

SELECTBOARD MEETING
August 8, 2024
Minutes

Present:	Bill Cleary	Holly Delisle
	Casey Mathieu	Callie Hamdy
	Wendy Doane	Greg Barrows
	Pat Haller	Sean Cushing
	Deb Jorschick	

Guests: see page 4.

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

CHANGES TO AGENDA

Added a request from a resident to add a stop sign, added a covered bridge update and added a discussion regarding a petition turned in.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment

MINUTES

The selectboard will review the July 25 minutes during the August 22 meeting.

CCRPC UPDATE

Ben Bornstein was present. He and Holly had heard back from CCRPC's transportation lead. The CCRPC person who can give direction regarding the intersection realignment feasibility study was out of the office at the time. There is a 20% buy-in for that study. CCRPC suggested we implement traffic calming measures proposed in the previous traffic study before conducting another one.

There is a CCRPC meeting next week that will take a deep dive into the ECOS plan that deals with land use and housing among other things. There was also notice of a major housing discussion slated for mid-September. The water quality subcommittee will meet next week.

Bill thinks it's reasonable for CCRPC to want us to try their suggestions before another study is done, but he would like to do both at the same time. Wendy would like to push ahead with the suggestion of adding convex mirrors at the suggested intersections. Holly noted the mirrors weren't in the previous report but were a later suggestion by a member of the public. Sean thought there was some liability difference if mirrors were involved. He suggested confirming with the state before proceeding. Holly mentioned some of CCRPC's suggestions are more costly than others, but some can be implemented for little effort and cost. Wendy asked when the study is going to be. Ben explained we'd get an answer by the end of August or beginning of September. Pat wanted to implement the easier signage suggestions before the new study, but that is for the safety of the residents on the road, not necessarily to stop speeders. Ben explained that the intersection realignment is separate from the traffic study, and we'd need a 20% buy in. Ben suggested going forward with getting it on the schedule. He pointed out that they talked about the expense of the suggested radar signs, and it was about \$4,000 each.

REQUEST FOR STOP SIGN

Bill was approached by a resident who asked for a stop sign at the Old #11/Covey Road intersection. There is a tight turn there with a blind spot they feel is dangerous and Bill agrees. Pat thinks that we did not have the authority to put up a stop sign without going through

VTrans and meeting their requirements like a traffic study of the intersection. He feels it's a great time to add this item to the traffic study Ben is asking CCRPC for. Bill noted that this might be a minimal impact since there are few people that live above the Covey Rd intersection on Old #11, but he thinks there may be people who would oppose the stop sign. Pat noted that VTrans has taken our signs down when not installed to their requirements. Sean confirmed this. He believes they study traffic volume, accident reports etc. Pat believes VTrans takes in the overall safety of the intersection, not just the number of cars or accidents. Holly mentioned that all stop signs are listed in our traffic ordinance so any new stop sign would require amending the ordinance. The board will discuss this further at a later date.

ROAD SCHEDULE

Sean Cushing, Road Foreman, went over the Road Schedule from July 26, 2024 to August 8, 2024. Casey motioned to approve the Road Schedule as presented. Deb seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

FY'24 HIGHWAY BUDGET STATUS REPORT

Greg Barrows, Treasurer, went over the FY'24 Budget Status Report.

Governor Scott authorized the State Treasurer to pay out all installments of highway aid so that towns affected by flooding could recuperate. Westford was not affected much by the storms. Bill suggested we could earn interest on this lump sum.

GLEBE LAND RELEASE REQUEST

Holly explained that we got a request from the attorney of a property owner whose deed showed they had Glebe Land. This is an old function that was to support schools and clergy. There was a law passed for municipalities to retain interest in Glebe Land by vote before January 1, 2020. Holly and the attorney looked at Selectboard minutes and could find no proof Westford wanted to retain Glebe Land, so it reverts to the landowner of record.

LIVESTOCK ORDINANCE FINAL REVIEW

The attorney provided a final version with our newest changes to the penalty and other sections of the Livestock Ordinance. Holly highlighted the fee structures. She also went through the language for a complaint process that had been defined. A public hearing on this ordinance is not required. Pat thought Ron suggested not including smaller livestock like chickens, roosters, poultry peasants, etc. and thought they should be removed from the ordinance. Bill disagreed, on the Essex end of Osgood Hill Road there are often ducks in the road. He doesn't think it's safe. He would feel bad if he hit somebody's animal. Deb saw both sides but agrees that it's a safety issue.

Carol Winfield thinks some people's animals escape on occasion. If there is the leeway for that sort of situation she would appreciate it. She is concerned that if a neighbor has a peeve with a certain resident they're going to complain. What recourse is there for the livestock owner?

