area because of the vehicle turnaround there and would prefer for the Road Crew to do the ditching.

John discussed on North Road there were sightline issues with the trees where it intersects with Westford Milton Road. This makes it difficult for residents to pull out due not only to the sightlines, but the increased traffic. Bill believes it looks okay; Lee will go look at it.

ACCESS PERMIT – OSGOOD HILL ROAD

John saw the application and had no objection. It was a forestry access that existed previously, and the access was disturbed when the road was ditched four years prior. Lee McClenny made a motion to approve the access permit, seconded by Bill Cleary. Motion passed: 2-0.

CCRPC ANNUAL REPORT

Charlie Baker from the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) was present to give the annual report. The CCRPC helped with things such as a Speed Study, Water Quality, GIS Mapping and more.

Charlie asked if there were any questions. Bill brought up that the traffic speed study had been ripped apart by town residents. Bill thinks it may need to be revisited, especially since it was done during COVID. Pat Haller and his group are working at future speed studies so perhaps working with that committee will be a good choice. Charlie agreed COVID has had an impact, even urban areas are still down about 5% from non-COVID times in terms of traffic.

The last section of the report talks about regional activities that are not specific to any municipality such as a legislative forum, racial equity, Building Homes Together campaign, emergency management, energy planning, and broadband.

Bill asked if they are working on cell coverage in any areas, since that is an issue within Westford. Charlie explained that it had not been a priority in the legislature, but he can certainly give feedback. George Lamphere said that the CCRPC is a fantastic resource to the Planning Commission and the Town, and they would not be able to advance some of their projects without them.

PLANNING COMMISSION PROJECT UPDATE

George Lamphere from the Planning Commission was present. The Planning Commission's site work for 1705 Vermont Route 128 is moving ahead and progress is being made. The extent of the PAH contamination should be delimited within the next few weeks. At the end of the month, they plan to remove the underground storage tank and surrounding contamination. The current owner is working with their insurance company and some of the project partners for the cleanup. They have a UPWP project for looking at the storm water culvert near the common. There will be a group looking at it tomorrow and accessing options.

Agency of Natural Resources is moving ahead. The determination comes from the archeological and environmental folks, but feedback has been positive. The Step II application is being processed and the Agency of Natural Resources and all questions from them have been answered. Things are taking longer than expected but are positive.

The Wastewater Community Outreach Committee has been in contact with people and have had some great dialogues. They will be having another meeting in October and meeting with the Westford seniors.

AMENDED TOWN COMMON USE APPLICATION

The corrected document based on the lawyer's comments had prior approval from the Selectboard, but the Common Committee had a few issues one of which was about the exclusive use of the gazebo. Previously language stated there was no exclusive use of the gazebo, but upon further inspection the Common Committee decided it would be okay.

Now, the Recreation Department has requested the use of the gazebo for September 12th with a rain date of September 19th which has been approved, however there was a conflict since Michael Kirick had hoped to have music in the gazebo that evening. Lori suggests restricting the exclusive use only for an initial date and if one wants a rain date they must ask again. This made sense to Bill and Lee.

Tonya Calley from the Recreation Committee was present. The Recreation Committee is more than happy to share the space. If Michael wants to do music, the rain date pizza party can set up in another area of the Common.

Bill agreed with Lori but is curious how long it takes Michael Kirick to set up a concert event. Lori just didn't want to run into a conflict of events again. Lee pointed out the Recreation Committee's flexibility and perhaps that should be considered going forward. There are a lot of events that could take place harmoniously with each other.

The other issue was to do with the alcohol use. Lori thinks that will be a hard sell, but it will be up to the Selectboard. The suggestion was that if somebody is going to serve alcohol they must get permits, etc., but regarding those bringing their own the application and policy wouldn't say anything. Legally we do not have an ordinance prohibiting alcohol, so our insurance's preference would be if alcohol is served it is by those that have a permit to do so.

Lee knows this has not been a problem in the past, so why not deal with it until it becomes an issue? The Board was in approval of the amended document as is. Lee McClenny made a motion to approve the amended Westford Common Use Policy and application form, seconded by Bill Cleary. Motion passed: 2-0.

TOWN COMMON COMMITTEE REQUEST FOR PROCEDURAL CHANGE FOR EXPENDITURE REQUESTS

The Common Committee is requesting permission from the Selectboard to use money from the Common Fund for repairs and improvements of the Common up to \$500 per request and not to exceed \$1500/month, after review and approval by the Town Clerk and Town Treasurer instead of requiring Selectboard approval for all such requests. Any larger requests, or items which the Town Clerk and Treasurer question, would still require approval by the Selectboard.

Lori Johnson from the Common Committee was present. Bill's only question was that there is \$45,000 in the Common Fund. What sources of revenue does the Common Committee have to replenish those funds? Lori explained there is not revenue. Bill commented it would be good to guard that fund as much as possible. Lori explained that they have not spent much of those funds and would be happy to have the funds limited per year.

