

SELECTBOARD MEETING
April 14, 2022
Minutes

Present:	Lee McClenny (Chair) Dave Baczewski Bill Cleary Greg Barrows	Nanette Rogers John Roberts Callie Hamdy
Guests:	Dave Lavallee Lynn Gauthier Eric Smith Bill Hill Maureen Wilcox	George Lamphere Lori Johnson Martha Heath Ron Hoag (Essex Police Chief) Joe Sinagra (Myers).

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. The meeting was held in person and via Zoom.

CHANGES TO AGENDA

Added PC Minute Clerk Contract, removed Fourth of July and Grand List.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

MINUTES

Bill Cleary made a motion to approve the March 31, 2022 minutes as amended, seconded by Dave Baczewski. Motion passed: 3-0.

ROAD SCHEDULE

John Roberts, Road Foreman, reviewed the April 1, 2022 through April 14, 2022 Road Schedule. Bill Cleary made a motion to approve the Road Schedule, seconded by Dave Baczewski. Motion passed: 3-0.

PLANNING COMMISSION UPDATE

George Lamphere was present from the Planning Commission (PC). The PC's current projects are moving slower than they had hoped. May is expected to be a busy month to advance things along. Stone Environmental is agreeable to work with the Town on the community wastewater project and are drafting an updated engineering services agreement as well as an updated Preliminary Engineering Report for the State. The State is supportive of the direction of the project.

Lee noted a comment on Front Porch Forum asking questions about the septic system under the town office parking lot. It was noted that the system is pumped every two years, and said service is coded under building maintenance in the budget. George reiterates that the 1705 property is still private property, and the PC needs permission to study certain areas including said potential connection between the septic for the 1705 property and the town office. Bill feels this question regarding septic should have been answered a long time ago.

Regarding 1705 the PC are looking at the end of May for the next public outreach meeting. The engineer, SE Group, provided a revised scope of work which was the result of public feedback received at their November presentation. The PC has provided more feedback to SE, who will update it again and then it will be given to the Selectboard for approval. The PC

is developing a series of webinars about the project and are redeveloping the website to better engage and communicate with the public.

MINUTE CLERK CONTRACTS – INFO ON INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS VS EMPLOYEES

When the Town hires a contractor, the contractor is required to complete a non-employee work agreement and a W-9. One of the minute clerk positions is held by somebody that is employed by the Town in another position. Nanette contacted VLTC (Vermont League of Cities & Towns) and asked how that works regarding that employee. VLCT replied it is a routine task the municipality does on a regular basis. If the person is an employee, they need to be treated as such. The amount budgeted for these positions is not much, but it is a different arrangement than the Board originally thought. VLCT feels that anyone filling the role of a minute clerk is a town employee.

Dave feels that the minute clerk positions are temporary to help put words on paper and the boards are the ones doing the critical business approving the minutes. To hire somebody to do minutes alone he does not feel that means the Town needs to hire another employee. Bill pointed out that the Town just needs to explain why it paid an individual and prove that it is legitimate. The reason the Board approved the minute clerk for the Planning Commission is because they wanted to promote greater transparency.

The Board agreed that minute clerks are a service that is provided by an individual and not a town employee. They do not feel minute clerks are an integral part of municipal business and would prefer to use minute clerks as contractors.

PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTE CLERK CONTRACT FOR SERVICES

The Planning Commission (PC) interviewed Diane Finnigan, who has experience with taking minutes, and recommended that she be hired to be the PC minute clerk. Dave Baczewski made a motion to approve contracting of Diane Finnigan as a minute clerk for the Planning Commission, seconded by Bill Cleary. Motion passed: 3-0.

MOWING BIDS

The Town received four mowing bids: Ideal Landscaping, Robert & Sons, Smith & Sons, and Wagner's Landscaping. The bids range \$3,000 to \$18,810 for town properties, and \$1,300 to \$2,400 for the town garage.

Robert & Sons, who submitted the lowest bid, has contracted with the Town in the past; the Town was satisfied with their performance. Dave Baczewski made a motion to accept the bid submitted by Robert & Sons Lawncare for the landscaping and lawn maintenance for town properties and the town garage, seconded by Bill Cleary. Motion passed: 3-0.

Lynn Gauthier was present from the Cemetery Commission. The Commission only received one bid and it three times what they paid last year. They rejected the bid and will go out to bid again.

