

Westfield Selectboard Minutes

**October 16, 2023 @ 4:00 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; Karen Blais, Assistant Town Clerk (Partial Attendance); Lisa Deslandes, Treasurer; Pat Sagui, Planning Commission Chair (Partial Attendance); Niki Dunn, Selectboard Clerk, Mike Piper, 2nd Constable (Partial Attendance)

Others Present: Pat Sanders, Jay Focus Group (Partial Attendance); Darlene Kelly, NEMRC (Partial Attendance); Scott Dean (Partial Attendance)

1. Call Meeting to Order-Jacques Couture, Chair: Jacques Couture called the meeting to order at 4:01 PM.

2. Public Comment – 5 Minutes: Pat Sanders from the Jay Focus Group came to inform the selectboard that they will be holding the home decorating contest again this year and it will now include Lowell. There are three categories that people can enter, and they will be able to send in photos with the voting being held online. Pat came to ask for the selectboards' support by allowing informational flyers to be left there and to hang the new plaque they are making if the town wins it. The plaque will be awarded to the town with the highest percentage of participation based on population.

3. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda: Dennis Vincent added 12A, windows in recycling center garage door.

4. Approve 9-18-23 Minutes and Business from the Minutes: Dennis motioned to approve the minutes from the September 18th, 2023, meeting of the Westfield Selectboard, Richard Degre seconded. Motion passed.

5. Library Update:

A. Discuss Status of Work to Fix Outside Pipe Before Winter: The board discussed the current state of the pipe. Last winter hay bales were stacked up and that seemed to help. Dennis thought that keeping the door open and having a fan blowing on it would also help, and that snow could be packed up against the exterior wall instead of hay if needed. He also mentioned removing about a foot wide area of the insulation from around it. Jacques noted that there is an outside water spicket that does not need to be there and could have a plug put in. Richard will work on getting that done.

B. Mold in Basement: Jacques noted that it does not smell although a lot of water has been coming out of the dehumidifier. There is a board that may need to be pulled and then the sheetrock will need to be replaced. Dennis also noticed some mold right in the doorway. Dennis has the dehumidifiers set at 38 right now and it seems to be helping. Jacques will ask Roger to get the sheetrock replaced.

C. Flag Raising/Lowering: LaDonna had spoken with the librarian, Maureen, about lowering the flag when the state deems it necessary for it to be at half-mast. In the past the librarian has always done it; however, Maureen has a longer drive and is not able to get it done at the required times. The selectboard members all let LaDonna know that she can text any of them when it needs to be at half-mast, and they will come do it. The flagpole does have a light on it, so it does not need to be taken down and put back up each day.

D. Computer for Book Inventory through State Library: LaDonna informed the board that the librarian needs a special laptop from the state with specific programming already on it to be able to log the book inventory. The laptop costs around \$800 and they received \$600 from the Lions Club that they will be putting towards it and would like to take the rest of the money out of the programs area of the budget. The board agreed to use the funds in this manner.

E. Roping off Museum: The board believes roping the museum area off is a good idea, and anyone going up there would need to sign in. Karen let them know that there is a case upstairs that is broken. It looks like it was forced open, and it contains quilts so there is a worry that mice will get into them. The board will have Roger look at it.

F. Security Camera: There has been discussion on getting a security camera set up for the museum. Richard noted that D&D Electric could get a system set up and have it go to a phone or the town clerk's office. Lisa felt that Ring would be a good option and the librarian could see that on her phone. She thought the annual service cost is about \$12 per year for Ring and the cameras are around \$2-300 each. The board agreed to get a Ring camera and hook it up.

Richard motioned to approve all decisions in 5A through 5F, Dennis seconded. Motion passed.

Karen inquired about setting up next year's library budget and how the trustees should go about coming up with their budget figures. They will need an increase in funds with all the new work they are doing there but are unsure of how much to budget for. Jacques let her know that the trustees should come up with a needs/ wants list to start with and prioritize each item. Karen noted that they are hoping to get grants for the larger needs. They are also hoping to do a 6-month evaluation for the librarian and possibly increase her pay at that time.

