

Westfield Selectboard Agenda
July 19, 2021 @ 5:00 p.m.
Westfield Town Offices & via Zoom

Due to COVID-19 an electronic option was offered via Zoom.

Town Officials Present: Selectboard members: Jacques Couture (Vice-Chair), Yves Daigle (Zoom) and Anne Lazor; Treasurer, Mary Lou Jacobs; Town Clerk, LaDonna Dunn; and Assistant Town Clerk, Karen Blais; Lister Chair, Danny Young (for a portion of the meeting); Librarian, Mary Lee Daigle (for a portion of the meeting); and Road Commissioner, Eric Kennison (for a portion of the meeting).

1. **Call Meeting to Order:** Jacques Couture, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:08 p.m.
2. **Public Comment – 5 Minutes:** None
3. **Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda:** None
4. **Approve Minutes of the 6/21/21 Selectboard Meeting:** There was a motion by Anne and second by Yves to approve the minutes with no changes. Passed unanimously.

A. Business from the Minutes: None

5. **Librarian Report – MaryLee Daigle (tabled from June):** MaryLee reported the library has been busy with a record high attendance of 15-20 people in one day. She said the library is being used more and more for office space with people bringing their own computers. She said she has work cubbies set up throughout the library. The After-School-Program will be meeting at the library again this year. She is hoping to have a pumpkin carving event this fall as well and possibly an end of summer gathering.

A. Status of New Computer from Grant and Discuss Outside Picnic Table: Mary Lee stated she is waiting on help from Carrie Glessner Young to order the new computer(s). LaDonna will provide MaryLee with Carrie's email address. Carrie stated in email correspondence the grant survey should be completed by September 3, 2021. The goal is to get the equipment ordered and installed by this deadline to prevent requesting an extension. MaryLee stated she is using a plastic table outside and it is working well.

B. Update on Signing Up for Library/Computer Classes: MaryLee would like to sign up for training classes in the fall when she has more time. Anne asked about cataloging the library books.

6. **NEK Broadband Communications Union District (CUD) Update – Carrie Glessner Young:** LaDonna stated Westfield's CUD Representative, Carrie, asked if a member of the CUD's Executive Committee could come to an upcoming meeting and give a report. The Selectboard was in favor. The Clerk will make the arrangements. Christine Hallquist issued a press release on July 12, 2021. A copy is available at the Town Clerk's office.

7. **Discuss Meeting at Missisquoi Valley Ambulance Service & Appoint Representative:** Jacques and Anne gave an overview of the meeting they attended at Missisquoi's ambulance bay. All of the towns in Missisquoi's service area were represented at the meeting with some towns having 100% Selectboard participation. All felt this is a dedicated group of individuals running the service and all have full time jobs in addition to working on the ambulance. There are a couple of big obstacles the ambulance service is working to overcome.

1. There is an old IRS debt from years ago that started with a balance due of \$100,000. With a payment plan in place, the current leadership has gotten the debt down to around \$60,000. It will still take years to pay the debt off completely. There was discussion among the towns at the meeting about sharing the cost of the remaining IRS debt and retiring it. The feeling was this would give the ambulance service more monthly operating funds. Jen Piette will check with the IRS to get a payoff amount if the debt were to be paid off in one lump sum amount.

2. Due to the IRS lien, Missisquoi Valley Ambulance Service lost their nonprofit 501(c)3 status.
3. Within a year, a new ambulance will need to be purchased with a cost of approximately \$310,000. Without nonprofit status, most grants aren't available for the purchase of a new ambulance.

All of the towns felt it is worth trying to keep this organization functioning. Jacques reminded the group that Roger Gosselin volunteered to be Westfields representative. There was a motion by Anne and second by Yves to appoint Roger Gosselin to be Westfields representative to the newly forming board. Motion passed unanimously. The next meeting will be August 30th at the ambulance bay. The Clerk will call and extend the invitation for Roger to be Westfields representative.

There was discussion among the Selectboard about using a portion of the ARPA funds to help retire Westfield's portion of the IRS debt, if the towns decided to move in this direction. The Clerk will check with VLCT to see if this would be an acceptable use of the ARPA funds.

8. Roads – Eric Kennison, Road Commissioner:

A. Trim Trees on Common: Eric said people have been complaining they can't see around the trees on the Common when pulling out on to Route 100. Jacques suggested trimming after the leaves are gone. Yves and Anne agreed.

B. Request from Dianne Laplante to add 'Slow - Blind Spot Ahead' Signs to 'Taft Brook Road Closed' Signs: LaDonna explained Dianne called requesting signs be placed below the current Taft Brook Road Closed signs alerting drivers there is a blind spot ahead. The Selectboard did not feel this would get drivers attention or slow them down. The Selectboard agreed not to add additional signage to the current sign but rather ask the Sheriff's Department to patrol Buck Hill and issue tickets to speeders and also place the speed radar cart on Buck Hill for a day or two.

C. Solar Radar Sign: Jacques will call the technician again and see if there are further suggestions to get the sign on the north end of town working again.

