

Westfield Selectboard MINUTES
DECEMBER 7, 2020 at 5 P.M. ♦ Westfield Town Offices & via Zoom

Due to COVID-19 some people participated in person and some participated remotely via Zoom.

Town Officials Present: Selectboard members: Yves Daigle (Chair), Jacques Couture (Co-Chair) and Anne Lazor; Treasurer, Mary Lou Jacobs; Town Clerk, LaDonna Dunn; Assistant Town Clerks, Karen Blais (via Zoom) and Heather Johnson (via Zoom); and Planning Commission Chair, Pat Sagui (via Zoom)

1. **Call Meeting to Order:** Yves called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m.
2. **Public Comment – 5 Minutes:** None
3. **Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda:** None
4. **Approve Minutes of the October 26, 2020 Selectboard Meetings:** Motion by Jacques; seconded by Anne to approve the minutes with one change. Motion passed unanimously.

A. Business from the Minutes: LaDonna reported there was an error in the September 21, 2020 minutes on Article 10C. The amount in the Edward Jones investment account should have been reported as \$157,159.74 not \$257,159.74.

5. **Draft of Housing Needs Assessment – Municipal Planning Grant – Pat Sagui/LaDonna Dunn:** The Selectboard will be receiving the full draft for review shortly. There will be a video on the website that will explain the informational meeting about the Housing Needs Assessment on January 5, 2021 at 6 p.m. The meeting will be held via Zoom. Postcards will be made available allowing people who may not be able to participate remotely or by phone to submit their questions or comments. The postcards will be made available at the Recycling Center. The draft of the Housing Needs Assessment will be posted on the municipal website at www.westfield.vt.gov as well as paper copies will be available upon request to the Town Clerk, 802-744-2484.

6. **Town Meeting 3/2/21 – Due to Covid-19 Restrictions Discuss Adopting Australian Ballot System of Voting per Act 162 vs. Traditional Town Meeting:** The challenges of holding the traditional, in-person, Town Meeting were discussed. The Selectboard felt it was too dangerous in the small space at the Community Center to hold the traditional Town Meeting. The Legislature voted in Act 162 making provisions for any municipality to apply the Australian ballot system of voting to any or all of its municipal meetings held in the year 2021 by vote of its legislative body. After much discussion there was a motion by Jacques and second by Anne to move all Town Meeting voting to Australian ballot voting including listing each appropriation request as a separate article on the ballot. The motion passed unanimously.

A. Discuss Considering Appropriation Requests as Separate Australian Ballot Articles on Ballot: This was discussed and agreed upon unanimously to consider each appropriation request as a separate article. See above.

B. Getting Information to Voters about Town Meeting Changes: Postcard or Absentee Ballot Mailing to All Voters: LaDonna suggested a mailing be sent to all registered voters to inform them of the changes to Town Meeting 2021. This will be discussed at the next meeting. Currently, the Legislature has not granted towns the authority to mail an absentee ballot to every registered voter without the voter requesting one. LaDonna reported this authority may be granted to the legislative body at the beginning of the new legislative session but VLCT is urging towns to make plans for Town Meeting, without waiting for the Legislature to reconvene, due to tight statutory deadlines. The Informational Meeting is the time and place for voters to ask questions about the articles being voted on. The Informational Meeting will be recorded and posted on the municipal website for those who are unable to attend the night of the meeting. There will not be a virtual

Town Meeting or an in person Town Meeting in 2021 due to Covid-19 restraints but rather all votes that would have take place by paper or voice vote at Town Meeting will take place by Australian ballot for 2021 per the authority granted to the legislative body pursuant to Act 162.

C. Set Date for Informational Meeting: The Informational Meeting (via Zoom) will be held February 25, 2021 at 6 p.m. Questions can be submitted to the Town Clerk in advance of the meeting or voters can participate in the virtual Informational Meeting via Zoom or by calling in on the phone. Pat Sagui offered to be the moderator for the Informational Meeting. The Selectboard agreed and thanked Pat.

7. Road Updates – Road Commissioner, Eric Kennison:

A. Guard Rails/Accident on Reservoir Road: Yves reported Eric installed guardrails at each end of Reservoir Road on December 1st, as has been done the past few years. Eric put Jersey barriers in place to block the North Hill Road and Kennison Road access to Reservoir Road in past years but decided to use guardrails this year. Yves received a call from Denny Lyster stating the day the guardrails were installed, at approximately 4:15 p.m., Denny returned home and did not see the guardrail at the Kennison Road access point. Denny stated the guardrail was installed at windshield height. He hit the guardrail and damaged his car. He stated when he left home earlier that day, the guardrail was not in place and when he returned home at dusk it was there. Due to the lighting that time of day, he said he could not see it, causing the accident. He wants the town to pay for the damages to his car. The day after the accident, Eric painted the guardrails orange to make them more visible. The Selectboard felt the best course of action would be for the Clerk to contact the Towns insurance company (VLCT-PACIF) and open a claim for them to investigate. The Clerk will make the call on Tuesday morning.

