

Westfield Selectboard Minutes
November 21, 2022 @ 5:00 p.m. In-Person Meeting at the Westfield Town Office,
38 School St. with Zoom Option

Town Officials Present: Jacques Couture, Selectboard Chair; Richard Degre, Selectboard; Anne Lazor (Partial Attendance via Zoom); LaDonna Dunn, Town Clerk; Lisa Deslandes, Treasurer; Niki Dunn, Selectboard Clerk; Danny Young, Lister Chair (Partial Attendance); Shelley Martin, Lister (Partial Attendance); Pat Sagui (By Phone), Planning Commission (Partial Attendance); Erik Kennison (By Phone), Road Commissioner (Partial Attendance)

Others In Attendance: Matthew Wilson, Barton Chronicle; Roger Gosselin (Partial Attendance)

1. Call Meeting to Order – Jacques Couture, Chair: Jacques called the meeting to order at 5pm.

2. Public Comment – 5 Minutes:

A. Missisquoi Valley Ambulance Service: Roger Gosselin spoke regarding the ongoing IRS debt that the Missisquoi Valley Ambulance Service has. The last meeting was held on November 7th and asking the towns they serve (Troy, Lowell, Westfield, and Jay) to help pay off the debt using appropriations was discussed. They estimate the debt to be somewhere over \$40,000 although it has been tough getting an exact number from the IRS. They are not sure yet if they will divide the debt into fourths and ask each town for an equal share or if the debt amount would be divided on a per capita basis. They would like the appropriations to be voted on in each town at the upcoming town meetings. By paying off this debt it will allow the ambulance service to gain 501c3 status which will allow them to apply for grants. Currently they are having a hard time keeping staff because of the condition of the building. It is not safe or comfortable for anyone to spend the night there, which does make response times longer. Jacques would like to see them use the money they have set aside for a new ambulance to pay down a large chunk of the debt before asking the towns for larger appropriations. Since it will be at least a year before they will be able to get a new ambulance, he thinks this would be a better use of these funds at this time. Jacques would like to have an exact debt amount by December 15th when the selectboard begins work on next year's budget. If this does go to a vote at town meeting it would need to be voted on by Australian Ballot. It should not be a co-mingled vote with the other four towns.

3. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda: None

4. Approve and Sign 11/1/22 Minutes: Richard motioned to approve the minutes from November 1, 2022, Jacques seconded.

5. Update on Vermont Transco – Danny Young, Lister Chair: At the beginning of the year the listers received a report from TRANSCO giving their Statement of Taxable Inventory. It

showed over 1 million dollars in taxable inventory when in previous years it had only shown around 180 thousand. Danny inquired about this, and it was determined to leave the old number of 180 thousand. Recently Deanna Robitaille from the Department of Taxes reached out to him and asked him to adjust the value to the larger number of over 1 million dollars. At the last selectboard meeting this was adjusted. In doing this it creates around \$20,000 more in education taxes collected and around \$10,000 more in municipal taxes collected. TRANSCO is not sure what this inventory was and where the inventory is now although they do believe as of April 1st it was in Westfield, so whether these ten thousand dollars belong to Westfield or not is still in question. The town does not have the authority to spend this money currently as it was not budgeted for. However, the listers were informed by the state that if Westfield does not accept the money, then no other towns will receive it either. Jacques suggested leaving the money in an account and not touching it until the money is clearly Westfields. The money has already been received. Jacques motioned to pay the education tax portion of the money and have the balance accounted for separately in escrow until the town hears that the money does indeed belong to Westfield, then the board can go out to the voters to determine how to spend it. Richard seconded.

6. Planning Commission Update – Ellen Fox, Consultant & Pat Sagui, Chair: Tabled until the meeting on November 22, 2022.

7. Consider Investment in Community Solar Project (VT Electric Coop) – Pat Sagui: Pat discussed the basics of the program with the selectboard. This is a project you can invest in, and the interest received is around 5%. There are no fees, and you can pull your money out at any time. Shelley Martin asked if there is a minimum amount to invest and Pat believed it was the cost of one solar panel. If you sign up for more panels, it is more cost effective and you can sign up for 10 years or 20 years with a better rate of return for 20 years. She offered to contact Vt Electric to see about someone coming to speak with the board regarding this project and the board agreed that would be a good idea. She will set that up for a future meeting.

