

Westfield Selectboard Minutes
January 23, 2023 @ 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; LaDonna Dunn, Town Clerk; Lisa Deslandes, Treasurer; Niki Dunn, Selectboard Clerk; Danny Young, Lister Chair (Partial Attendance); Will Young, Zoning Administrator (Partial Attendance)

- 1. Call Meeting to Order – Jacques Couture, Chair:** Jacques called the meeting to order at 4:58 pm.
- 2. Public Comment – 5 Minutes:** There were no public comments.
- 3. Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda:** LaDonna added discussion regarding the boiler at the Community Center to other business.
- 4. Approve 12/5/22 & 12/15/22 Selectboard/ Budget Minutes:** Richard motioned to approve the minutes as presented, Jacques seconded.
- 5. Review Amended 2022 Equalization Study Results for CLA 88.89% and COD 17.92% - Danny Young, Lister Chair:** Danny Young informed the Selectboard that no re-appraisal has been triggered yet, however the numbers are moving closer to a re-appraisal (85% CLA) and one may be triggered next year if home sales continue to trend the same in 2023 as they did in 2022. The state is looking at a substantial backlog already for re-appraisals as there are only so many appraisers in the state and many re-appraisals were triggered this past year. If a re-appraisal is triggered this year the town would have until 2027 to get it done and Jacques believes we should be financially set to pay for another appraisal by then.
- 6. Update from Zoning Administrator – Will Young:** Will wanted to inform the Selectboard about a situation with a pond on Buck Hill Road being too close to the road. Any overflow from the pond would run right into the ditch and if any work needed to be done on the ditch it would affect the pond. If the pond does overflow and it causes damage to the road, then the homeowners would be on the hook to pay for the damages. The pond should be 50ft from the gravel and it is currently closer than that. Will needs permission from the homeowners to go on the property to take measurements so he will be doing that as soon as possible. The first step he will be taking is to send the homeowners a letter to see if they would like to remedy the problem on their own. If he does need to send a violation letter, he would like the town attorney to look at the letter before he sends it out to make sure it is written in a legally binding way. Jacques thought that the Agency of Agriculture or the Agency of Natural Resources may need to be informed. Will said he could reach out to them. Will has also spoken with the planning commission to make sure there are very clear bylaws regarding ponds in the new bylaw rewrite.

7. Ambulance Advisory Report and Vote on Changing Ambulance Service: The board discussed switching to Newport Ambulance Service. Jay, Troy and Lowell towns are all switching to Newport Ambulance. All four towns will need to agree on one pricing structure (grand list, population, per call, ½ grand list ½ population). Newport Ambulance calculates the cost per calendar year so the cost will be pro-rated this year depending on the start date. Jacques and Richard agreed to use \$40,000 as the cost to be put in the budget this year. The cost will go in the general budget as opposed to an appropriation as the Selectboard has a legal right to provide the town with ambulance services. Jacques wanted to know if the appropriation paid from Town Meeting to Town Meeting or calendar year. Richard said nobody at the meeting the other night was sure. Jacques thought if there was never a contract then it is safe to assume it was Town Meeting to Town Meeting. Richard learned at the meeting that Newport Ambulance typically only raises prices 2-5% per year, and they will only raise rates if they need to cover their actual costs during the year. LaDonna also noted that she was very impressed when she called them and received the information she had requested right away. Jacques asked if anything was said regarding coverage for Alpine Haven. LaDonna said she could ask Jeff. Richard motioned to switch to Newport Ambulance Service starting after the Town Meeting this year, Jacques seconded.

8. Highway Updates:

A. Certificate of Highway Mileage Due 2-20-23 (emailed in advance): Reviewed, no changes made.

B. Review/ Approve Selectboard FY23 Highway Budget (emailed in advance): Lisa has not made any changes since the board looked at the budget in December and Eric did look it over and approved of it. Richard motioned to approve the FY23 Highway Budget as presented, Jacques seconded.

9. Continuing Discussion about Town Accepting the Westfield Congregational Church as a Gift:

A. VLCT's Legal Opinion (emailed in advance): LaDonna let the board know that it is up to them whether they accept the church as a gift or not. Jacques wondered if the gift of the church would be conditional on keeping it under town ownership or if the town could sell the church if that's what they decided to do with it. He thought it would be good to discuss this with Dennis Lyster. Jacques and Richard both agreed if the town can sell the church, then they would feel comfortable accepting the gift. LaDonna thought this would be a good thing to discuss at the Town Meeting and could ask for an informal show of hands to get an idea on how the townspeople feel about accepting the church as a gift.

10. Discuss Town Meeting March 7, 2023:

A. Revisit In-Person Town Meeting VS Australian Ballot: Richard thought that switching the Selectboard and School Board positions to Australian Ballot may get more people to vote. LaDonna said that unless legislation passes changing things at this point

you would have to change all votes to Australian Ballot or change none. The board would also have to vote to change to Australian Ballot one year and could then put it into practice the following year. Richard motioned to have this year's Town Meeting in person, Jacques seconded.

B. Discuss Mailing Ballots to all Voters: This is not needed as Town Meeting will be in person.

C. Set Date for Town Informational Meeting (if needed) - School Informational Meeting is 2/28/23 @ 6pm: No Informational Meeting is needed for the town since voting will be in person, from the floor.

