

SELECTBOARD MEETING
December 9, 2021
Minutes

Present:	Bill Cleary (chair) Dave Baczewski Lee McClenny Nanette Rogers	Callie Hamdy Greg Barrows John Roberts
Guests:	Lynn Gauthier Benjamin Bornstein	Andy Doe Dave Lavallee

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. The meeting was held in person and via Zoom.

CHANGES TO AGENDA

Added proposed amendment to approved uses for the common use application and permission for VAST to cross and travel on town roads to Discussion and added Executive Session to end of meeting agenda.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

MINUTES

Dave Baczewski made a motion to approve the November 11, 2021 minutes as amended and discussed what Ben Bornstein's comments included, seconded by Lee McClenny. Motion passed: 3-0.

Lee McClenny made a motion to approve the December 2, 2021 minutes as amended, seconded by Dave Baczewski. Motion passed: 3-0.

ROAD SCHEDULE

John Roberts, Road Foreman, reviewed the November 12, 2021 through December 9, 2021 Road Schedule. Dave Baczewski made a motion to approve the Road Schedule, seconded by Lee McClenny. Motion passed: 3-0.

Dave wanted to clarify that there is a smaller sand pile located in the south part of the town garage lot that residents can come grab sand from. Is this correct? John confirmed that is true. Bill asked what John's expectations were for how much residents can take? John said a few five-gallon buckets full should be adequate. Dave is also going to work on snow and road concerns with John regarding the Winter Festival.

John explained there is a resident parking in one of the turn arounds and they are unwilling to park in a way that makes it easy for the plow to turn around. John has spoken to the resident. He is wondering what the next steps are. Nanette will draft a letter to send to the resident and send it to the Selectboard.

Dave looked at the Prospect Hill apron and he sees the problem but does not approve of the Town spending money on private property as he feels it sets a precedent.

REQUEST TO REMOVE TREES IN BROOKSIDE CEMETERY LOCATED WITHIN RIGHT OF WAY

The Cemetery Commission is requesting permission to remove trees within the right-of-way near and in Brookside Cemetery that have fallen or could fall on gravestones. The Cemetery Commission was able to fund the removal of the trees in question. Dave looked at the trees in question and agreed that the trees need to go. Heritage Tree Removal has done good work in the past and is a Westford Resident. Bill suggested that in the future we continue the precedent to get at least three quotes to remain consistent with what we ask from other Town departments. Lee made a motion to approve the Cemetery Commission's request to remove trees located within the right-of-way, seconded by Dave Baczewski. Motion passed: 3-0.

PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO APPROVED USES FOR COMMON USE APPLICATION

The Common Committee had discussed the artisan vendor issue and are proposing an amendment to the Common Use Application in response.

The amendment states "the Selectboard has agreed to waive insurance requirements for artisan vendors including jewelry, knitted goods, sewn goods, drawings, paintings, photographs, cards, calendars, wooden objects such as bowls, spoons etc., glass art, and others after consideration..."

The Board agreed with the changes and felt they were benign objects that would not cause liability. Lee McClenny made a motion to accept the Common Use Artisan Vendor language as amended for final policy for use on the common, seconded by Dave Baczewski. Motion passed: 3-0.

REQUEST TO CLOSE WHITE CHURCH LANE FOR WINTER FESTIVAL AND CONCERT

The Winter Festival and Concert is requesting permission to close White Church Lane on the day of the festival. It would be a partial closure on Saturday February 12, 2022, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. This would be to help direct potential traffic and parking away from that area and keep it open for White Church Lane residents and emergency vehicles. The residents of White Church Lane had given consent.

Lee McClenny made a motion to approve the request and close White Church Lane on February 12, 2022, seconded by Dave Baczewski. Motion passed: 3-0.

PERMISSION FOR VAST TRAILS TO CROSS OR TRAVEL ALONG TOWN ROADS

The Saxon Hill Riders are requesting permission for VAST trails to cross and/or travel along town roads. Andy Doe was present. By statute if they have snowmobile trails that exist on roadways, they need to get approval to travel and cross those roads. Andy gave a history of the VAST organization. He had provided a list of Westford landowners that VAST trails cross.

Bill asked what kind of signage they provide for motorists. Andy explained how they stake the trail with reflectors and the stop signage that they provide. Dave had experience as a snowmobile club member and was familiar with the signage and process. Dave asked Andy if it would be okay if they want to put signs on the snowmobile trails to advertise the Winter Festival. It was, Dave will contact Andy if they decide to go that way. Bill thanked the landowners that make this possible.

Dave Baczewski made a motion to approve the snowmobile road crossing and travel as briefed by Andy Doe of Saxon Hill Riders, seconded by Lee McClenny. Motion passed: 3-0.

DRAFT CAPITAL BUDGET

The Board reviewed the draft Capital Budget. Nanette is hoping that they can schedule a public hearing for the December 30th meeting so the Capital Budget may be approved by that time.

There are three things the Town can do with the Highway surplus according to Bill: nothing, make it so we are paying more than a 20% down payment on a capital investment when it comes time to do so, or give some back to the taxpayers by not transferring as much into the capital fund. However, if they do the latter, they cannot do it in one fiscal year, this would be scheduled out over several years and makes it complicated, but Bill feels it is most fair if done over several years. Nanette suggested they keep things as simple as possible for the bookkeeper and new personnel coming on. Greg suggested taking \$50,000 of the surplus money and reduce numbers by \$10,000 each year. That would leave money in the reserve for unforeseen expenses and keep the budget flatter. Dave and Bill feel that would be responsible, we should not carry such a large reserve and they liked the idea of metering it out.