Lee sees why they would want some flexibility. The Treasurer should sit down and oversee what kind of bumpers to put on this so that the money doesn't go out to something crazy. He doesn't think the Committee would do that, but it is good to have procedural precautions with town money. Greg would also like to look back several years and see how much has been spent and do further research. Once this money is gone, it's gone, and once it is, expenses could be put back on the taxpayers. We should guard ourselves appropriately.

DOG WASTE DISPENSERS FOR TOWN COMMON

The Town Clerk, Assistant Town Clerk and Common Committee are requesting permission to purchase and install two dog waste bag dispensers on the Common. There has been an increase in dog waste being left on the Common and they are hoping to mitigate the issue by providing residents and visitors with waste bags. They hope this will ensure that responsible owners never find themselves without a bag and to encourage good stewardship of the Common by the community.

Lori from the Common Committee was present, and they think it is a great idea. The Town Office would be responsible for purchasing the bags, they would like to recommend just one at first, to be placed at the western end near the Wi-Fi signage and trash cans, and then go from there. Nanette agreed.

Bill and Lee had no objections. Bill agreed on the placement. Lee McClenny made a motion to approve the installation of one dog waste bag dispenser to be installed on the western end of the Town Common, seconded by Bill Cleary. Motion passed: 2-0.

EXPANSION AND MAINTENANCE OF TRAILS WITH A FEATURE TRACK ADDITION

The Recreation Committee and Conservation Commission have been working for the past year on improving and advancing the already existing town trails. They have been also working towards adding a Features Track to be enjoyed by community members of all ages. A Features Track is also known as a Pump Track and is used for mountain biking.

They have conducted a survey and with the information worked with the guidance of Fellowship of the Wheel to lay out the groundwork. The team has also been working on accessing funding through State grants and are submitting a letter of intent. Other improvements listed in their letter of intent were improving accessibility to trail networks, new signage, and a scoping study for a connector trail between the Town center and the existing Maple Shade Forest and Misty Meadows trails.

Lori Miller from the Recreation Committee was present. They have submitted a letter of interest for a grant through the Vermont Department of Forest and Parks. They have been looking at doing some trail expansions for a year or more. This came out of several forums such as Westford's Future Forum, etc. where walking safety had been a priority. They have done walk throughs with Fellowship of the Wheel on Misty Meadows and Maple Shade Forest for the addition of a Pump Track and improving existing trails for all users. They then teamed up with the Conservation Commission and a trails survey was done.

Some results that came out the survey was support for improvement of trails and a high favorability of trails in Westford in general. Part of the reason a Pump Track was chosen was because it was good for beginners. The grant is big, they are requesting \$75,000 and, in the proposal, what it encompasses is short term building as well as long term maintenance. They've built in money to get the Conservation Commission more equipment to maintain the Town trails as a whole and create bridges and sustainability in our current trail system.

Bill asked where the Features Track would be put. It would be on the piece of property the Town owns right by the school on Misty Meadows. The Recreation Committee confirmed that they only looked at Town owned land for this project. They wanted to increase mountain biking opportunities for kids in Westford and be cognizant people want the trails to remain multiuse which is a huge part of this grant. Looking long term, they would like to connect the Town Center to the Town trails, and they know that they would need to get permission for access in that area.

A frequent point of feedback was the need for improved signage which was also part of the proposal. The grant is a full grant, but it is a reimbursement-based grant, so they'd need to come up with the funds and then submit for reimbursement. This is not an ask now but a heads up.

Lee explained there are trails where dual and triple use becomes an issue and some users can often feel that there needs to be some discrimination and we should just be aware of that going forward. The Recreation Committee understands that concern. The survey had a question about multi-use vs trails only for single activities. Over eighty percent wanted multi use. One of the things they talked about with Fellowship of the Wheel is that eventually they could put some linking single track that would help avoid some of the double track trails having bicycles encroaching on people walking.

Sarah Pinto explained they would really like to go forward on the trail from the Common to the school trails and perhaps money can help with that. The equipment such as the ATV and a trail to help get to remove areas with equipment would be a big help. Bill asked if they have a timeline for reimbursement. They were not given one but did mention that they can be reimbursed as you go.

ONGOING PROBLEM WITH DOGS ON TOWN TRAILS NOT UNDER OWNER'S CONTROL OR LEASHED

There has been a notable increase in dog-related incidents, especially on town trails, within Town. Nanette thought that the Town should be proactive with communication about appropriate stewardship of dogs on trails. Currently the Town does not require leashes on trails, but unfortunately some bad behavior has created a lot of conflict. Signage that mentions that the privilege to have dogs off leash may be revoked if poor behavior continues may be helpful. Bill referenced dogs have been disallowed from being on a trail in Williston, and it's important that people understand that it is a privilege, not a right if people cannot behave.

Bill asked if we put communication on Front Porch Forum and in the Newsletter would that be possible? Yes, and keeping it short and sweet would be ideal as well as posting frequently. Lee thinks a good first step would be a communication from the Town Office. Callie will write a communication to go out.

LISTERS OFFICE AND TOWN ASSESSOR

Nanette explained that when the Town put together the current budget, they discussed switching from a three lister board to a Town Assessor with a part time assistant because it is difficult to find people to fill the lister positions. The budget includes funds for an Assessor, which has been advertised but no one has responded.

