

Westfield Selectboard Meeting MINUTES

January 5, 2021 @ 8:00 a.m. ♦ Westfield Town Offices & via Zoom

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

There will be NO IN-PERSON TOWN MEETING March 2, 2021.

All Town Meeting voting takes place via Australian ballot on March 2, 2021
at the Westfield Community Center, 9 a.m. until 7 p.m.

There will be an electronic Town Informational Meeting on February 25, 2021 via Zoom at 6 p.m.

There will be an electronic School Informational Meeting on February 23, 2021 via Google Meets at 6 p.m.

Visit the municipal website www.westfield.vt.gov for login credentials closer to the Informational Meetings.

Town Officials Present: Selectboard members: Yves Daigle (Chair), Jacques Couture (Co-Chair) and Anne Lazor; Treasurer, Mary Lou Jacobs; Town Clerk, LaDonna Dunn; Road Commissioner, Eric Kennison; Lister Chair, Danny Young (for a portion of the meeting); and Planning Commission Chair, Pat Sagui (for a portion of the meeting)

Others: Sheriff Jennifer Harlow

1. **Call Meeting to Order – Yves Daigle, Chair:** Yves called the meeting to order at 8:12 a.m.
2. **Public Comment – 5 Minutes:** Sheriff Harlow gave the Selectboard an update on the following:
 - Sheriff Harlow stated there has been a lot of activity in town this past year. She said the contracted hours could be changed if the Selectboard felt the need.
 - 173 patrol hours of the contracted 275 hour have been administered. The balance will be completed by the end of the March 2021 contract. Sheriff Harlow said the contract could run January 1 to December 31 if the Selectboard wished instead of beginning in March each year. They felt the current timeframe was adequate. Mary Lou commented the contracted hours completed were a little bit behind. Sheriff Harlow said she appreciated the Towns patience. They have been short-staffed. She said the hours will be completed by the end of the March 2021 contract.
 - The upcoming April 1, 2021 contract will reflect an increase to \$55.12/per hour from \$51.40/per hour. She stated because the State Police will be increasing their rate considerably for after-hours dispatching, the Sheriff's Department will be switching to dispatching by the Newport Police Department. She said 911 calls go to Williston and get transferred to the appropriate agency.
3. **Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda:** Changed the wording on #6 and #6A from:
 - 6. Discuss Town Meeting March 2, 2021; changed to Australian Ballot Voting (Town Meeting Day)
 - 6A. Review Timeline for Town Meeting; changed to Review Timeline to Prepare for March 2, 2021 Voting
4. **Approve Minutes of the 12/21/20 Selectboard Meeting:** There was a motion by Jacques and second by Anne to approve the minutes with no changes. Motion passed unanimously.

A. Business from the Minutes:

- **Update from Yves on Conversations with Bobby Starr and Mark Higley re: Internet Connectivity on North Hill Road:** Yves reported he has continued to be in touch with Bobby Starr and Mark Higley. They have pledged to help Westfield and make town officials aware when there is funding or other opportunities for internet connectivity. Jacques mentioned the recent information in NVDA's newsletter talking about the towns that are first on the list to start receiving additional connectivity. Unfortunately, Westfield is not on the list, but the CUD has assured all member towns that in the coming years all the line will be connected. The Selectboard will continue to monitor and act on this issue.

- **Library Grant Update:** LaDonna reported the grant has been submitted by Carrie Glessner and there are no award announcements yet.

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

A. Approve Warrants for Expenditures Dated:12/23/20 \$47,149.09 (bills) & \$7,550.39 (payroll); and 12/31/20 \$13,481.42 (bills): There was a motion by Anne and second by Yves to approve the warrants as listed. Motion carried.

6. Australian Ballot Voting March 2, 2021 (Town Meeting Day):

A. Review Timeline to Prepare for March 2, 2021 Voting: LaDonna reviewed the Timeline of events leading up to Town Meeting voting with the Selectboard.

B. Review Draft of Postcard for Mailing to all Registered Voters: LaDonna presented a draft postcard for the Selectboard to review. It was suggested to mail one postcard per household of registered voters. The suggestions will be implemented.

C. Update on School's Annual Meeting: LaDonna reported the School Board will be meeting this week for budget approval and it looks like they will be voting by Australian ballot this year.