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

A. Approve Warrants for Expenditures Dated: 6/24/21 \$42,703.61 (bills) & \$5,045.27 (payroll); 7/7 \$5,686.38 (bills) & \$1,320.45 (payroll); and 7/14 \$6,477.65 (bills): There was a motion by Yves and second by Anne to approve the warrants as listed. Motion passed unanimously.

B. Review Budget Status Report, Checking Account Balance & Investment Accounts (emailed in advance): The Selectboard had no questions about the budget status report that was emailed in advance of the meeting. The current general fund checking account balance as of 6/30/21 at Community National Bank is \$158,684.40 plus \$5,211.45 (Restoration Fund), \$7,521.13 (Grader Fund), \$5,014.08 (Reappraisal Fund), \$10,028.17 (Unanticipated Expense Fund), and \$31,817.50 (Good Neighbor Fund). In addition, the North Country Federal Credit Union accounts reflect balances of \$252.73 (debit card checking account), and \$4,466.52 (Reappraisal CD maturing on 4/15/26). The Edward Jones account balance as of 6/30/21 is \$166,557.08 reflecting a slight decrease from last month's balance of \$166,621.77.

C. Review Trash Revenue vs. Trash Expense: According to an initial review, the trash revenue is up \$1,400 over the trash expense paid to Dave's Rubbish. Mary Lou will continue to monitor to make sure we are charging enough for trash disposal.

D. Review/Sign Letter to Jason Belisle: The Selectboard reviewed the letter drafted by Mary Lou. The letter offers two payment plans (6 payments of \$1,120 or 12 payments of \$560) to repay the accidental overbilling totaling \$6,720. Both payment options are interest free. The letter asks Jason to select a repayment option, sign the agreement and return it with the first payment. There was a motion by Anne and second by Yves to sign and send the letter to Jason. Passed unanimously.

E. Set Municipal Tax Rate: Mary Lou presented the worksheet calculations used to set the tax rate. Lister Chair Danny Young confirmed the calculations using NEMRC as well as the total municipal grand list value used from the July 19, 2021, Form 411. There was a motion by Anne and second by Yves to set the municipal tax rate at .6665/per \$100 assessed value for the 2021/22 tax year. Motion passed unanimously. Tax bills will be in the mail within a week.

Using the education tax rates provided by the state on July 1, 2021, the combined municipal, veterans' exemption, and education tax rates will be:

- Homestead: municipal tax rate .6665 + veterans' exemption .0034 + homestead education tax rate 1.3708 = \$2.0407/ per \$100 assessed value
- Non-Homestead: municipal tax rate .6665 + veterans' exemption .0034 + non-homestead education tax rate 1.5754 = \$2.2453/per \$100 assessed value

F. Review Education Tax Rates – Homestead \$1.3708; Non-Homestead \$1.5754: The state sent a notification dated July 1, 2021, with these education tax rates. These tax rates will be used when calculating the 2021/22 tax bills.

G. Discuss Charging Late Filing Penalty on Property Tax Bills: LaDonna said the Selectboard has the option to charge a late filing penalty on the tax bill for taxpayers who file their homestead declarations late with the state. She pointed out that there are numerous real costs associated with re-issuing tax bills to late filers. Motion by Anne and second by Yves to continue charging a penalty to late filers of homestead declarations. All agreed.

H. Review Estimate Payment-In-Lieu-Of-Taxes (PILOT) on State-Owned Buildings \$5,316: The Selectboard reviewed the estimate issued by the state for state-owned buildings. The full PILOT was \$6,141. The estimated payment of \$5,316 will be issued on or about October 30, 2021.

10. Discuss American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021 Funding and Acceptable Uses: LaDonna said she received some preliminary quotes to begin the digitization process of the land records in the vault. She said it looks like around \$20,000-\$25,000. She asked the Selectboard if they were still agreeable for her to spend the time to continue getting quotes and more information about the process. They agreed for her to continue.

11. Sheriff's Report for May: The Sheriff's Report reflected many warnings issued and 18 patrol hours for May.

12. Discuss/Sign North Hill Cemetery Repair Contract: There are 10 headstones in the old section of the North Hill Cemetery which need straightening/repairs. There was a motion by Yves and second by Anne to sign the contract with Heritage Memorials, Inc. in the amount of \$1,000. \$500 to be paid from the general fund and \$500 from the North Hill Cemetery investment fund. Motion passed unanimously.

13. Recycling Update: Yves reported a woman wants to take 300 tires from the Recycling Center because she is using them to build a house. This would be a substantial savings to the town because there would not be the normal costs associated with disposing of them at the NEKWMD. He also said the waste management district will no longer be accepting plastic bags, film, and bale wrap. The primary reason is lack of markets for the material. Signs have been placed at recycling notifying people of this change.

A. Status of Cement Work for Rolloff: Yves said after meeting with Richard McAllister they discovered reworking of the quote would be needed. Eric will call and meet with Richard and report back to the Selectboard.

14. Other Business: None

15. Adjourn: Following a motion by Jacques and second by Anne, the meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Westfield Selectboard Approval: Date: 8/16/21 with 1 change(s)

Yves Daigle, Chair

Jacques Couture

Jacques Couture, Co-Chair

Anne Lazor

Anne Lazor

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