Barb Peck explained state livestock laws regarding how many animals are considered livestock vs pets. She suggests that the ordinance give a definition for "Pets". Pat understands what Barb is saying but the ordinance defines livestock and what we mean by that for Westford specifically. He doesn't think we have to change it. Pat explained that complaints must be put in writing and then the livestock owners can defend themselves against a false claim. Holly's understanding of this is that the ticket, once written, goes directly to the Vermont Judicial bureau and they manage it. The fee is set by the Selectboard, but the Judicial Bureau handles it and credits costs back to the town later. It is not the Selectboard specifically making that end determination. Bill motioned that we adopt the livestock ordinance as amended. Pat seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

ESSEX RESCUE QUARTERLY REPORT

Essex Rescue had provided a quarterly report. Holly went through the report. Bill asked Deb and Holly to thank Colleen for the report and services.

REQUEST FOR ENDORSEMENT – TOWN ADMIN INSTITUTE

Holly had expressed an interest in going to an institute for new Town Administrators. The cost of tuition is covered by the Leahy Center. It is a seven-course institute over the next 8 months. Bill was in favor. They are mostly virtual meetings. Pat motioned to recommend Holly attend. Wendy seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

TOWN OFFICE SUMP PUMP SERVICE REQUEST

The Town Office Sump Pump needed service. The system is supposed to be serviced once a year but hasn't been serviced since 2020. The main pump is broken, and the backup battery is weak. The costs can come out of the Town Office Repairs and Maintenance line item but will put that item over budget by the end of the year. Wendy motioned to approve \$1,565.00 for a new sump pump. Pat seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

COVERED BRIDGE

We received notice that the bridge qualifies for historic designation which is the first hurdle in getting grant funding for its repair. The Preservation Trust told Holly that the report VT Heavy Timber did in 2023, once updated, could count as the conditions assessment required for the grant. The cost of the bridge repairs was quoted at \$40,000 in 2023. This could be discussed in the ARPA deep dive in September.

PETITION RECEIVED

A petition was received on 8/6 for a charter amendment to change the Town Clerk from elected to appointed. Holly went over the specific timelines and required public hearings for the charter change. She recently received this information from the town attorney. The first day a hearing could be held is August 16th. The deadline to get articles to the State is August 23, but if we mail the ballots ourselves it allows us more leeway.

Pat thinks we could hold the public hearings in August, and they could hold additional public hearings closer to the November vote. The board thought the cost of mailing the ballots manually would burden the town and wanted to hold the hearings quickly to avoid that. Vicky Ross was present. She asked the Selectboard to rethink the 5:00pm start time because people who are working do not have any time to get there after work and would find that inconsiderate. Also, regular meetings begin at 6:15pm so it could be seen as abnormal. Bill motioned to hold the first public hearing on 8/16 at 6:15pm and the second on 8/21 at 6:15pm and to also hold a third public hearing closer to the vote. Casey seconded. Motion passed 5-0. These dates are tentative based on availability of venue.

1705 UPDATE

David Tudhope estimated that a new 490gallon per day septic system would cost \$50,000 to construct. Pat would like the agenda item for 1705 to not be listed under Wastewater since it encompasses more than that now. Holly will make the change to future agendas.

FY'24 GENERAL FUND BUDGET STATUS REPORT

Greg Barrows, Treasurer, went over the FY'24 General Fund Budget Status Report.

REVIEW AND APPROVE ACCOUNTS PAYABLE & PAYROLL WARRANTS

Greg Barrows, Treasurer, went over the Accounts Payable & Payroll Warrants.

Holly mentioned that Julia Andrews, Westford's representative to the Statehouse suggested that Westford work with other towns to discuss how to spend opioid settlement money.

CORRESPONDENCE

Thank You Letter from GBIC

Greater Burlington Industrial Corp sent a Thank You letter for the donation Westford residents approved. GBIC helps facilitate the Town getting certain grants.

Thank You Letter from UVM Health Network Home Health & Hospice

Thanking the town for our donation to their organization.

Correspondence about the stop sign that was discussed earlier.

Additional correspondence was received from a resident expressing their concern with the Town Clerk situation.

Vicky Ross commented that she had missed the Stop Sign discussion in the road section. Bill explained the previous discussion.

COMMUNICATION

Holly will communicate to the public about the new Livestock Ordinance.

Holly will also communicate the Information about Public Hearings.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 8:13 pm Bill moved to enter executive session for evaluation of a public official. Pat seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

Deb motioned to exit executive session. Casey seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

No action was taken.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 9:47p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Bill Cleary, Chair
Selectboard

Callie Hamdy
Minute Clerk

GUEST LIST

Dave Lavallee
Bob Bancroft
Ira Allen

Kim Guidry
Ben Bornstein
Carol Winfield

Barb Peck
Lori Johnson
Vicky Ross

Dan Strobridge
Sheila Franz
Sue Roediger

ADOPTED THIS 22nd DAY OF AUGUST 2024.

WESTFORD SELECTBOARD



William Cleary, Chair

Patrick Haller

Casey Mathieu



Deb Sawyer Jorschick



Wendy Doane