

SPECIAL SELECTBOARD MEETING
December 28, 2022
Minutes

Present:	Bill Cleary Lee McClenny Dave Baczewski	Nanette Rogers Greg Barrows
Guests:	Harmony Cism Pat Hechmer Geoff Garrow	Andy Doe Ben Hamlin

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 a.m. and was held in person and via Zoom.

CHANGES TO AGENDA

Removed the December 14, 2022 minutes.

MINUTES

Bill Cleary made a motion to approve the December 8, 2022 minutes as written, seconded by Dave Baczewski. Motion passed: 3-0.

Dave Baczewski made a motion to approve the December 21, 2022 minutes as amended, seconded by Bill Cleary. Motion passed: 3-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

REQUEST FOR VAST TRAILS TO CROSS OR TRAVEL ALONG TOWN ROADS

Andy Doe from the Saxon Hill Riders was present to request permission for VAST (Vermont Association of Snow Travelers) trails to travel on sections of town roads and to cross the town garage property. The three roads where the VAST trail is located within the town right of way are: Cambridge Road (0.3 mile), Phelps Road (0.1 mile) and Osgood Hill Road (0.1 mile). Andy noted they do their best to keep trails off the roads because snowmobilers and motorists do not want the snowmobiles travelling on the road.

Bill Cleary thanked landowners who allow use of their property which benefits the trail network.

Dave Baczewski made a motion to approve the three road sections where the VAST trails will travel within the town right of way and to cross town-owned land where the town garage is located, seconded by Bill Cleary. Motion passed: 3-0.

TOWN WEBSITE PROPOSALS

As part of the Phase II ARPA application for a new town website, Nanette contacted several web designers to obtain proposals. Three proposals were submitted:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Estimated Cost</u>
Axis Web Design	\$5,700 - \$7,125
BVT Creative	\$11,500
Symmytree Creative Design Solutions	\$10,300

Out of the three, Nanette narrowed her choices to BVT Creative and Symmytree. BVT Creative is owned by Westford resident Ben Hamlin. Earlier this year, BVT redesigned the Library's website. Symmytree was contacted by Eric Ford in 2021 when he served on a

committee that resulted from the Vermont Council on Rural Development forums. Geoff Garrow updated Symmytree's 2021 proposal for the ARPA application. Ben and Geoff gave a summary of their companies and what they have to offer. It was noted that both companies seem very capable of designing a new website.

After careful consideration Dave Baczewski made a motion to select the proposal provided by Symmytree, seconded by Bill Cleary. Motion passed: 3-0.

LIBRARY TRUSTEE APPOINTMENT

The Library Trustees requested letters of interest in filling a vacancy created by the resignation of Peggy Rodgers. The Trustees received one letter which was from Helen Sterling. Helen has shown great interest in the community by volunteering at the library and for filling in when the Emergency Management Coordinator was unavailable.

Bill Cleary made a motion to appoint Helen Sterling as a Library Trustee until Town Meeting in March, seconded by Dave Baczewski. Motion passed: 3-0. It was noted that Helen will need to submit a petition to run for the remainder of the term for the position she has been appointed to.

REQUEST TO PURCHASE ADOBE ACROBAT PRO

Zoning Administrator Harmony Cism submitted a request to purchase a subscription for Adobe Acrobat Pro. The program would allow her to create fillable forms, edit/mark up PDFs, as well as other functions which would help her fulfill her responsibilities as well as make things more convenient for residents. The annual cost is \$239.88.

Dave Baczewski made a motion to approve the purchase of Adobe Acrobat Pro as requested by the Zoning Administrator, seconded by Bill Cleary. Motion passed: 3-0.

FY'24 BUDGET WORKSHOP

The Board discussed salaries for FY'24. Several town employees submitted a salary request to be considered by the Board. The Board took several things into consideration when determining salaries. Once the salaries were determined, the FY'24 draft budget totaled \$2,165,830 which is a 5.77% over FY'23. The Board decided to use \$39,500 of the General Fund's surplus from prior fiscal years to help reduce the amount to be raised by taxes. After deducting this amount and the anticipated revenue from the total budget, the amount to be raised by taxes is \$1,851,163 which results in a 0.0001 decrease in the tax rate. It was noted that the Grand List figure used to calculate the estimated tax rate is from 2022. The 2023 Grand List is expected to be higher due to new homes being built and other changes to properties, therefore there could be a larger decrease in the estimated tax rate. However, this will not be known until after the 2023 Grand List is set and tax bills are issued. The draft budget will be formally presented to voters at the January 12th meeting. The budget needs to be finalized before the end of January in time for warning Town Meeting and to be published in the Annual Town Report.

INVESTING TOWN MONEY

The Board discussed moving some of the Town's money into interest bearing CDs. The interest the Town receives for its checking account is minimal whereas rates for CDs are higher. Greg will investigate viable CD options.

CONTINGENCY FUND

The Selectboard's goal has been to have a balance in the Contingency Fund of \$250,000. The current balance in the fund is \$107,502.92. Lee McClenny made a motion to transfer \$142,497.08 from the General Fund to the Contingency Fund, and to invest the Contingency Funds in an interest-bearing CD for one year with interest going into the General Fund, seconded by Bill Cleary. Motion passed: 3-0.

ARPA FUNDS

Dave Baczewski made a motion to allocate an additional \$9,600 to the ARPA Admin Project #VT0255-01 to pay an annual stipend to Greg and Nanette in the amount of \$1,200 each per calendar year in recognition of the additional administrative work these two positions will be handling through December 2026, seconded by Bill Cleary. Motion passed: 3-0.

Dave Baczewski made a motion to create an ARPA project number for Westford Town Expenses and to allocate up to \$30,000 of ARPA funds to the project for the purpose of paying expenses such as diesel, fuel oil, electricity, etc., seconded by Bill Cleary. Motion passed: 3-0.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence.

COMMUNICATION

The Board discussed poor cell phone service in Westford. This has been a hot topic in the past. The discussion stemmed from the recent winter event that knocked over trees and left many homes without power. During an emergency, the Selectboard is responsible for opening the emergency shelter if needed. However, none of the Selectboard members had power, internet, or cell service to communicate with other officials during the recent event. Westford's State Representative, Julia Andrews, and Senator, Irene Wrenner, will be contacted to ask them to be aware of any bills or other opportunities that may come up during the legislative session to address poor cell service. If Julia and Irene are available, the Board would like them to attend a meeting to discuss this as well as other topics of interest to Westford.

FY'23 GENERAL FUND STATUS REPORT

Greg Barrows, Treasurer, reviewed the FY'23 General Fund and Highway Budget Status Reports.

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE AND PAYROLL WARRANTS

Greg Barrows, Treasurer, reviewed the accounts payable warrant. The Board signed the warrant.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 11:24 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lee McClenny, Chair
Selectboard

Nanette Rogers
Town Administrator