Westfield Selectboard Minutes--March 21, 2022
In-person at the Town Office with Zoom Option

Town Officials Present: (Selectboard Members) Jacques Couture, Chair; Richard Degre, Via Zoom; Anne Lazor, Vice-Chair; Lisa Deslandes, Treasurer; LaDonna Dunn, Town Clerk; Eric Kennison, Road Commissioner (Portion of Meeting); Pat Sagui, Planning Commission Chair (Portion of Meeting)

Others Present: Alison Low, NVDA (Portion of Meeting); Dan Pellerin, Edward Jones (Portion of Meeting); Sheriff Jennifer Harlow (Portion of Meeting); Niki Dunn

1. **Call Meeting To Order -** Jacques Couture called the meeting to order at 5:05 PM.

2. **Public Comments –** None

3. **Additions to the Agenda –** LaDonna added a property concern to agenda, under other business

4. **Minutes –** Minutes were not available for approval yet

5. **Alison Low NVDA – Public Hazard Mitigation Plan-** Alison discussed the local hazard mitigation plan which needs to be approved by FEMA. She will be sending out PowerPoint slides after the meeting for board members to look through. With an approved plan we would be eligible to receive FEMA grants for hazard mitigation projects. An approved plan is also required to receive maximum assistance from the state for disaster relief funds. Currently we would receive 75% of the money needed for repairs, this would give an additional 50% of the remaining 25%. FEMA does not fund mitigation for manmade events. Two of these events are currently on our plan. We should consider adding two new hazards – invasives and infectious diseases. Climate change is also a hazard we should consider, rising temperatures, annual minimum average temperature is higher, recent droughts are all issues related to climate change in our area. A hazard mitigation survey was done at the beginning of 2020, there were 26 respondents, most were affected by natural hazards, 14 flooding, 13 wind, 16 ice/ snow, 9 extreme cold, minor amount cited drought, hail, and earthquakes. Some issues caused by these events are impassible roads and extended periods of power loss. We need to decide which hazards to include and how they will be ranked in order of importance, then we will have a public meeting for input, make the plan available to neighboring communities and state departments' and then it gets sent to Vermont Emergency Management for review. Typically plans get sent back for revisions. Once approved this will not need to be done for another 5 years. Hazard Mitigation Team members currently are, Anne Lazor, Pat Sagui and one other person. Anne – how many people can be on the team? Alison – As many as you would like. People can be involved as you need them, do not need to be on the team for the whole process.

6. **Dan Pellerin, Edward Jones –** Discussed Investment Accounts. Currently all investments are combined, Dan stated that he could separate these into different accounts, and it wouldn't cost any money to do so. Jacques – Would like to keep the cemetery accounts together and have 1 account for the grader and 1 account for the library. Dan - Investments have made $68,000 since January 2009. CD rates were not good when the last CDs matured, rates are better now. Jacques – typically cover any cemetery expenses with the general fund. Money is already

allocated in the budget for shed repairs. We don't need quick access to cemetery funds. Dan - Mutual funds are better over time than CDs, but will fluctuate, there is a 3-5% onetime charge up front and some risk. Could purchase dividend producing stocks also. You would want to choose 5-7 different stocks with at least $5,000 in each of them. They would yield 3-6% based on initial investment. Mutual funds average about 1-2% yield. Anne – is purchasing stocks riskier? Dan - Yes, you don't have to put all of the money in stocks, can put some in CDs. Utility stocks won't drop as much as retail stocks. Jacques – Could Dan send us list of stocks to look at and we can get back in touch at another meeting. Dan - Can get paperwork for next meeting for separating the accounts and will send a list of stocks. Lisa – Where will the cash on hand go? Dan - Could go into stocks or put part of it in CDs. How much you put where will depend on how soon you need to access the money. Richard - Grader fund money needs to be more accessible. Dan - CDs more available access to money but have a lower yield. Stocks 2.5% fee to put money in and again to get money out, not good for 6-month timeframe. Fee based accounts have a .1% fee per month, ability to sell at any time. Will pay more fees long term, but no penalty to pull money out. Pat – She would like the board to revisit investing in VT Electric Coop Community Solar Program, it is a guaranteed return on investment.

7. **Highway Update – Eric Kennison**
   A. Request from Thomasz Adach for underground easement on School Street. Eric – He talked to him and he is not planning on doing it until the second week of May. Something needs to be written up to give right of way and state that it needs to be done correctly and if not, there will be a charge to have it fixed. Anne motioned to approve a written plan that Eric and LaDonna will write up to allow the easement and outlining what needs to be done and what will happen if it is not done correctly. Richard seconded.
   B. Sign Municipal Roads General Permit Annual Report For 2022 – Jacques signed.
   C. Input on VASA agreement – None
   D. Eric will be at the annual District 9 Agency of Transportation meeting on 4/6
   E. Eric – Roads becoming muddy, impassable due to large trucks driving over them during muddy season. Town is spending money on gravel to fix these spots daily. If we post roads, we can control who goes on them and they would need a permit to use them. We could charge what we want for the permit. Roads would need to be legally posted with District 9. Jacques – We are going to need a larger solution to this problem for the whole state, maybe something to talk to legislators about.