TRASH & RECYCLING SERVICES CONTRACT

The Town's trash and recycling contract with Myers expires the end of June 2022. The contract contains a clause that allows the contract to be extended for two years if both parties agree. Joe from Myers stated that Myers is interested in extending the contract. Bill asked if Myers is offering the same pricing. Joe advised that although gas prices have risen, Myers

pledges to freeze the Town's rates if the contract is extended. It was pointed out that there were very few complaints this year, with most of the complaints coming from the first winter storm. Bill Cleary made a motion to extend the trash and recycling collection services contract with Myers for another two years contingent the price stays the same and there is no fuel adjustment, seconded by Dave Baczewski. Motion passed: 3-0.

DRB COORDINATOR & PLANNING ASSISTANT – DRAFT JOB DESCRIPTION & AD

Melissa drafted a job description and position advertisement for the DRB Coordinator & Planning Assistant position for the Board's review. The Board and Melissa had a miscommunication earlier regarding the status of the position. Melissa thought the position would be permanent, but the Board wanted to try it for a year to see how it goes before putting long-term money towards the position. Melissa has reiterated that she believes that even once our current long projects are over that the need for assistance will exist. Dave thinks of this more like a trial period for the position and he admits he sees how the current non-permanent status may make hiring difficult.

GUIDANCE FOR ARPA COMMITTEE

Previously the ARPA Committee had asked the Selectboard for guidance on priorities for ARPA funding applications. There were two main items the ARPA committee wanted guidance on: priorities the Selectboard may have and how to distribute the ARPA funds.

Regarding how to distribute the funds, Lee believes it would be best to dole it out over a long period of time. He feels by doing this the funds will be spent as systematically and thoughtfully as possible. Bill agreed adding it would be foolish to think that tracking the money and projects will not tax town staff if they were to occur at the same time. From a timeline perspective Dave expects the Committee will begin to get applications in the early fall, and some may be quite large. He agrees it would be prudent to put some of the funds aside. He reminded the Board that if all the applications initially submitted are items the Town wants to put money toward, the Board can change the distribution rate.

How to prioritize is a more complex subject. Martha reiterated this is a once in a lifetime windfall and the Town should be conscious of that. For pandemic resilience 'emergency resilience' could be used and it could be any number of emergencies that may threaten the community and increasing the ability to survive and thrive in emergency situations. The neutrality of the projects is very important. The Town does not want to create additional costs for the town in future budgets. Bill pointed out that the Board seems to struggle during the budget season with requests from town organizations that are not town owned. A suggestion he has if the Town is finding it difficult to spend all the funds, is to give some to those organizations and perhaps eventually they will not be dependent on the Town. That would be a tax negative approach. The respective nonprofits need to individually figure out how to make themselves more fiscally sustainable.

Dave feels the town office needs some consideration. Some funds could go toward how to improve the building, more resilient, efficient, etc. Are there items, such as a boundary line dispute or septic considerations, which need to be resolved before the Town can move forward with any improvements? Rather than competing for grants, ARPA funds could be used to accelerate the process for an initial scope of what can be done.

The two largest items in the survey that residents wanted was broadband and wastewater. Dave was all for expending funds for broadband but pointed out that based on Mark Drapa's

presentation, CUDS are not using local or ARPA funds. He added that ARPA funds strategically applied against the wastewater funding stack to allow taxpayers to vote on the project is important; to lower the tax burden to the Town for that type of investment.

Martha wondered if the Board will be setting funds aside for a feasibility study for the town office, a new website, or other projects or if applications will be submitted to the ARPA Committee. It was pointed out that the challenge is someone taking it on. If someone were to volunteer to take it on, then the application process is important.

Bill Hill thought that a way to provide momentum is to publicize some of the funds that will be spent and invite others to submit applications to spend all of the funds.

LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICES

Chief Hoag from the Essex Police Department was present to talk openly about what sort of police services Westford is interested in. Bill is most interested in speed enforcement because that is a hot button topic in town, and possibly someone to serve violations/tickets to dog owners. Bill asked how economically Essex Police could provide traffic enforcement for us. Ron asked how many hours Westford needs? How many do we currently get? What sort of coverage are we looking for? Essex has never entered into a contract with another town, so this is new to them. It was noted that Westford currently budgets \$20,000 and the Chittenden County Sheriff's Office determines how many hours they can provide based on that amount. They are asked to not provide service during mud season due to road conditions and to keep to town roads and target certain times of day and roads that are commuter pathways, such as Woods Hollow Road, Cambridge Road, and Old Stage Road. Dave feels it is important to also monitor other roads in equal time so that other roads are not left with speeding issues. Bill reiterates it is not that Westford is dissatisfied with the service provided by Chittenden County Sheriff's office, it is merely looking to see what it can get for the money.