8. Highway Updates – Eric Kennison, Road Commissioner:

A. Update on Painting/Metal Paneling at Town Garage – Richard Degre: The Poulin Lumber quote for materials is ~~\$549.08~~ ^{\$2,731.64}. Richard is planning to put the tin up on Friday. This will be in place of the painting that was going to be done and will help avoid wood rotting from moisture.

B. Location for 2023/24 Better Roads Grant Application due 12/14/22: Erik doesn't have the location for the work yet, will get it before the application is due.

C. Award of Town Infrastructure Grant-Upper Missisquoi and Trout Rivers (UMATR), Wild and Scenic Committee: Town was approved for a \$10,000 grant.

9. Community Center:

A. Update on Quote for Foundation/Walkway Repairs for Upcoming Budget Meeting – Richard Degre: No updates at this time, Richard will try to get a quote before the budget meeting.

B. Update on Insulation Work in Cellar: This work has been completed.

10. Recycling Update:

A. Determine Recycling Hours for Christmas Eve Day 12/24/22 and New Year's Eve Day 12/31/22: The Recycling Center will be open regular hours on these two days.

B. Recycling Worker's Schedule for December:

December 3rd – Dennis Vincent

December 10th – Roger Tetreault, Maurice Doyon

December 17th – Richard Degre

December 24th – Jacques Couture

December 31st – Jacques Couture

C. Review State Labeling Requirements for Recycling Collection Bins and Location of Replacement Labels: We have received the correct labels and photos have been sent in.

D. NEKWMD's Offer to have Styrofoam Collection Site in Westfield: Westfield has been chosen as a pilot town for this program. They are currently doing it in Lyndonville. The program will begin in Westfield on December 1st, and they will provide plastic bags to put the Styrofoam in. They do not want the Styrofoam broken up, they would rather have it in larger pieces and only certain types of Styrofoam will be accepted. There are posters outlining what is and is not accepted.

E. Determine Tire Fees for Truck Tires: The town is being charged more for removal of large pickup tires. Originally the charge was \$4.50 per tire, now the charge is about a tire and a half for pickup tires. The new pricing will be as follows:

14-15" Tires: \$5 each

16-18" Tires: \$7.50 each

19-20" Tires: \$8 each

Any Tire with a Rim: \$10 each

No big truck tires will be accepted.

These prices will go into effect immediately. LaDonna will update the pricing signs.

F. Review NEKWMD 2023 Proposed Budget and Proposed Fee Changes: Proposed budget for 2023 is \$38664.50, 4.5% increase over 2022. Increase due to adding one full time employee and health insurance. Per capita assessment increases from \$.84 to \$1.06. Surcharge rate increases from \$24.99 per ton to \$25.99 per ton. This doesn't have much effect on Westfield's budget. Some towns only Australian ballot vote is for this item, so they would like the towns to agree to have the supervisors approve the budget instead of bringing it to the towns on town meeting day.

11. Continue Discussion about Westfield Congregational Church and Site Visit Option (deeds emailed in advance): LaDonna did find an old deed for the first church. Before any decision is made the town's lawyer, Bill Davies, should go over the deed to make sure it can be gifted to the town. If the town does decide to take over the church, then a decision should be

made as to what it would be used for or if the town would sell the church. If the church is able to be gifted to the town, then it should go to a town vote on whether to accept the gift or not. There will be costs associated with upkeep each year. The selectboard agreed to have Bill Davies look over the deed first and go from there.

12. PACIF/VLCT Annual Safety Inspection Report Findings: (emailed in advance): The selectboard reviewed the report. There were some minor findings. In the Community Center some of the emergency exit lights may need the batteries changed. The old lights in the cellar need coverings and there is an extension cord going from the dishwasher through the floor and plugging into a basement outlet. In the Library there were items in the way of the emergency exit. At the town garage there was a cord outside near the fuel tank. LaDonna will call D&D Electric to have the emergency exit lights checked. The inspector informed Jacques that there are safety grants the town can apply for to receive funds for things like construction signs and ergonomic chairs.

13. Discuss Having a Holiday Gathering on the Common and Decorating the Common (Jay Tree Lighting 12/2/22): Mike Piper will be putting the Christmas lights up in town this weekend. The town Holiday Gathering will be held on December 8th at 6pm. LaDonna will work on getting a Santa and talking to the fire dept. Jacques will ask Debbie Breault about providing the food and drinks. He will also talk to Marylee about caroling and can bring some wood for the fire. Richard will figure out the lighting and will ask Mike Piper about providing the tire rim for the fire.

