

**WESTFIELD INFORMATIONAL MEETING
MEET THE CANDIDATES FOR SELECTBOARD**

Minutes

December 8, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.

Westfield Community Center, 59 North Hill Rd. (at School Street)

In attendance: Jacques Couture; Anne Lazor; Shelley Martin; Richard Degre; Pat Sagui; Mike Piper; Nikki Dunn; Jeremy Dunn, Kay Courson; Mike Courson; Jan Degre; Yvan LaPlume; Connie LaPlume; Danny Young; Bill Salmon; and LaDonna Dunn

1. Welcome & Call Meeting to Order – Jacques Couture, Selectboard Chair: Jacques welcomed everyone and explained the Selectboards thinking behind a Selectboard appointment to fill the late Yves Daigle's Selectboard position vs. allowing the people to decide by Australian ballot. He explained Yves held the position on the Selectboard for over 50 years and said his will be big shoes to fill. In the end, the Selectboard felt the fairest way was to put the decision making in the hands of the people by Australian ballot and allow them to decide who would fill Yves' unexpired term.

2. Turn Meeting Over to Pat Sagui, Moderator: Jacques explained the Selectboard asked Pat Sagui to be the evenings moderator and turned the meeting over to her.

A. Explain Format for Meeting: Pat explained the format for the evening.

B. Drawing for Speaking Order: Shelley's name was drawn to speak first.

C. Five Minute Opening Comments from Selectboard Candidates:

- Shelley Martin shared about her early childhood and upbringing. She said her parents were of opposite political views. She shared what her parents instilled in her: No matter how many differences you can always find common ground. She said she has lived in every state in the U.S., never living any place longer than 2 years until she moved to Vermont in 1988. Her father was in the military. She married a man in the military and said she got her training to be a leader from what she learned helping military families. She retired from working for the State of Vermont, Agency of Natural Resources. She commuted to her job in Waterbury and Montpelier for many years. Part of her job included mercury recycling. Shelley said she is currently a Westfield Lister and is the Town Health Officer. Shelley said she is willing to work very hard for the people of Westfield and would bring a new face to the Board.
- Richard Degre said he remembers the day Yves Daigle came to his door and asked if he wanted to be on the Selectboard. Richard said he was on the Selectboard during the 1997 flood. He believes in helping people out and leaving no one behind in need. He said in his many years on the Selectboard they always functioned on a tight budget to help keep people's taxes as low as possible. He jokingly said he's used to being in front of people speaking but as an auctioneer, not talking about himself. He said if he was elected to the Board again, he would do his best to serve the people of the town. He thanked everyone for coming out to hear what he had to say.

D. Questions from Audience – Two Minutes to Answer and Rebut:

- Bill Salmon asked about the Federal money (ARPA) given to the states and towns. He said he knew it was a lot of money and wanted to know the candidates' thoughts on how it would be managed. He wondered if they thought there should be a special vote on how to use the money or if the Selectboard would decide.

Jacques said there are a couple of thoughts as to what the money could be used for, but no decisions have been made yet. Jacques said one option being explored

is digitizing the land records in the Town Clerks vault. Anne added another idea is adding internet connections to the areas which are lacking connectivity in town.

Richard responded saying the people should be asked how they think the money should be used.

Shelley responded that she agreed with Richard. She said that's part of being transparent.

- Connie LaPlume thanked Richard for putting up the lights and decorating the Common for the holidays.

Richard responded saying he was just one of the people involved with helping. He said Mike Piper had also helped as well as Dan McAvinney.

Jacques commented what a great community we have. Everyone pulls together. He used how people have stepped up to help at the Recycling Center since Yves passing as an example.

- LaDonna Dunn asked what areas the candidates thought needed improvement in our community and how they could contribute towards improving that area.

Shelley thought internet connectivity needs improvement. She also felt the vacant/abandoned house in the village in disrepair needs to be addressed. She felt she would be able to help improve this in her capacity as Town Health Officer. She stated she is working with the State Fire Marshal to see what can be done about the situation.

Richard also felt the abandoned house was a concern for the town. He said he used to cut the grass to keep it looking as nice as possible. He thought working with the Zoning Board to see what else could be done would be a good idea. He also thought there needs to be better internet connections on North Hill Road and Kennison Road.

Jacques commented it's been tough for the town to do anything about the abandoned house because the taxes have been paid each year.

E. Final One Minute Statement from Candidates: The candidates both said they had nothing more to add.

3. Public Comment: The Candidates were thanked for attending and sharing their thoughts.

4. Other Business:

A. 12/15/21 Election Day Voting by Australian Ballot (9 am – 7 pm @ Community Center) & Absentee Voting – LaDonna Dunn, Town Clerk: LaDonna explained voters can request absentee ballots by mail or come to the office and request a ballot to take home. They can also vote before Election Day at the office. She explained the Election Day procedures and said after the polls close at 7 p.m. the ballots will be counted and the results will be posted on the town website at www.westfield.vt.gov as well as posted at the Westfield General Store, Westfield Post Office and announced on the Town of Westfield, Vermont Facebook page.

5. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Westfield Selectboard Approval: Date: _____ with _____ change(s)

Jacques Couture, Chair

Anne Lazor

Minutes submitted by: _____
LaDonna Dunn, Town Clerk