ROAD COMMITTEE

The Town has been activating a Road Committee for the past 15 years or so. The Committee is charged with producing a five-year plan for the roads. The last Road Committee report is for 2017-2022. Is there an interest in reactivating a Road Committee? The Board was not in favor of this. Westford has a Road Foreman who people can reach out to as well as the Selectboard. They feel the questions that come up can be answered with direct contact with the Road Foreman.

TOWN PLANNER & DRB COORDINATOR ASSISTANT COMPUTERS

With the addition of the DRB Coordinator and Planning Assistant (DCPA), a new computer will be needed. Additionally, Melissa has been working from home on her personal computer and this is not the best from a security standpoint. The proposed solution was to provide both Melissa and the DCPA with laptops so they could be more mobile with where they work and to provide second monitors while they are in the office.

Lee agrees that town employees using their own computers is not a good idea. The Town can provide equipment. If somebody made a public records' request an individual's personal computer would subject to the request.

The computer being used for Zoom meetings is old. Nanette floated the idea of purchasing a new computer and monitor for Zoom meetings that could be used for the DRPA, too. Vermont Connections provided a quote for two new laptops, including licenses, etc. It was noted that

ARPA funds could be used for at least part of the expense. Lee McClenny made a motion to approve the expenditures in this budget for the purchase of two laptop computers, screens, and software, seconded by Dave Baczewski. Motion passed: 3-0.

CORRESPONDENCE

Dave corresponded with Art Woolf, who had a request that the Grand List be put on the Town's website. Westford has not published the Grand List on the website, but other towns have. It would be easy to do. The Board agreed to put the 2022 Grand List on the website when it is finalized, which should be sometime in June.

Bill received a phone call from Chittenden County Sheriff's Office. They were wondering if they had done something that initiated the search for law enforcement services from other providers. Bill explained that was not the case, but it occurred to him that it may be best practice to warn current vendors when we are investigating other service providers.

The Board received multiple emails about the roadside brush hogging. Nanette will send a communication out to all that inquired. Lori Johnson was present. She thought the road crew's 'why' regarding the brush hogging was clear, but the concern with the big trees remains. She thinks the Town needs to recognize that a significant number of them are going to die which will be an expense in the future. Bill reiterated that if the brush hogging were done on a more consistent schedule than previously, the larger trees would not need to be cut. Although he agrees about the damage to the bigger trees, he does not think this applies to all of them. Lori explained that it will take years for the trees to die. Dave used the Essex side of Chapin Road which was brush hogged as well. Essex uses the same method as Westford, but they are on a more timely schedule. The debris looks similar, but the big trees are not being impacted. but you do not see the big trees used the same method as Westford. The Board could ask John to be judicious with the larger trees, but Bill believes some of them need to be limbed as well. The Board agreed that the trees warranted more discussion in the future. Lori felt that if the larger trees were limbed with a saw, it would be better for the trees.

The Board received a letter from Paul Birnholz. The Board wanted to have more time to take on the contents of the letter and will evaluate next meeting.

The Board received a letter from a Seymour Road resident proposing an alternative to roadside mowing. John advised Lee that if a property owner has concerns with an area, they can contact the Road Foreman. On some occasions, it may be possible to skip that area. The Board will ask John to follow up with the resident.

The Recreation Department asked the Board about getting a cell phone for the Recreation Coordinator. The new coordinator is hesitant to use their personal phone for recreation communications. Nanette explained that she feels any expense for such should come out of the Recreation Committee funds. Bill stated that it could be combined with the road crew cell phone contract. Dave feels the request is worth considering.

COMMUNICATION

There were no outgoing communications.

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE & PAYROLL WARRANTS

Greg Barrows, Treasurer, reviewed the FY'23 expense and budget status reports. The Board signed the accounts payable and payroll warrants.

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ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Lee McClenny, Selectboard Chair

Callie Hamdy,
Minute Clerk

**TOWN OF WESTFORD HIGHWAY DEPT.
ROAD SCHEDULE
April 1, 2022 – April 14, 2022**

Work to be done

- Finish brush cutting on Woods Hollow Road
- Grade roads when weather permits
- Put the summer tires on the trucks
- Service the trucks

Work completed

- Graded most of Brookside Road, Old Stage Road, Woods Hollow Road, Plains Road, and all of Common Road, Huntley Road, Osgood Hill Road, and Cambridge Road
- Filled potholes and soft spots on remaining roads. (added +/- 50 loads of gravel)
- Hauled in gravel for road work
- Removed wing plow from the last truck

Approved at the 4/14/22 Selectboard Meeting.