

## Westfield Selectboard Minutes

August 21, 2023 @ 5:00 p.m. In-Person Meeting at the Westfield Town Office, 38 School St.

**Town Officials Present:** Jacques Couture, Selectboard; Richard Degre, Selectboard; Dennis Vincent, Selectboard; LaDonna Dunn, Town Clerk; Lisa Deslandes, Treasurer; Eric Kennison, Road Commissioner (Partial Attendance); Mike Piper, 2<sup>nd</sup> Constable (Partial Attendance); Pat Sagui, Planning Commission Chair (Partial Attendance); Niki Dunn, Selectboard Clerk

**Others Present:** Theresa McAvinney (Partial Attendance); Denny Lyster, Westfield Congregational Church Member (Partial Attendance); Jenn Grace (Partial Attendance)

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1. **Call Meeting to Order-Jacques Couture, Chair:** Jacques Couture called the meeting to order at 4:57 pm.
2. **Public Comment – 5 Minutes:** Theresa McAvinney read a prepared letter to the members of the Selectboard regarding a statement that was recently added to the Westfield town website. The statement she was referring to was the recently adopted Inclusion Statement. She inquired as to who proposed the idea to the Selectboard. She feels that the Inclusion statement will allow people to bring activities to town that do not align with the core values of Westfield residents, such as drag queen story hours at the library. She would like the Selectboard to refute the statement and remove it from the website. Jacques noted that the Selectboard received the letter and would not be taking any action during this meeting. Theresa would like this to come in front of the town, not just the Selectboard. Jacques believes that the statement will not change anything in town and noted that Westfield has always been welcoming to everyone. The board thanked Theresa for her time.
3. **Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda:** No additions or deletions at this time.
4. **Approve 7-17-23 Minutes and Business from the Minutes:** Richard Degre motioned to approve the minutes from the July 17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Westfield Selectboard, Dennis Vincent seconded. Motion passed.
5. **Update from Library Trustee Board – Jenn Stelma, Chair of Library Trustees – 5 p.m.:** Jenn Stelma was not present for the update. Selectboard members received an emailed report from the library board detailing an online training course that Maureen would like to take. She would be paid hours for her time taking the course. Richard motioned to pay Maureen Zimmerman her hourly rate for her time taking the library training course, Dennis seconded. Motion passed.
  - A. **REDI Program Letter of Support:** This item was tabled until the next meeting.
6. **Update on Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for Village Wastewater Project – Pat Sagui:**
  - A. **Evaluation Criteria & Interviews – Tentative Window of Dates:** Pat updated the board letting them know that the request for qualifications letter is almost ready to be sent out. Then they will need to give 30 days for people to respond. The criteria for evaluating applicants is what needs to be decided upon next. The evaluation criteria needs to be consistent from applicant to applicant and the state cannot help with this part. The board will need to be able to justify the criteria they choose to evaluate the applicants with. Jacques wondered if there is a scoring matrix that the town could use that is already created. Pat let him know that she would be talking with Alison Low, from NVDA, on Wednesday to get an idea of what to use. Jacques felt depending on how many applicants respond, the board may need to schedule a separate meeting to evaluate the applicants rather than trying to do it during the regular monthly Selectboard meeting. The evaluation criteria could be decided upon at a regular Selectboard meeting. Richard wondered when they will need to notify townspeople about the project. Pat let him know that there should be something posted on the town website notifying residents that the town is doing this, and it should include the request for qualifications. It should also be posted at other town sites like the community center and recycling. There is no requirement to have a meeting with the townspeople at this point in the process. Once an applicant has

been chosen then a meeting can be scheduled so that the chosen applicant can help explain the rest of the process and the options and costs to the townspeople. LaDonna felt that getting the mailing list for the customers on town water and sending them a letter would be a good idea.

**7. Discuss Applying for a Municipal Planning Grant (Application Deadline 11-1-23) to Access Options for Church – Pat Sagui:** Denny Lyster and Pat Sagui discussed the grant with the board. Pat and Denny met to discuss the possibility of applying for a municipal planning grant and Pat has a meeting scheduled to discuss this with Alison from NVDA. The grant can only go to a municipality, but it does not need to go to a municipal project. Richard inquired as to the town's cost for the grant. Pat let him know that the grant may be around \$20-25,000 and LaDonna explained that the split is 90-10, so the town would be responsible for paying 10% of the grant price. Denny let the board know that the church would be willing to help with that cost and could split it with the town. Jacques worked out the rough estimate of approximately \$1,000 coming from the town and \$1,000 coming from the church if the grant ends up being \$20,000. The grant would be to hire a consultant to look at all the possible uses for the building and any associated costs or issues that may need to be solved before the building could be used for various things. Richard feels that it will be difficult to do anything there because of the lack of parking. The right of way with the neighboring lot needs to be investigated. The septic system may also be an issue but could be solved if the town goes ahead with getting on a village septic system. Denny let the board know that the church has enough money to continue paying the expenses for a couple more years if it takes that long to come to a good solution. Richard motioned to proceed with applying for the municipal planning grant to find access options for the church, Dennis seconded. Motion passed. Pat will send the board an email before the end of the week to give the board a better sense of the timeline after she has spoken with Alison.