D. Review/ Approve Draft of Warning for Town Meeting (emailed in advance): LaDonna removed the appropriation for Missisquoi Ambulance. She will update the budget numbers once they pass. She added article 7 to the warning because if nobody is authorized to collect the taxes then it defaults to the Constable to do it. She also added article 8 this year because without it the taxes become due 30 days after tax bills are mailed. Article 9 may not be needed, the Waste Management District may be voting on their own budget, it depends on legislation passing.

E. Elected Town Positions – How to Run for Office: Candidates will need someone to nominate them from the floor. They do not need to be present to be nominated.

11. Treasurers Report – Lisa Deslandes:

A. Approve Warrants 12/5/22 \$35,334.57 (bills) & \$4,595.51 (payroll); 12/9/22 \$10,358.30 (bills); 12/13/22 \$13,978.00 (bills); 12/15/22 \$5,783.74 (bills); 12/21/22 \$16,526.13 (bills) & \$22,365.89 (payroll); 12/28/22 \$13,297.52 (bills); and 12/31/22 \$43,248.03 (bills): Richard motioned to approve the warrants; Jacques seconded.

B. Review/ Approve Selectboard FY23 General Fund Budget (emailed in advance): Lisa is leaving the Edward Jones interest at \$0. She also noted that next year the money that is leftover should be put in the budget as carryover like she does in the highway budget instead of just rolling the money over into the next year. She also would like payroll hours to be submitted before the end of each quarter instead of having people wait until the end of the year. There are now two sheets for recycling, each employee will not need to submit their own payroll sheets anymore. LaDonna questioned where the money for the library roof repair would come from. Richard and Jacques agreed that the ARPA funds could be used to cover the roof. Jacques thought the town could benefit from a grant writer. He has seen a lot of grants that the town could make use of but would need someone willing to invest the time in looking for the grants and then applying for them. LaDonna had a request from Ellen Fox for \$1500 to be included in the budget for her to finish the work she has been doing rewriting the zoning bylaws as consultant for the planning commission. There was already \$2,000 in the line item for planning commission consultant, so no funds needed to be added there. Richard motioned to approve the FY23 General Fund Budget as presented; Jacques seconded.

C. Recommendation for Selectboard to Set Policy about Timeframe for Reissuing Lost Checks: Lisa would like to have a set time period before she re-issues lost checks. She thought 30 days would be a good amount of time. Richard motioned to wait 30 days before re-issuing any lost check, Jacques seconded.

D. Policy Change for Vacation Hours for Town Clerk and Road Commissioner: The current vacation policy is paid as a 24-hour work week for the Town Clerk and a 40 hour work week for the Road Commissioner. LaDonna works more than 24 hours a week. Jacques motioned to set the Town Clerk and Road Commissioner vacation weeks at 40 hour work weeks, Richard seconded.

12. Review Quote from Poulin for Building Materials for Roof at Library – Richard Degre: Material cost quote from Poulin came to \$6618.07. There will also be costs for labor, removing old shingles, dumpster etc. Jacques estimated that it would cost around \$20,000 when it is completed. Lisa would like a quote for the entire job and due to the high cost of the job she would like at least two quotes. The Selectboard agreed that this project would be a good use of ARPA funds.

13. Recycling Update:

A. Work Schedule for February:

February 4th – Jacques

February 11th – Maurice Doyon & Roger Tetreault

February 18th – Richard

February 25th – Dennis/ Jacques if Dennis cannot

14. Discuss Request from Jay Focus Group to use Community Center for Self-Defense for Seniors: LaDonna let the board know that this program is taking place at the hospital first and if it goes well they would like to hold at least one session at the Community Center. They are interested in holding multiple sessions if it goes well. Jacques and Richard agreed that they can use the Community Center at no charge.

15. Library Survey Report – Anne Lazor: Tabled until the next meeting as Anne was not present.

16. Written Report from Planning Commission (emailed in advance): Pat Sagui sent a report outlining the timeline for completion of the Bylaw Revisions. They are looking at April or May to have the process completed.

17. Approve Liquor/ Tobacco License for Westfield General Store: Richard motioned to approve the liquor/ tobacco license for the Westfield General Store, Jacques seconded.

18. Sheriff's Reports for November and December 2022:

November – 2 Tickets Issued, 1 Warning Issued, \$309 in Fines, 0 Arrests and 24.25 Hours

billed. December – 2 Tickets Issued, 11 Warnings Issued, \$411 in Fines, 0 Arrests and 34 Hours Billed.

19. Executive Session for Personnel Issues (if needed): No executive session needed.

20. Other Business:

A. Schedule Next Meeting Date: Next meeting will be held February 20th at 5pm

B. Boiler at Community Center: The boiler at the Community Center needs a repair made and a mixing valve installed. The board agreed to go ahead with the repairs. Richard was at the town garage and the air is flowing much better and the moisture problem is under control. Eric installed two fans to move the air around in there and the furnace has been running about 50% less than it previously was.

21. Adjourn: Richard motioned to adjourn at 6:42pm, Jacques seconded.

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

WESTFIELD SELECTBOARD:

X

Jacques Couture
Chair

X

Anne Lazor
Vice Chair

X

Richard Degre

Minutes Submitted by: Niki Dunn, Selectboard Clerk