An option we have is to contract with NEMRC who we have a relationship with. They provide us with the modules used for the Grand List, dog license and accounting. They have a department that specifically does this service. Caroline sat down with the list of options and checked off things that she would be willing to do and NEMRC gave us an estimated cost of \$8,000 for the field work and larger items. They are very familiar with the Town because the person that runs the department conducted the reappraisals in the past. It would be an easy switch if we were to do this. Caroline was present and thinks it would be a good fit. Bill thought it was worth noting that if we take all the Lister's salaries it was just under \$8,000. It was not a substantial amount over what we currently pay and is less than budgeted. The employee in the office would be an assistant to the NEMRC assessor.

A couple factors is that Caroline expressed an interest in retiring and has been gracious enough to fill in while we look for an assessor of which we've had zero response. NEMRC isn't coming out at a big dollar figure, so this is a no brainer for Bill. Bill thanked Caroline for her 33 years of service as a Lister, in addition to her many other town responsibilities. Nanette

had included the services agreement in the Selectboard packet, they will look it over for approval at the next meeting.

MUNICIPAL COVID POLICY AND PROTOCOLS

Melissa Manka, Town Planner, had requested the Town implement a masking requirement regardless of vaccination status due to the surge in the Delta variant of COVID-19.

While Bill had his own feelings, he asked Nanette to reach out to the Town's Health Officers for their opinions. Bill would prefer to follow the State Guidelines, but both Health Officers are in favor of reinstating a mask mandate in the Town Office. Lee's opinion was that while he has his own personal feelings about wearing a mask, absent of an emergency order or authority from the Governor he's not sure if the Town can do that. The Town is not a private business, rather a public institution. The problem is that it is an honor system and that makes things difficult. Although, the news' reports indicate there may be an incoming vaccination policy for federal employees.

Ben Bornstein was present; he appreciated the Town's attempt to be inclusive. Ben's personal perspective is that if masks are the tool, we must prevent tragedy and help protect people that it's about his respect everybody else, it's about community responsibility. He would err on the side of caution. Bill would prefer to wait until Dave is back to decide on something like this. Lee had no motion to make and perhaps by the next time the Board meets there will be more guidance from the State. As is, the Board is comfortable changing nothing and will wait until further guidance. Lee McClenny made a motion to postpone this measure pending further guidance from the Governor, but to also keep an eye on the situation, seconded by Bill Cleary. Motion passed: 2-0.

MEETING OWL PRO 360 CARE PACKAGE

Westford purchased the Owl Pro that was previously approved. There is a support package available up to 30 days after purchase.

The care package includes unlimited training, online installation support and an extended limited warranty. Bill had no problem with it but wanted to know how long the Owl Care Package cost covered. It was one time price per unit. Lee McClenny made a motion to approve the \$149 charge for Owl Care, seconded by Bill Cleary. Motion passed 2-0.

AMENDED STEP II CWSRF ENGINEERING SERVICE AGREEMENT

There was an amended Step II CWSRF Engineering Service Agreement, revised based on requests made by a state reviewer. Lee McClenny made a motion to accept the amended Step II CWSRF Engineering Service Agreement as amended, seconded by Bill Cleary. Motion passed: 2-0.

CORRESPONDENCE

A citizen on Rollin Irish Road wrote in to explain that speeding is still an ongoing issue and to please address it however the Town is able. Bill asked if the Chittenden County Sheriff could patrol on that road. That was correct and Nanette will contact the resident and sheriff.

COMMUNICATION

Communication about Dog Behavior for Front Porch Forum and the newsletter.

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE & PAYROLL WARRANTS

Greg Barrows, Treasurer, reviewed the accounts payable and payroll warrants.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Lee McClenny made a motion to enter Executive Session at 9:16 p.m. for a personnel matter, seconded by Bill Cleary. Motion passed: 2-0. Those in attendance were Bill Cleary, Lee McClenny, and Nanette Rogers. The Board exited Executive Session at 9:29 p.m. No action taken.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Bill Cleary, Selectboard Chair

Callie Hamdy
Assistant Town Clerk/Minute Clerk

GUEST LIST

Charlie Baker, CCPRC
George Lamphere
Sarah Pinto
Lori Miller
Tonya Calley
Jim & Kati Anderson (via Zoom)
Caroline Brown (via Zoom)
Lori Johnson (via Zoom)
Ben Bornstein (via Zoom)

TOWN OF WESTFORD HIGHWAY DEPT.
ROAD SCHEDULE
August 5, 2021 – September 9, 2021

Work to be done

- Grade roads as needed
- Add gravel to roads.
- Continue working on Old Stage Rd. ditching and culvert replacement.
- Continue hauling in winter sand

Work completed

- Graded most roads.
- Chloride roads after grading
- Cut some trees on Old #11 Rd.
- Hauled in winter sand.
- Added gravel to a section of Woods Hollow Rd.
- More of the ditching, stone lining, and culvert replacements on Old Stage Rd.
- Minor repairs on the trucks.

Approved at the 9/9/21 Selectboard Meeting.