**8. Zoning Bylaw Update – Pat Sagui:** Pat let the board know that a lot of things had to be put on hold with the flooding that recently happened. NVDA has had the updated bylaws since April but has not approved them yet and the flooding has now added even more work to their plate. The state has still not approved the flooding updates to the bylaws. Pat is wondering if the town can go ahead with the new bylaws and then amend them down the road if the state does not approve the flooding changes or should the flooding part of the bylaws be changed back to what it was in the previous version of the bylaws and then be amended to the new updates once the state approves them. She will be asking Alison Low about this on Wednesday.

**9. Highway Update – Eric Kennison, Road Commissioner:**

- A. Bills for Old Chloride Tank:** Eric has left five messages and has not heard back regarding this bill. LaDonna noted that the bill is now delinquent, and the amount of the bill is \$3,180 Eric explained that the tank price is added in over the years in the contract price of the chloride and should have been paid off so the town should own the tank at this point. Jacques felt that the town could send the bill back and let them know that we don't use the tank anymore. Eric will try calling a couple more times.
- B. Status of Road Signs Installation:** Eric put some of the signs up, but not all of them yet. North Hill still needs to be done. The board let him know that blind drive signs will now need to be put up on North Hill for Jennifer Graces driveway.
- C. Status of Repairs to Roads from July Storms & Need Assistance Setting Up Request for Public Assistance/FEMA:** Eric let the board know that the repairs are all done. LaDonna let Eric know that the second set of FEMA forms are financial spreadsheets, and she needs to sit down with him to fill those out. LaDonna also let the board know that they are getting more FEMA money from the Halloween storm in 2019 due to a federal law change in the amount of money towns now receive from FEMA.
- D. Discuss Steps Needed to Finalize MRGP/Road Erosion Inventory (Bathalon Farm Road):** This road needs to be accessed for road inventory and it currently is roped off. Jacques questioned whether a class 4 road is allowed to be roped off. Richard wondered if the town could turn it into a trail and then there would be no need for maintenance nor would it be part of the road inventory. Jacques noted that there are other people who own land at the end of the road, and they like to be able to drive down to their land. The board

agreed to have someone open the road up for the person doing the inventory and then the road can be roped off again once he is done.

**E. Status of Grants in Aid Pre-Construction Scoping Summary:** Eric talked to Jason and Ashley or Kristine are supposed to be calling him. LaDonna reminded him that they are close to the deadline. The work needs to be done by September 30, 2023, and the pre-scoping summary needs to be approved before the work starts. Dennis inquired as to what this grant is for. Eric explained that this is for erosion control, and they are supposed to fix the worst sections first. These grants are to help towns get into 100% compliance by the state deadline year.

**F. Request for Hidden/Blind Driveway Sign at 390 North Hill Road:** Jenn Grace requested to have blind or hidden drive signs put up on both sides of her driveway on North Hill. Jacques felt this is a good suggestion, and that this area should have a sign. Jenn believes the ATV speed sensitive signs that were put up have been a big help. Richard noted that those will need to be picked up before winter plowing starts. Dennis motioned to approve the purchase and installation of blind driveway signs at 390 North Hill Road, Richard seconded. Motion passed. Jacques will order the signs.

**G. Paving:** Lisa had the Selectboard and Eric sign the paving bill from Grays Paving.

#### 10. Treasurer's Report – Lisa Deslandes:

**A. Approve Warrants for 7/6/23 \$10,739.12 (bills), \$5,114.93 (payroll); 7/13/23 \$3,186.26 (bills); 7/17/23 \$8,145.50 (bills), \$5,972.80 (payroll); and 7/26/23 \$4,746.96 (bills):** Richard motioned to approve the warrants, Dennis seconded. Motion passed.

**B. Review Budget Reports, Balance Sheet & Investment Accounts (emailed in advance):** Jacques thought that the line item for VMERS was a little high for this point in the year. Lisa figured that it was due to not budgeting for the higher payroll expenses but that it should be even by the end of the year.