6. Update on Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for Village Wastewater Project – Pat Sagui: Only one reply to the request was received. Pat checked with Tom Brown, and he let her know that they would like to have three at least, however they did a good job of getting the word out there so if they are happy with the one reply received then they can move forward. He also noted that the request can be sent out again if the board would like. Pat found guidance for interviews specifically regarding water that the State of Connecticut had online, and she printed the questions out for the board members. Pat let the board know that they could look over the information received and decide in the next week if they would like to interview the company. Jacques noted that when it comes to hiring, due to the purchasing policy they are supposed to

have more than one bid. Pat noted that the town is not spending any money on this, it is all covered by grants. Pat will update Jay and Troy on the status so far. She noted that they have more than enough capacity to add Westfield to their system. Jacques questioned what the timeline is to get the interview done. Pat let him know that there is only a certain amount of money available and so she feels it should be done as soon as possible. Pat will send a note to the company that applied saying thank you and that someone will be in touch within 30 days. Pat and the board will meet October 30th to discuss the interview questions at 5pm.

7. Zoning Bylaw Update/Discuss Tentative Work Dates– Pat Sagui, Planning Commission

Chair: Pat gave the board some tentative dates for the rest of the process. Planning commission hearing materials will go online November 15th, and the statutory hearing of the planning commission will be December 4th (selectboard does not need to be at this meeting). The final draft should be ready by January 12th, and January 15th will be a meeting with the selectboard. February 19th will be a public hearing prior to the regular selectboard meeting, and the bylaws could be adopted that night. There is also going to be the dissolution of one board and the creation of a new board on that night. Pat will have prepared and submitted policies for the new board prior to the meeting. In the new bylaws they are proposing to create a new conservation district and Pat will be sending letters out to the property owners that it effects on behalf of the planning commission. Jacques wondered what comprises a conservation district. Pat noted that this one will match the conservation district in Montgomery that borders Westfield and that it is for a certain elevation range. She also noted that it does not affect forestry and agriculture, it only regulates things like building hotels on the land and other projects like that.

8. Highway Update – Eric Kennison, Road Commissioner:

A. Bill out Wild & Scenic Grant (Loop Rd. near the Selmer’s): LaDonna is waiting on pictures for this project. An extension on the paperwork was given.

B. Select Location for 2024 Wild & Scenic Grant Application—up to \$10,000 (due 11/1/23): Eric knows he needs to get this done and will be working on it tomorrow (10/17).

C. Status of 2023 Grants in Aid-GA 0461 at Monteith Rd.-Segment 134678 deadline pushed to 9/30/24): Eric met with Jason Sevigny and this grant has been extended, the paperwork is in for this one.

9. Treasurer’s Report – Lisa Deslandes:

A. Approve Warrants: 9/5/23 \$155.36 (bills); 9/11/23 \$28,513.22 (bills) & \$5,514.50 (payroll); 9/14/23 \$7,976.72 (bills); 9/26/23 \$11,745.39 (bills) & \$6,711.54 (payroll); and 9/27/23 \$575.98 (bills): Richard motioned to approve the warrants for September, Dennis seconded. Motion passed.

B. Review Budget Reports, Balance Sheet & Investment Accounts (emailed in advance): The cash basis accounting method was voted on prior to this section being discussed. Richard felt that the town should try to get locals to do the auditing again, however Jacques noted that it would need to go back to a town vote to change it back.

LaDonna felt that the town just needs to find a CPA who will do an audit based on the cash method. Jacques would like the first step to be to discuss with the current auditors what the town would like as far as an audit goes and see if they are willing to audit that way.

C. Explain Accrual basis vs. Cash Basis Accounting & Decide Which is Best for Westfield – Darlene from NEMRC: Darlene from NEMRC came to help explain the cash vs accrual basis accounting methods. The auditors audited the town based on the accrual method of accounting, even though the town currently operates on a cash basis method. She explained that with the cash basis method when you collect taxes, you record the revenue and when you pay bills you record the expenses. In the accrual method that does not happen. The revenue is recognized when taxes are billed out and the expenses are based on when the services were performed or the goods were received, not when you actually paid for them. She noted that a lot of smaller towns in the state record on a cash basis accounting system. The auditors moved expenses and revenues between years to match the accrual form of accounting, which makes the financials look off throughout the year. Jacques felt that switching auditors may be the route to go. Lisa did not want to change the way the accounting is currently done because of the way the budget is created the cash accrual method works best. Darlene spoke to the auditor and asked why they audited based on the accrual method and she explained that the cash basis is not GAAP accepted. Darlene let the board know that it is okay to use the cash basis and the town complies using this method of accounting. The audit numbers will not match the financials because of the way the auditor moves things around to go with the accrual method and Lisa felt that it would take a lot of explaining if people wanted to know why all the numbers were different. Darlene felt that if the town wants to stay on a cash basis method, then they should draw a line in the sand, and let the auditor know that the town needs to be audited on a cash basis even if it's not GAA compliant. She also let Lisa know that she can help Lisa talk with the auditor to let her know that it needs to be audited on a cash basis method. Jacques felt that if the auditor resists, we can have a conversation about changing auditors. Richard motioned to stay on the cash basis method of accounting, Dennis seconded. Motion passed.