Dave asked Greg if we could buy down any debt. Based on the 2020 Town Report the excavator or John Deer loader may be candidates. Nanette asked if there was any new equipment that we could decrease the down payment on. Bill mentioned that the Road Crew has suggested getting a pick-up truck to use for commutes where a larger truck is not necessary and so they are not driving personal vehicles. Bill thinks leaving some balance in there would not be bad, we do not know inflation wise what trucks, gas etc. will cost five years from now. Bill was all for the \$10,000 for the next five years. Lee and Dave agreed. They would look further into where the remaining \$30,000 can go, such as to buy down debt.

There was also a \$56,000 surplus in the Admin section of the Capital Budget. Greg mentioned that depending on what happens after the wastewater and the 1705 projects the money being there may not be a bad thing to cover costs like renovating or replacing the Town Office or connecting to the wastewater system. Of that money there is \$8,000 Nanette had budgeted for a new voting machine, which the State may cover. The Town Office server is also due for replacement very soon. Dave suggested moving some of the surplus into the fund for the Town Office expansion fund. They agreed to move approximately \$32,000 into the Office Expansion fund to make it total \$40,000. If the State does decide to fund the new voting machine Nanette would like that money moved to the vault expansion. There was \$24,000 remaining, which was comfortable.

The Fire Department had a surplus of \$65,000. The Town could spread it out like they did with the Highway Department, but the Board also wondered if there were debts that could be paid down. The amount could go towards the replacement of vehicles to help keep the budget level funded. The Board wanted to see what the budget would look like after the changes and was more comfortable warning a Public Hearing in the beginning of January. Bill thinks the Board needs to be prepared to answer questions on how the Town generated the surpluses. Greg believes a lot of this came from when equipment was purchased and feels this must have been happening for a long time. Bill feels that by tackling this issue we are at an advantage. There is a time within every organization to scrutinize within in certain areas and this year the Town spent this time on the Capital Budget, and it has paid off for us as we do a course correction. The Board thanked Greg and Nanette for their hard work.

Nanette explained that the IT vendor advised that the warranty for the service can no longer be extended. If something happens to the server, the Town will have no backup of its files. The cost of a new server is approximately \$18,000 for total replacement, which included various other costs. The quote to move to the cloud has a total of \$7,500 but does have a recurring monthly charge of \$202. Bill asked how long the old server lasted and how long will this one last. The new server would last five years.

Being on the cloud has the disadvantage if the internet goes out. Town staff would not be able to do anything in the office, but on a positive note they can then access things from home if needed. Dave explained that a server could get hacked just as easy as a cloud, so the cloud was not a security concern. Dave was in favor of the cloud for this kind of application.

Lee McClenny made a motion move to the cloud for application and record keeping and to do so as fast as possible, seconded by Dave Baczewski. Motion passed: 3-0.

DRAFT FY'23 BUDGET

The Board discussed if they wanted to put the donation items on the ballot. Dave thinks there is some visibility that needs to be shone on this section of the budget, it is no small amount. He is not disputing any of the items we donate to, but perhaps we could take a closer look at it next time like we have done with the Capital Budget. Bill's worry with putting it on the ballot if the public does not have the write up that is provided by the organizations that we donate to then they are not making an informed decision. Dave feels that if this is done this year it could get caught up in or overshadow important discussions other upcoming projects have been having. Nanette suggested a letter to the organizations explaining that the money is not permanent, and they may not expect the money every year. Dave does not dispute putting money to those organizations but feels looking at the donations with more scrutiny could benefit the Town.

The Board discussed the Contingency Fund and wanted to follow the recommendation of our Auditors of having two to three months expenses in the Contingency Fund.

CORRESPONDENCE

Bill met with Dennis Angiono, Fire Warden, and he is feeling a little slighted that for the fifteen years he's been Fire Warden he has never gotten a stipend. Bill thought it was interesting to hear that the Fire Department uses Dennis' information to assess situations. Dennis puts a lot of effort into the position. Dave was surprised to hear the requirements and where Dennis had gone above and beyond. It sounds well beyond a volunteer position. Dave acknowledges this does impact the budget; the question is how much money to the Fire Warden. Dave feels the requirements are bigger than a DRB member or Selectboard member in terms of the time commitment. Dennis had discussed \$400 with Bill. Dave Baczewski made a motion to authorize a stipend of \$400 annually for the Fire Warden with a \$400 bonus to cover this year, seconded by Lee McClenny. Motion passed: 3-0.

Dave corresponded with Seth Jensen about the language going back and forth on Front Porch Forum about the potential town center development. He is concerned about the debate on affordable housing and how it is talked about, thinking that people are using it as an exclusionary statement. They agreed it was a sensitive subject and that the discussion has momentarily soothed and for any board members to clarify on the subject would bring it to the forefront. The Board agreed transparency and factual statements in this would be best.

COMMUNICATION

There were no communications.

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE & PAYROLL WARRANTS

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Lee McClenny motioned to go into executive session at 9:31 p.m. to discuss personnel, seconded by Dave Baczewski. Motion passed: 3-0. People in attendance were Bill Cleary, Lee McClenny, Dave Baczewski, and Nanette Rogers. The Board exited Executive Session at 10:10 p.m. No action taken.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 10:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Bill Cleary, Selectboard Chair

Callie Hamdy
Assistant Town Clerk/Minute Clerk

**TOWN OF WESTFORD HIGHWAY DEPT.
ROAD SCHEDULE
November 12, 2021 – December 9, 2021**

Work to be done

- Plow and sand when needed.
- Brush cutting.
- Service the last truck and loader.

Work completed

- Graded a few roads and fixed potholes before it snowed.
- Put chains on the trucks.
- Worked on trucks to get ready for plowing.
- Sanded several times, Plowed.
- Cut a few trees that came down during a snowstorm.
- Organized the yard to get ready for snow.

Approved at the 12/9/21 Selectboard Meeting.