**C. Sign New Signature Card for North Country Federal Credit Union:** Lisa had past Selectboard members, Anne Lazors, name removed from the account and wondered if the board wanted to keep it at the current three signers, Lisa, LaDonna and Jacques or if they wanted to add a fourth signer to the account. The board agreed to keep it at three.

**D. Discuss Transferring Debit Card Account to Community National Bank and Increasing Limit to \$1,000:** Lisa would like to transfer the debit card account to Community National Bank. She explained that it is more of a hassle to deal with this type of account through North Country Federal Credit Union. She also would like to have the limit increased from \$500 to \$1,000 as there are times when they need to make a purchase that is larger than \$500. Richard motioned to close the debit card account at North Country Federal Credit Union and open an account at Community National Bank, as well as increasing the limit on the debit card account from \$500 to \$1,000, Dennis seconded. Motion passed.

**E. Consider Oil Pre-Buy for Upcoming Heating Season:** Lisa let the board know the pre-buy last year was \$3.57 per gallon. She also noted the town has a credit of \$1,394. Last year the pre-buy was for 3,700 gallons. Jacques felt it would be a good idea to figure in 3,700 gallons minus the credit amount, which would be a pre-buy of 3,500 gallons for this year. Dennis motioned to prebuy 3,500 gallons through Oil Supply at \$3 per gallon, Richard seconded. Motion passed.

**F.** Lisa noted that the bill from McAllister Concrete was more than the estimate by \$2,000. Richard explained that the wrong bill was originally sent, and the actual amount should be \$3,500, which is \$1,000 over the original. The Selectboard reviewed the new bill for \$3,500 and were okay with the billed amount.

G. The auditor will be coming next month to speak with the Selectboard at the regular Selectboard meeting to explain how she goes about doing the audit. LaDonna and Lisa felt like the audit was very boiler plate this year and not as specific as the audits the town used to receive. Lisa will be sending the board the packet from the auditor to review prior to next month's meeting.

**11. Sheriff's Reports for July:** 1 ticket issued; 2 warnings issued; fine total \$162; 0 arrests.

**12. Community Center -- Discuss Plumbing/Heating Changes, Plumbing Bills & Request for New Bathroom Flooring:** Chris Hammond looked at the plumbing and heating in the Community Center. He talked about using a hot water on demand system for the dishwasher in the kitchen and then the furnace wouldn't need to be on in the summer. Dennis mentioned having small 1.5-gallon water heaters for the bathrooms. LaDonna wondered if this would be coming from ARPA money. Lisa noted that so far ARPA funds have been used for the library roof and the community center concrete work. Jacques felt some of the work may be covered under the energy efficiency audit grant money. Jacques felt that putting in the on demand hot water for the dishwasher now and then the mixing valve would be the most important, then if the energy grant comes through the bathroom water heaters could be installed. Richard would like to have Chris give an estimate, so the board knows how much they are looking at spending for the two bathroom heaters. Jacques noted that he also talked with Chris about having a separate heating zone for the upstairs. There is a locked room upstairs and LaDonna will check to see if there is a heater in there. LaDonna noted that the bathroom floor needs new linoleum, it is worn near the sink, and it is also squishy near the toilet. Richard will talk to Roger to have him check out the squishy floor issue, it may be that the toilet gasket has begun leaking. Jacques noticed a lot of school desks in the basement of the community center and wondered what could be done with them. The library might want them for the kids.

**13. Recycling Update & Attendants Schedule for September:**

**2<sup>nd</sup> – Richard Degre**

**9<sup>th</sup> – Maurice Doyon, Roger Tetreault**

**16<sup>th</sup> – Dennis Vincent**

**23<sup>rd</sup> – Jacques Couture**

**30<sup>th</sup> – Dennis Vincent**

Jacques thinks that the town may be getting charged for the number of totes they have, not just for them to be emptied. If they are being charged for each of the totes, then he doesn't think they need 5 of them. LaDonna will find out if they are charging for each tote.

**14. Discuss Possible Uses of \$4,000 Mini Grant -- Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP):** LaDonna feels that this grant is not a good fit for the town. The grant money is only for very specific things and none of it is anything the town needs to do. The board agreed not to pursue this grant.

**15. Review Draft of Hazard Mitigation Plan (emailed in advance):** The board reviewed the draft ahead of the meeting. No action was needed, and no changes were made. NVDA hired a consultant to get this done faster, as it's been 5 years since this was first approved to be done.