D. Approve Appropriations Request from Missisquoi Valley Ambulance Service for Partial Year 2023: LaDonna received an email from Jen Piette requesting \$9,189, which is the appropriation amount for the first quarter of the year. Jacques noted the board was expecting this bill and that it should be paid as it is owed. Dennis motioned to pay the \$9,189 owed to Missisquoi Valley Ambulance Service, Richard seconded. Motion passed. There were some questions regarding where the money would go, however the board agreed that the money was owed and so it would be paid.

E. Constables Stipend: Mike Jacobs said he'd think about becoming constable. Lisa wondered what to pay for a stipend to Gerry Bouchard Jr as he did not work the full year. Jacques let her know she could pay half of the yearly stipend for the 6 months he worked.

10. Sheriff's Reports for August: The report was for 13.5 hours, with 2 fines totaling \$0 dollars.

11. Community Center – Update on Plumbing Work- Nadeau's Plumbing & Heating – Dennis Vincent: Richard talked to Mark who said he would talk to Jeremy about it. He let Richard know that they are backed up with work right now.

12. Recycling Update & Attendants Schedule for November:

Nov 4th – Jacques Couture

Nov 11th – Roger Tetreault, Maurice Doyon

Nov 18th – Richard Degre

Nov 25th – Dennis Vincent

A. Windows in Garage Overhead Door: Richard called Nick and he's going to stop in to look at it. He said it would probably cost around \$200-300 dollars.

Jacques saw that one bucket of e-waste was picked up. Dennis saw that it was empty Sunday. LaDonna will call to get the steel picked up.

13. Playground: Mike Piper came to discuss a group of kids that have been behaving inappropriately at the playground. They have been using inappropriate language, messing with the port-a-potty and playground equipment and were being verbally abusive to some younger children. Mike spoke with the parents already and some other members of town have spoken with the kids, however the behavior has continued. Mike felt that sending a letter from the selectboard to the parents or calling the Sheriff's Department would be acceptable remedies in the future. Jacques felt that letting it go for now with winter coming and revisiting it in the spring if it continues is the way to go at this point. Regarding upkeep on the tennis courts Jacques thinks they do not need to be resurfaced right now. He is okay with getting the pickleball lines painted on the courts though and he fixed the gate latch. There is also a new net up. Mike was curious what the lifespan on the courts surface is and how often it's recommended that it gets resurfaced. Jacques thought a sign letting people know to latch the gate when they leave might help keep it from being left open and blowing in the wind.

14. Executive Session (if necessary): Richard motioned to enter executive session at 5:50pm for personnel reasons, Dennis seconded. Motion passed. There was a motion by Richard to exit executive session at 6:01 p.m. which was seconded by Dennis. Motion passed.

15. Other Business:

A. Next Meeting Date November 20th: Meeting will be held Nov 13th at 5pm instead of the 20th.

B. Budget Meetings: December 1st, 12:30 pm to 4:30 pm (General Fund) & December 4th, 4 pm to 6 pm (Highway): Informational only.

C. Reminder: Energy Audit of Town Buildings October 17th beginning at 9 am:
Informational only.

D. Reminder: FEMA In-Person Meeting at Town Office, October 19th, 10:30 am.
Eric will be at this meeting. Jacques will be there also.

Scott Dean came to inform the board about some cutting that is going on near a house on School Street/ Ball Ground Road. They have cut all the trees right up to the brook and it is a flood plain. Now the lawn goes all the way to the brook. He is concerned that the road or the bridge could wash out now if the root system is gone. Jacques felt that the Agency of Natural Resources would want to know about it and Scott let him know he already filled out the online form to let them know.

16. Adjourn: Following a motion by Richard and second by Dennis, all agreed to adjourn the meeting at 6:01 p.m.

Westfield Selectboard Approval Date: 11/13/23 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