8. **Internet Kennison Road** – Lisa – Comcast quoted about $90,000 for everyone on Kennison Road to receive internet. Comcast is only giving $1,500 towards services, not $7,500 like they used to. Comcast mentioned talking to Xfinity who handles personal internet services, Comcast handles business internet services. CUD Broadband uses existing power poles, they add their own cable to the poles. They are hoping for this area to be ready by the end of 2023. CUD internet would have more capacity than Comcast. CUD brings it to every house but prioritizes larger populated areas first before installing in smaller population areas. Richard – Can comcast use the CUD money? Jacques – From the conversation he had with them it doesn't sound like it.

9. **Organizational Tasks**
   A. Chairperson - Richard motioned to elect Jacques, Anne seconded.

B. Vice Chairperson– Richard motioned to elect Anne, Jacques seconded.
C. Selectboard Clerk – Richard motioned to appoint Niki Dunn, Anne seconded.
D. Regular Meeting Dates and Times – Meetings will continue to be held on the 3rd Monday of the month at 5pm.
E. Adopt Selectboard Rules and Procedures – This was tabled until the next meeting so they could be looked over first
F. Three Posting Locations – Town Clerks Office, Westfield General Store, Recycling Center
G. Newspaper – Newport Daily Express
H. Appointment of Tree Warden – Currently Selectboard does this, it now needs to be a specific person designated to this position by state law. Anne motioned to nominate Jacques, Richard seconded. Jacques – The common has two trees that need to be trimmed for road safety. Richard – There are also two small trees on the common that need to be moved as they are in the way of snow plowing. Lisa – Tree fell at North Hill Cemetery and is on the fence. Jacques will try to get up there to fix it in the next couple days. LaDonna – In the future maybe we could give this position to whoever gets lawn contract.
I. Appointment of Pound Keeper – This is a person willing to keep dogs when they get picked up. Normand Piette agreed to do this in the past, will continue with him holding this position.
J. Appoint NEKWMD Supervisor and Alternate – Jacques – All meetings are done through Zoom and last about an hour. Richard motioned to make Jacques the Supervisor, Anne seconded. Richard agreed to be the alternate.

10. Librarian Report -

A. Minimum Standards On Libraries – Anne – North Troy used ARPA Funds to add more programming. You don't need to meet minimum standards to have a library but there are benefits to meeting them. Online books, movies, etc. available through libraries can save townspeople money. Meeting standards helps get access to these types of things. Jacques - Minimum Standards suggests the certification of the librarian through State of Vermont, it is free and can be done online. Anne –We could use ARPA funds to catalog books, ours are currently not cataloged. We could also send out a survey or resurrect the library committee to see how much use it might get. The Community Center would be better to be used for activities than the library. Online book access may not cost us any extra, Anne can look into it. Jacques – With so many ways to access information these days, would people use the library? Lisa – Library should be open more on weekends. Could look into inviting someone from State Department of Libraries to come to a board meeting to give some information. Anne - Put survey out during election time to see if there's town interest in using/ upgrading library. Could set up "friends of the library" group to help guide library use/ activities. Jacques - Should library events be book focused? If not, should they move these events to the community center? Lisa – There should be a reading element to all library activities. Richard – Easter event coming up should include something to do with books. Anne – There is currently no system to keep track of books or how often they are being checked out. Jacques – Lets invite someone to next meeting to discuss where to start on moving forward with library. Anne will call Marylee to make sure she can attend.

11. **Treasurers Report -**
    A. Approve February Warrants for Expenditures Dated 2/2/22 $23,959.61 (Bills), $5,026.75 (Payroll), 2/16/22 $19,373.01 (Bills), $6,875.96 (Payroll), $14,938.68 (Bills). Richard motioned to approve the warrants; Anne seconded.
    B. Review Budget Reports and Balance Sheet – Lisa – Debit card should be $500, shows as $766. Miscellaneous revenue of $1,376 is a correction on a W2 that was not voided from last year. LaDonna – Is overpayment of taxes next year's taxes that are pre-paid? Lisa – Yes, that's people whose taxes are paid monthly. Anne – Where are we at with ARPA Funds? Lisa – We have a portion of it and have 5 years to use it. Lisa – Donations being given at recycling? She is adding it to the can money for now. Richard – If you put a sign up stating that money donated goes to the playground you will probably get more donations. Lisa – Tennis court will need to be resurfaced soon. Has never been resurfaced. Jacques – Should bottle money continue to be put towards playground/ tennis court? Richard – We could keep track for a year to see how much is raised. Lisa – Attendants at recycling need to specify bottle money/ tire money, etc. Jacques – Can keep track of that on sheet each weekend to know how many tires are being left.
    C. Bid Process for Professional auditor – Hiring outside auditor passed at town meeting. Richard – Could check with Cheryl Raboin. Lisa – Has to be a professional accountant, does not need to be a CPA, so Cheryl would fit that. Jacques – Level of audit should be similar type of audit that elected officials were doing. NEMRC sent a letter regarding holding trainings for town auditing. A company in St Albans does town audits and has been recommended also. LaDonna – If cost of the audit is over $10,000 it needs to be put out to bid. Jacques – Need to have someone lined up before end of year. LaDonna – Need to have audit done before town report. Cheryl Raboin will be checked with first to see if she is interested in taking this on.

