

**SPECIAL SELECTBOARD MEETING**  
**August 16, 2024**  
**Minutes**

Present: Bill Cleary  
Casey Mathieu  
Wendy Doane  
Deb Jorschick

Holly Delisle  
Callie Hamdy

Guests: Dick Lavalley, Lori Johnson, Carol Winfield, Barb Peck, Sheila Franz, Vicky Ross,  
Martha Heath

The meeting was called to order at 6:15 p.m. The meeting was held in person and via Zoom.

**CHANGES TO AGENDA**

There were no changes to the agenda.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

**SET BALLOT ARTICLE LANGUAGE: CHARTER AMENDMENT**

Legal advice from the Town Attorney laid out what the proposed Charter change would look like. By statute, the Selectboard is allowed to shorten the full text of the amendment for the article that will appear on the November Ballot. The full charter change with the red line edits will be in every voter booth and available in multiple online and physical locations for people to review. Bill read the new version out loud. Wendy liked how clear and short the proposed article version is. She wondered if we should highlight or bold "appointed" and "elected" in the article language. She felt this might help things be clearer. Bill has seen more complicated article language on ballots before; he felt this was clear. The only thing we cannot change is the intent of the petition wording. Bill read the petition wording out loud for comparison.

Bill motioned to approve the article as presented, with the words "elected" and "appointed" in all capital letters, to be printed on the ballots for a vote to amend the charter of the Town of Westford on November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Wendy seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

Bill motioned to find that the charter proposal is too long and unwieldy to set out in amended form and to post the notices as a concise summary of the charter proposal. Casey seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

Casey made a motion to accept the technical correction to the petition of amendment of section 3 of the Town of Westford Vermont charter as amended or highlighted in red or blue. Deb seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

**TOWN FACEBOOK PAGE DISCUSSION**

We are having difficulty filling our two open highway crew positions. Casey has found posting on Facebook to be a cost-effective way to attract employees. There are concerns with the town having a Facebook (FB) page. Holly explained that the concerns are significant because of the two sunshine laws: open meeting law and public record law. This would affect any communication the town posts on social media. VLCT gives guidance. Most towns do use Facebook or have a social media presence, but most have social media or communication policies that dictate how the town uses social media. Anything we post on FB is a public record as is any response we may make. We have to be careful on who is posting. Most towns have commenting, and reactions turned off on posts. The public cannot communicate feedback to the town via FB. Municipalities can designate social media platforms as "government speech

forums" for one-way communication out to the public. If it is something the board chooses to move forward with, we should do so in a measured way with a strong social media/communications policy. Fairfax has a communication policy that covers all the platforms they may use to communicate. Wendy asked if VLCT can help us with a policy? Yes, there is a sample policy. Holly will provide the board with a draft. Bill asked if we could start the page with just a road crew advertisement on it. Holly explained it is not a good idea. She would not be comfortable putting a page together without a policy in place. Any discussion on the policy should also be done in public meeting. The selectboard wants to move quickly on Facebook because of the timeline of hiring a road crew member. We currently post job listings on Front Porch Forum, fliers on the board in the office, and job ads on Indeed and in Seven Days. Bill was not opposed to taking longer to draft the policy. Vicky Ross was present. She asked if we were posting on the VLCT job board. We are not. Vicky was also supportive of the Facebook page and the communications policy.

### **ROAD CREW HIRING DISCUSSION**

We are at risk of jeopardizing our current road crew by not being able to fill the open positions. Vicky asked if we had incentives to make our road crew jobs more appealing? Holly and Casey discussed this last week, but the aim is getting someone on board that has experience in the short term. It takes 3 months to obtain a CDL which would put us in the middle of winter. Wendy wondered if we should offer to pay for someone to obtain their CDL. It might be months, but what if it gets us somebody vs nobody? What if we have a contract for a specific term of service? Bill wanted to talk to Sean about that first, but believed he would prefer to hire somebody with experience. Casey thought it depended on the position. For the first open position we need somebody with experience to fill the immediate need, but the second person we could train. Casey stated a CDL can cost between \$5,000-\$7,000. Vicky suggested for the more immediate need we look at what other towns offer for a sign on bonus to make it more attractive. Dick Lavalley was present. He was wondering if we would ever apply a bonus to anybody that already had a CDL. That would be what Vicky is referring to as a sign on bonus.

Bill is not sure how well sign on bonuses work, so he deferred to Casey. Casey says it depends on the candidate. He, Holly, and Sean had met with an applicant last Monday who is currently making \$16 more an hour than what we are paying while working for UPS but has difficult hours because of how short staffed they are. The applicant wanted us to know he's had other offers at \$35 an hour with zero experience. We are on the low end of the spectrum, but he had come for an interview because he had done some research into our budget and thought we had room to pay him more. Even if we met him in the middle, we would need to reevaluate the other salaries. He was interested in our work specifically because he found it interesting. Is that worth such a drastic cut in what somebody is making? Are we offering what people need in offer to fill this role? Are we attracting the right kind of people? Casey thinks step 1 is advertising on FB and step 2 is the conversation about salary.

Vicky Ross was present. Other towns participate in VMERS. We may have trouble attracting people away from roles that have that benefit unless there is another thing to draw them here. Holly has looked into this; it seems like there's a way to only offer it to certain employees, but everybody within a similar job type would be required to participate. Another thing is when we are interviewing folks who have families, we only offer single-person benefits, which works if their partner also has insurance, but that is not always the case. She feels it is a detriment. Sean had mentioned to Casey that we do not want to poach people from the state or other surrounding towns. Casey thinks our best benefit is the four day, 10-hour shifts year-round and our overtime policy. That is what these sort of people look at. Bill explained that BCBS family health care plans are going up around 20%, we have MVP which is going up around 15%.

Dick Lavallee wondered about advertising on the radio. Casey thinks it starts the engagement and gets people thinking but it. Bill was in favor. Casey thinks he can get us attractive rates at the radio station. He would rather spend the same money for 10 commercials than what we are paying for Seven Days. He feels we would get more bang for our buck. Wendy agreed. Deb and Casey offered to record the ad.

Carol Winfield was present. There are only a few places that you can do to train and get a CDL. Perhaps is there a way to advertise at the CDL schools? The board agreed that Seven Days was not the right place to advertise for the road crew positions. Casey stated that we would be looking at \$2,000-\$3,000 a month for radio advertising to be effective. He believes the morning drive hours to be the most cost effective. Casey thinks radio advertising would be best if done in conjunction with Facebook. Callie Hamdy suggested a more visible job openings section on the town website. The board agreed to go forward with radio advertising.

Barb commented that she has lived here 40 years, and she thinks it is not just that expectations are higher on the road crew, people complain more now than they did 20 years ago.

**ADJOURN**

The meeting adjourned at 7:17p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bill Cleary, Chair  
Selectboard

Callie Hamdy  
Minute Clerk

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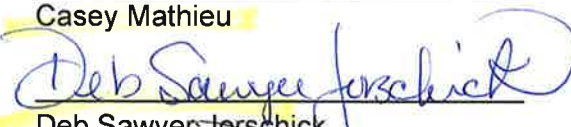
ADOPTED THIS 22<sup>nd</sup> DAY OF JULY 2024.

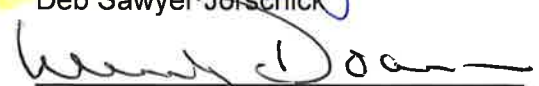
**WESTFORD SELECTBOARD**

  
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William Cleary, Chair

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Patrick Haller

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Casey Mathieu

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Deb Sawyer Jorschick

  
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Wendy Doane