**16. Update on Delinquent Dogs & Status of Purchasing Kennel– LaDonna Dunn:** Mike Piper updated the board on the status of the delinquent dogs. One owner is taking his dogs to the vet this week and there is one other person they are still waiting to hear from. They are new residents and have been sent a letter. LaDonna did not go ahead with ordering the kennel because there was no place to put it. Richard felt it was a good idea to put it on hold for now. Mike asked Normande Piette if he would be interested in housing lost dogs again and he was not. If the town does not keep them then they would have to pay to have them put into a kennel while waiting to see if owners can be located. Mike feels like the late charges and charge for having a Constable visit for a delinquent dog should be raised as people aren't willing to get their dogs registered at the current rates. He has had to go out to a person four times this year. He stated it has never been this bad. Richard noted that if you don't pay your town taxes on the day they are due it's an automatic 8% charge, so the dog registration should increase after April 1<sup>st</sup>. Right now, it is \$25 every time a Constable has to go

see a person regarding their delinquent dog status. Jacques wondered how to go about increasing the fee. LaDonna believes it's a policy that needs to be re-written. She also noted that there is a state statute about when you can start charging people late fees and she will look at the statute to see if that fee can be changed. Currently it's a very small charge for the late fee. LaDonna also noted that she has been unable to get anyone to host a rabies clinic in town since Covid and that contributes to the problem. LaDonna will look into the state statute and let the board know at the next meeting what can be changed.

**17. Lions Club Offer of Picnic Tables for Playground and Library:** LaDonna let the board know that Connie LaPlume approached her regarding the picnic tables the Lions Club has and wondered if they should put some out at the playground and the library as they are just in storage and not being used. Richard questioned who would be picking them up in the fall. LaDonna noted that there has been one picnic table at the playground for years and it does not get picked up in the winter. The board decided to wait to decide on having more picnic tables at the playground until spring, however if Maureen would like some at the library, then Richard said he would be willing to bring them to her.

**18. Discuss Possible Candidates for 1<sup>st</sup> Constable Position:** LaDonna explained that the town needs to have a 1<sup>st</sup> Constable and currently Mike Piper does not want the position. The 1<sup>st</sup> Constable needs to be someone who's around during the day as that is when most lost dogs need to be picked up. The board did not have any ideas on who would be willing to fill this role, but they will ask around at recycling.

**19. Speeding Complaint on North Hill Road Near Turn at Reservoir Road:** Dennis was asked by a towns person about the continued speeding on North Hill Road and he told them that the Sheriff is focusing their attention on North Hill for the next few months. Lisa noted that when the speed cart was on North Hill at the cemetery, she felt that helped. The complaint is about speeding near the turn to Reservoir Road.

**20. Possibility of Heat Pump for Town Office:** Dennis requested this mostly for air conditioning in the summer as it can get very hot in the office. Jacques agreed that it's a good idea. Dennis also noted that the building could be heated solely off the heat pump until around November. Richard would like to ask Chris Hammond for an estimate for the budget.

**21. Executive Session (if necessary):** Richard motioned to enter executive session at 8:07pm for a personnel reason, Dennis seconded. Motion carried. Motion by Richard to exit executive session at 8:20pm, Dennis seconded. Motion carried. The board stated the Selectboard agreed to a pay increase for Niki Dunn, the Selectboard Clerk.

**22. Other Business:**

**A. Next Meeting Date September 18th:** Next meeting is at 5pm.

**B. Wild and Scenic Committee Member:** Dennis motioned to appoint Jen Grace to the Wild and Scenic Committee, Richard seconded. Motion passed.

**C.** LaDonna informed the board that the Lions Club Texas Hold'em tournament made \$595 for the library.

**D.** Jacques pointed out that the bill received from Todd Daigle had two hours of research billed from back in February when he initially purchased the part that was never put in. He felt it should've been billed back then and not added on now. However, Jacques felt like the board should pay the bill and move forward. The rest of the board agreed.

**E.** There are some tree branches down across from the cemetery on North Hill Road and some people have complained about how it looks. Someone will get it cleaned up soon.

**F.** Richard noticed that Yvan LaPlume has been paid the same set salary for taking care of the cemetery on Cemetery Road for years. He feels Yvans salary should be raised in the next budget. Lisa noted that he does submit bills for cleanup, and she would like more clarification on how his time mowing is broken down to

make it easier to pay him. LaDonna thought it would be a good idea to have him fill out estimate form in the mowing contract.

**23. Adjourn:** Motion by Dennis and seconded by Richard to adjourn the meeting at 8:21pm. Passed unanimously.

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Westfield Selectboard Approval Date: 9/18/23 with Ø change(s)

**WESTFIELD SELECTBOARD:**

X Jacques Couture  
Jacques Couture  
Selectboard Chair

X Richard Degre  
Richard Degre  
Selectboard

X Dennis Vincent  
Dennis Vincent  
Selectboard