12. **Sign Vermont ATV Sportsmans Assoc. Road Agreement** –Anne motioned to approve the form as is, will be signed at a later date, form was not currently available in the office. Richard seconded.
13. **Add North Hill Cemetery and Library Mowing to Contract with Town Office, Community Center and Common.** Tommy Bathalon is not doing it anymore, needs to be put out to bid. Jacques – Includes spring and fall cleanup? Yes. Anne - Includes cemeteries? Only North Hill cemetery, Westfield cemetery is mowed by Yvan LaPlume. Richard – When we put it out to bid should get a separate price for cemeteries so we can keep track of costs. Bids need to be in before next selectboard meeting.

14. **Process to Schedule Burials with Sexton Todd Morey** – There is an upcoming burial that is not being done through a mortuary, need to figure out how to collect fee, who gets paid? Putting Sexton on town payroll would require taxes to be taken out. If he provides his own insurance, he could get paid through a 1099 instead. Jacques - Will talk to Todd and get more information for next meeting.

15. **Recycling Update**

A. Heater Installation – Has been installed, works well and was on budget. D&D needs to finish the wiring. 100-gallon propane tank installed; Fred's will be delivering fuel for this. Would like thermostat moved near door going into other garage bay.
B. Recycling Schedule for April – Richard – 4/2, Jacques 4/9, Dennis 4/16, Anne 4/23, Richard 4/30
C. Policy For Handling Illegal Trash Disposal – Should only have one warning before repercussions. Will ask Sheriff if they can figure out who offenders are based on license plate from video surveillance. Going forward watch cameras and send letter right away when offenders are identified.
D. Reminder to Fill Sawdust Bin Before – Needs to be done before recycling and after. Anne – Can we get something less dusty? Richard has some that he will bring over.
E. Sign Westfield Transfer Station Recertification Document – Jacques signed.

16. **Sign Liquor License For Westfield General Store** – Will need to be signed later, not in office.

17. **Discuss Updating Local Emergency Plan (LEMP)** - Anne will take care of it, just needs to be updated.

18. **Ambulance Report –** Upcoming zoom meeting with Katie Buckley, VLCT at 5pm – March 28th – Not sure if Westfield's representative is available that day.

19. **Returning Delinquent Dog Fee To Property Owner -** Motion by Richard to refund money ($50) to landlord as he is not responsible for the debts of the tenants, Anne seconded. Lisa – Need to deposit money into miscellaneous fund, then write a check and mail it so there is a way to track.

20. **Sheriff's Report for January and February –** Regarding recycling center video of cars license plates for illegal dumping: Jennifer – The public cannot access plate information however the Sheriff's Department could figure out who it is and if a case is started, they would follow through on enforcing rules/delivering letter. They would need the video as evidence. LaDonna – Hardly any tickets are being issued although lots of hours have been logged. Jennifer – She had just spent a couple hours patrolling town, only one person slightly over speed limit. Hours could've been tied to warrant served recently. She will come next month with the contract.

A. January Report – 26.25 Hours patrol, 1 warning, 2 fines ($75)
B. February Report – 39.5 Hours, 0 warnings, 0 fines, 0 arrests

21. **Executive Session** – Not Needed

22. **Changes to Town Health Officer Duties –** Health officer is taking classes online to learn more about job.

23. Other Business

A. Next Mtg Date: Monday, April 18th at 5 pm
B. Annual District 9 Agency of Transportation Meeting April 6th, 8 am at the Town Office – Eric will attend.
C. Letter from Sandra Snyder – Letter was received and read by all board members.

D. Letter from NEMRC – Discussed earlier, offering help regarding understanding town audits.
E. Report Of Large Amounts of Trash on Local Property – Eric had mentioned that it is not in the right of way but is where he has to turn around, not a lot of room now. Jacques - All we can do for now is to keep an eye on it, it's on private property. LaDonna – Will reach out to person who submitted request to have this looked into.

24. **Adjourn -** Richard motioned to adjourn at 8:38 pm, Anne seconded.

Westfield Selectboard Approval Date: 4/18/22 **with** 0 **change(s)**

WESTFIELD SELECTBOARD:

Jacques Couture

Jacques Couture, Chair

Anne Lazor

Anne Lazor, Vice Chair

Richard Degre

Richard Degre

Minutes Submitted by: Niki Dunn, Selectboard Clerk