7. Discuss Resignation of Dennis Neumann, Emergency Management Co-Coordinator: Yves read a resignation letter from Dennis Neumann. The Selectboard expressed their appreciation for his service. It was decided Anne will contact Dan Backus the co-chair and discuss his ideas for a replacement. Anne brought an emergency management checklist document she thought might be helpful to have on the website. She will get the pages to LaDonna for placement on the site.

8. Discuss Equalization Study Results – Lister Chair, Danny Young: Danny reported the 2020 Equalization Study Results report Westfield's Common Level of Appraisal (CLA) is 102.32% or 1.0232 and the Coefficient of Dispersion (COD) is 5.87. He stated these numbers are in the acceptable range and do not trigger a reappraisal. Danny said many of the recent home sales are running higher than the Grand List assessments which could possibly trigger a reappraisal. Due to Covid-19 this seems to be a recent common occurrence in other towns as well. LaDonna said she spoke to Mark Higley. He is planning to address this with his colleagues to make sure the legislature is aware that this could trigger unnecessary town-wide reappraisals.

9. Review Draft of 2021 Highway Budget: Mary Lou was still working on the budget. The final draft will be sent before the next meeting for review.

A. Add to Budget for Signage and Retroreflective Rails for Reservoir Road per VLCT Guidance: LaDonna reviewed the recommendations from VLCT for signage. It was determined the current amount in the budget is adequate.

10. Draft General Fund Budget: The Selectboard reviewed the actual 2020 figures and then drafted a proposed 2021 Budget to be voted on by Australian ballot on March 2nd. Discussions during the process included:

- **Planning Commission Request for One-Time Appropriation for Zoning Bylaw Rewrite:** Planning Commission Chair, Pat Sagui, reported the Town did not receive the Municipal Planning Grant funds requested in the October 1, 2020 application. The \$8390 grant request was specifically to reorganize and review the Zoning Bylaw. This budget includes \$850 for warnings, informational meetings, and printing to adopt the Bylaw. Pat stated the scope of work does not include NVDA's committed contribution of staff time to rewrite the Hazard Mitigation section and integrate it into the updated Bylaw. Nor does it include the dozens of hours of Planning Commissioners' time to identify the changes needed to align the Bylaw with new state guidelines that Westfield has adopted (e.g. Village Center Designation), and the Town Plan.

The Planning Commission requests a one-time appropriation of \$7500 to contract a knowledgeable and skilled Bylaw writer to reorganize and update the Zoning Bylaw. The contractor would have demonstrated knowledge of Vermont municipal statute and small-town zoning issues. The contractor would be guided by the recommendations from the Planning Commission in collaboration with other town officials. Pat said per her request at an earlier Selectboard meeting, she would try for the Municipal Planning Grant first, and if the grant was not awarded, she would ask for a one-time line item in the budget. The Selectboard agreed to include the \$7500 in the 2021 budget.

- It was decided to give a 3% salary increase effective October 1, 2021 pending approval of the budget by the voters.

At 12:15 p.m. there was a motion by Anne and second by Jacques to enter into executive session to discuss personnel issues. The Selectboard exited Executive Session at 12:19 p.m.

- The Recycling Center Coordinator will receive \$17.85/hour effective October 1, 2021 pending voter approval of the budget. The recycling assistant will be paid the new minimum wage, effective January 1, 2021.
- LaDonna requested to have a written report about budget changes from the Treasurer for the Town Report. She felt it would be helpful to have a written explanation for voters since we are not having an in-person Town Meeting in 2021.

Mary Lou will make the adjustments to the budget and will provide a final draft prior to the next meeting for the Selectboards review.

11. Other Business:

A. Schedule Next Meeting Date (1/26/21) to Finalize Budget & Approve Australian Ballot:

The next meeting will be January 26, 2021 at 9 a.m. via Zoom or in person at the Town Office.


Note: Due to a scheduling conflict discovered after the meeting, the date was changed to January 25th.

12. Adjourn: Following a motion by Anne and second by Jacques all agreed to adjourn the meeting at 12:50 p.m.

Westfield Selectboard Approval: Date: 1/25/21 with 0 change(s)


Yves Daigle, Chair

Jacques Couture, Co-Chair


Anne Lazor

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