B. Completed since Last Meeting: Road signs have been installed throughout the town.

C. Timeline Update on Unfinished Projects: Installation of Stone Barriers at Roger Tetreaults; Dykeman Culvert; Installation of Radar Signs; Installation of Guardrails at Taft Brook Road/Buck Hill: The Clerk reported Eric Kennison has scheduled a meeting with Dig Safe regarding installation of the radar signs. Eric stated at a previous meeting he pre-poured the cement forms for mounting the radar signs. The Selectboard said due to how late in the season it is, installation of the Dykeman culvert will wait until the spring.

8. Treasurer's Report – Treasurer, Mary Lou Jacobs:

A. Status of Money Received from FEMA & NVDA for Road Grants: Mary Lou commented the FEMA money for the Halloween Storm in 2019 was received in the amount of \$25,286.52. It was deposited in the General Fund in State Aid to Highways. The Town received notification that the Better Roads grants were not going to be funded for 2020 due to Covid-19 but instead each town in the state would receive a portion of the money that would have been allocated for these grants. This money was also deposited in the General Fund. The Selectboard discussed transferring this money out of the General Fund by year-end and possibly deducting it from the amount of money to be raised from taxes in the 2021 budget. This will be discussed further at the Budget meetings.

B. Approve Warrants for Expenditures Dated: There was a motion by Yves and second by Anne to approve the warrants dated 11/18/20 \$19,543.05 (bills); 11/25/20 \$6,721.28 (bills) and \$6,862.57 (payroll); and 12/3/20 \$4,777.40 (bills). The motion passed unanimously.

C. Budget Status Update (emailed in advance): Mary Lou said Hold Harmless money was received in the amount of \$42,514.00. The balance in the General Fund is currently \$476,714.30. Jacques asked Mary Lou to make sure all of the Good Neighbor Fund money had been paid back to the investment fund. Mary Lou commented she has already written the check for \$5,625 for the

Grader Fund for 2020. She will check into CD rates and report back to the Selectboard at the next meeting.

D. Investment Accounts Update (emailed in advance): The October 31, 2020 Edward Jones Investment account is valued at \$155,574.38 representing a decrease of <\$132.20> and November 30, 2020 \$160,378.34 representing an increase of \$4,803.96. The North Country Federal Credit Union balance is \$9,744.05.

E. Reconsider MVP Health Care over Blue Cross Blue Shield for 2021: LaDonna reported after further investigation she discovered there would be a substantial savings of \$3,400/per year by switching from Blue Cross Blue Shield Platinum Plan to MVP Health Care Platinum Plan. She carefully reviewed both plans line by line and spoke with Eric Kennison, confirming his doctors are in the MVP network. Eric and LaDonna are in agreement to try MVP for one year if the Selectboard is in agreement to reconsider their decision from last month. Jacques said he felt he needed to bring up a negative experience one of the Boards he is on had with MVP. He said he did not know all the details but felt he needed to bring it to the table for discussion. After careful consideration, there was a motion by Yves and second by Anne to reconsider last month's decision and go with MVP Platinum Plan for one year and re-evaluate it during open enrollment next year. Motion passed unanimously.

F. Lister Request: Move Unexpended Reappraisal Money from General Fund to Credit Union CD: LaDonna said Danny Young, Chair of the Listers, requested that any money left over in the Listers Reappraisal Accounts be transferred out of the General Fund by year-end and be placed in a CD for future reappraisals. Jacques commented there are numerous line item accounts in the General Fund for the Listers and asked that they be consolidated to one income and expense account for the Listers reappraisal. Mary Lou will get back to the Selectboard before the next meeting once she consolidates the accounts to make sure all of the reappraisal expenses are accounted for.

9. Approve Heritage Memorials, Inc. Repair Contract for North Hill Cemetery for 2021: The Selectboard agreed to sign the contract to repair 4 stones in the old section of the North Hill Cemetery in the amount of \$500. The money will be budgeted for in the 2021 budget. The Treasurer will transfer money to the General Fund in 2021 from the cemetery investment fund to cover the expense.

10. Internet Connectivity/Email from Christine Hallquist, NEK Broadband – LaDonna Dunn: Yves stated he has a meeting on Tuesday, December 8th with Bobby Starr to discuss this and see if there is any money available through the Cares Act to help bring internet connectivity to Kennison Road. LaDonna said due to the increased Covid-19 cases in the Northeast Kingdom she has not been comfortable going to Nate Deslandes home with her internet hotspot but she will figure out a way to get it accomplished before the next Selectboard meeting.