14. Treasurer's Report – Lisa Deslandes, Town Treasurer:

A. Approve Warrants for Expenditures Dated 10/4/22 \$17,084.93 (bills); 10/12/22 \$6,236.24 (bills) & \$3,079.77 (payroll); 10/14/22 \$3,598.59 (bills); 10/27/22 \$106,575.80 (bills) & \$15,400.87 (payroll); 10/31/22 \$916,207.17 (bills-School Tax Reimbursement) & \$196.00 (bills-Electronic Transfer) & \$78,885.77 (Appropriations): Richard motioned to approve the warrants; Jacques seconded.

B. Review General and Highway Fund Budget Reports and Balance Sheets (emailed in advance): The delinquent tax column shows people who paid after the 15th. Amount that people haven't paid yet does not show up in the report. Lisa will be talking to NEMRC.

C. Continue Discussion on Updating Employee Handbook & Town Policy: Lisa would like to have this updated before the end of the year. The board will work on this after the highway budget meeting.

D. Request from Vermont Trails & Greenways Council to Become a Council Member: Membership runs from January through December; cost is \$35 per year. Richard motioned to enroll (pay dues) for the 2023 year, Anne seconded.

E. Determine Benefit for Health Insurance – Open Enrollment ends December 15, 2022 (emailed in advance): Premium went up \$159.87 from last year, for the MVP

Platinum Plan. Richard motioned to keep the MVP Platinum plan for the next year; Jacques seconded.

F. Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) Amounts from Agency of Natural Resources and Hold Harmless: The amount the town is receiving for Hold Harmless is \$39,815, more than originally budgeted. Received PILOT payment.

15. Discussion about Ways to Spend ARPA Funds (\$148,566.23 includes Town and County Allocations): Jacques spoke to Ben Rose regarding money that may be available for covering sandpiles. Ben will see if there is any money that could be used for that. LaDonna explained how Barre City is splitting up the ARPA funds. They have set aside certain chunks of money for specific projects and then left some money for community input projects. Jacques thinks that digitizing the town records, around \$50,000, is the most important project. Richard noted that the library will need a new roof soon and needs to be repainted. The Community Center also needs to be painted and the windows upstairs need to be fixed, as well as the concrete walkway out front. The selectboard agreed that spending money on these projects would be most beneficial for the town as the money would need to be raised for these projects through taxes otherwise. Richard will work on getting some quotes from Poulin and from some roof contractors. LaDonna would like the selectboards report for the town meeting to highlight why these projects were chosen if this is the direction the board goes in, so that townspeople can hear exactly what the money will be spent on and why.

16. Format for Town Meeting Day 3/7/23: The temporary Covid laws regarding town meetings have expired, so for 2023 anything not voted on by Australian ballot prior to the temporary laws will need to go back to a floor vote for the 2023 meeting. This means the meeting will need to be held in person. The format will be the same as in the past, with snacks provided. Anne inquired as to how the Library Board of Trustees would be decided on. She has spoken to a few people who are interested and LaDonna thought there were at least 5 people who indicated interest through the survey. Shelley Martin let Anne know that she worked as a librarian in the past and is interested in being on the board. Anne also had people interested in the Librarian position, but nobody with the correct training, although they can receive the training through the Vermont Department of Libraries. Richard would like approval for spending funds to still go through the selectboard. Anne will work on getting the list of people interested together. The board could be appointed and then the re-elections could be staggered, one every year for five years.

17. September and October Sheriff's Report:

September: 0 Tickets, 1 Warning, 1 Arrest. Billed Hours: 16.

October: 3 Tickets, 7 Warnings, Fines Totaling \$486, 4 Arrests. Billed Hours: 30.

18. Executive Session (if necessary): Not needed.

19. Other Business:

A. Appropriation Thank You Letters from Rural Fire Protection Program, Vermont Center for Independent Living, and Vermont Family Network: Thank you letters were received.

B. Reminder: Budget Meetings 12/5/22 at 5 p.m. (Highway Fund) and 12/15/22 at 8 a.m. (General Fund): Informational.

20. Adjourn: Richard motioned to adjourn at 7:06 pm, Jacques seconded.

Westfield Selectboard Approval Date: 12/5/2022 with 1 change(s)

WESTFIELD SELECTBOARD:

X *Jacques Couture*

Jacques Couture
Chair

X

Anne Lazor
Vice Chair

X *Richard Degre*

Richard Degre

Minutes Submitted by: Niki Dunn, Selectboard Clerk