11. Discuss Adopting an ADA Harassment/Tolerance Policy – Anne Lazor: Anne explained it had been brought to her attention there was an incident on North Hill Road where one of our residents was run off the road and harassed by a driver. In this instance, the police were called to the scene. The driver was not known. She stated it has happened more than once to this individual and she expressed her concern about protecting this persons rights, as well as others who may have similar circumstances. She did some investigating with the ADA and drafted a policy statement she asked the Selectboard to adopt to make people aware that the Selectboard wants all people to be protected and safe in our town while on the roadways or going about their daily business. Jacques commented he thought the position statement was well written. He asked how Anne envisioned the document would be used. LaDonna suggested it could be put on Town letterhead and Anne thought it could be posted at the General Store, Post Office and Recycling Center as well as publicizing it on the website, Front Porch Forum and the Town's Facebook page. There was a motion by Jacques and second by Yves in favor of adopting the ADA Harassment/Tolerance Position Statement. Motion passed unanimously. Anne thanked Jacques and Yves for their support.

12. Sheriff's Report for October: The report reflected 18 patrol hours and \$543 in issued citations. The Clerk read an email from Sheriff, Jennifer Harlow, stating she would be happy to come to a meeting to discuss the contracted hours before the appropriation request is submitted. Mary Lou stated they are a little behind in their total contracted hours for the year. She will double check the totals and notify the Sheriff's department when she sends the next quarterly payment. The Selectboard felt the contracted hours are adequate and no change needs to be made for 2021. The Clerk will contact Sheriff Harlow to notify her of the Selectboards wishes.

13. Review NEKWMD Proposed Budget Changes & Tire Disposal Update:

Tires:

- Yves presented calculations based on the last two tires deliveries to the NEKWMD. Based on his calculation, which include the districts disposal fee (tonnage x \$130.00/ton), labor costs for Yves and Scott Dean plus mileage, the Recycling Centers costs are covered while leaving the tire disposal fee at the current rate for Westfield recyclers. Yves said Scott Dean does not require mileage at this time for the trailer used to transport the tires. At earlier meetings, there was discussion about hiring a hauler to pick up the tires from the Recycling Center. Yves pointed out this would have increased the cost charged per tire for Westfield recyclers. It was decided by the Selectboard to leave the current system in place with Yves and a helper taking the tires to the NEKWMD. Yves also discussed the importance of supporting the NEKWMD with our tire business.

Northeast Kingdom Waste Management District (NEKWMD) Proposed Budget Changes: The NEKWMD budget is voted on by Australian ballot on Town Meeting Day, March 2, 2021.

- A per capita assessment of \$0.94 will be assessed in 2021. This represents a \$0.04 increase compared to 2020. This assessment is necessary to pay for costs associated with the baler (\$40,538) and to help replenish the District's Capital Improvement Fund (\$40,262), which has been depleted over the course of the last two years due to the purchase of a new baler in 2019 and lower revenues associated with COVID-19 in 2020.
- The proposed surcharge rate for 2021 will increase by \$0.24/ton. The 2021 rate will be \$24.99/ton.
- Stop charges for servicing District schools and recycling facilities will increase by \$3 and \$4/stop, respectively. Schools will be charged \$33/stop and recycling facilities will be charged \$49/stop.

14. 2020 Town Report – LaDonna Dunn:

A. Authorize 2-Year Printing Contract with Repro: LaDonna reported it is time to renew the contract to print the Town Report. She said she's very pleased working with Repro and is recommending a two-year contract renewal. She stated the one-year contract to print 230 books (72 pages-perfect bound with color covers) will be \$750 or a two-year contract will be \$720. Motion by Jacques; seconded by Anne to extend Repro's contract by two more years. Motion passed unanimously.

B. Discuss Cover Concept: LaDonna said she would like to have Westfield's Farming Legacy as the theme for the front cover/cover story focusing on all aspects of agriculture going back into the 1940's to present day. The Selectboard was enthusiastic about featuring farming and offered suggestions. Pat Sagui has graciously agreed to work with LaDonna on the cover story.

15. Other Business:

A. Upcoming Budget Meetings 12/21/20 via Zoom 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. and 1/5/21 via Zoom 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.: These dates have been set to draft the Selectboards 2021 General Fund and Highway budgets. As discussed earlier in the meeting the budgets will be voted on by Australian ballot for 2021. There will be an Informational Meeting on Thursday, February 25, 2021 via Zoom at 6 p.m.

B. Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) Dues: Yves read a letter from VLCT stating there will be no dues increase for 2021. The Selectboard will budget \$1,730 (\$1.25 per capita).

16. Adjourn: Following a motion by Anne and second by Jacques, all were in agreement to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Westfield Selectboard Approval: Date: _____ **with** _____ **change(s)**

Yves Daigle, Chair

Jacques Couture, Co-Chair

Anne Lazor

Minutes submitted by: _____
LaDonna Dunn, Town Clerk & Selectboard Clerk