

Westfield Selectboard Minutes

July 17, 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); Niki Dunn, Selectboard Clerk; Jenn Stelma, Library Board of Trustees Chair (Partial Attendance)

Others Present: Kate Sudhoff, Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation (Partial Attendance); Kate Wanner, Trust For Public Land (Partial Attendance)

1. **Call Meeting to Order-Jacques Couture, Chair:** Jacques Couture called the meeting to order at 5pm.
2. **Public Comment – 5 Minutes:** There were no public comments.
3. **Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda:** LaDonna added 8E Grants In Aid Pre-Construction Scoping Summary and 21B Municipal Technical Assistance Program (MTAP)
4. **Approve 6-19-23 Minutes and Business from the Minutes:** Richard Degre motioned to approve the minutes from June 19, 2023, Dennis Vincent seconded. Motion passed.
5. **Update from Library Trustee Board – Jenn Stelma, Chair of Library Trustees:** Jenn let the Selectboard know that Beau Harris has joined the Trustee Board and is very excited about the collections at the library. Beau is looking into two grants right now and they will keep the Selectboard updated on the progress. The new librarian, Maureen, is doing a kid’s summer reading program and will be holding a story hour on Thursday mornings. Lots of cleaning is going on, and Jenn was looking for some clarification on how to handle regular cleaning and deep cleaning in the future. Jenn enquired about how the cleaning was taken care of in the past, does the librarian take care of it before and after opening. Jacques would like the trustees and Maureen to assess the need for the deep cleaning, how many hours it may take to get it completed. Lisa Deslandes noted that the cleaning was included in the previous librarians’ working hours, there was no time paid for cleaning prior to or after the hours that the library was open. Richard noted that the library looks good. Jenn let the Selectboard know that the trustees are looking to do some fundraising events, like a fall cider open house event as well as other events. She wondered if the library was a 501C3. LaDonna let her know that it is not, they would need to start something like “Friends of the Library” and make that a 501C3 to fundraise on behalf of the library. She believed the cost was around \$700 and there is a lot of paperwork that would need to be done to set it up and to maintain it every year. Jenn explained that a couple in Jay wanted to donate to the library however they wanted a receipt so they could claim the donation as a tax exemption and that cannot be provided if they are not a 501C3. Jacques noted that people can still donate but they would not be able to claim the donation as a write off. Richard thought it would be best to have an accountant or lawyer set it up. LaDonna let the Selectboard know that the Lions Club is making the library the beneficiary of Augusts Texas Hold ‘Em funds. She noted that it is usually around \$400. Jenn updated the Selectboard on the needs assessment, they have not heard anything back on it yet. LaDonna questioned where all the computers went that used to be there. There’s only one desktop computer and there used to be two desktops and one or two laptops that were purchased using grant money. Jenn does not know where the computers went, they have not come across them yet and there are many people who come into the library looking to use computers so having more than one would be useful. Jacques asked LaDonna to confirm how many are supposed to be there.
 - A. **Updates on Roofing Project – Richard Degre:** Ethan Bathalon gave Richard a quote for the library roof. The quote total is \$17,700 which breaks down to \$16,200 for labor and materials and \$1,500 for the dumpster. The Selectboard members signed the estimate. The water line also needs to be fixed soon while the weather is warm.
6. **Presentation about Proposed Forest Legacy Conservation Easements – Kate Wanner, Trust for Public Land and Kate Sudhoff, Vermont Dept. of Forests, Parks, and Recreation: (emailed in advance)** Kate Sudhoff manages

the Forest Legacy Program for Vermont which is a federal program. The Backus property is already conserved through the program. She let Kate Wanner explain the details on the proposed easements. Kate Wanner explained that there are four properties, approximately 2300 acres with 3 different owners that they are looking to put into the program. Two of the properties are in Westfield, one on North Hill and one on Hazen's Notch Road (Route 58). The easements require the property to stay forest lands, available for timber management and sugaring. They are also guaranteed public access for things like hunting, fishing, hiking, etc. One of the properties includes a portion of the Catamount Trail. She also explained that this shouldn't affect taxes unless the lister decreases the assessed value of the properties. They are requesting a support letter from the Selectboard to submit with the application. Jacques has land secured with Vermont Land Trust and was wondering how this compares. Kate Wanner explained that public access is a difference, some properties in the Vermont Land Trust require the land to stay open for public access and some don't. The board was happy to offer a letter of support. Kate Wanner will write up a draft letter of support and get it to LaDonna by the end of the week. Kate Sudhoff let the board know that the application will be submitted this fall and they probably won't hear back for about a year, but they will let the board know when they have any updates.

7. Tax Rate for 2023 – Lisa Deslandes, Treasurer:

A. Set Municipal and Local (Veterans Exemption) Tax Rates: The homestead rate is 2.1092, non-homestead rate is 2.3484. Lisa explained how the rates are set. Richard motioned to approve both the municipal and education tax rates; Dennis seconded. Motion passed.

B. Review Education Tax Rates FY23/24 – Homestead \$1.3257; Non-Homestead \$1.5649/per \$100 Assessed Value: The board reviewed the Education Tax Rates.

C. Discuss/Approve Penalty for Homestead Declaration Late Filers Requiring New Tax Bills (Currently 3%): LaDonna let the board know that she believes they cannot change the number, they can only decide not to charge it. Jacques stated it has been working, so there was no need to get rid of it. Dennis motioned to approve the penalty of 3% for homestead declaration late filers requiring new tax bills, Richard seconded. Motion passed.

8. Highway Update – Eric Kennison, Road Commissioner:

A. Bills for Old Chloride Tank: Eric will figure out if this is owed, and if it is then he will pay it.

B. Road Signs: Eric let the board know that no signs have been put up yet. Jacques asked for a timeline on when they will be up so that the speed ordinance can be enforced. Dennis noted that a resident on Reservoir Road has also been asking when the speed limit signs will be up on that road. Eric said he will do it this weekend.

C. Discuss Road Repairs from 7/7-7/10/23 Storm and Determine if Opening a FEMA Claim: Eric had a total of \$12,722 for storm damage, although he explained that the only area that would really qualify for FEMA funds would be Loop Road and that amount was only \$6,879. He felt that for the amount of time it takes to get the money and the work that goes into getting it that it would be better not to ask for funds this time. LaDonna noted that it takes about a year and a half to get FEMA funds and the town is still owed some from the storm in 2019. The board agreed not to pursue any FEMA funds at this time. Jacques also thanked Eric for taking good care of the roads and noted that they hold up so well during storms because of how well they are cared for throughout the year.

D. Sign Better Roads Grant BR1104 Grant Agreement for TH2-Route 58: Jacques signed the grant.

E. Grants In Aid Preconstruction Scoping Summary: LaDonna let Eric know that this year you have to go online and fill out a preconstruction scoping summary for this grant. LaDonna wondered if he knew yet where he would be using this grant money. Eric explained that it must be done on a segment that has failed or is a high priority. He thought the Kingdom Mountain Road culvert might work as a possible spot. Eric will meet with LaDonna to get the summary submitted.

Eric also wanted to let the board know about traffic on Route 58. He has to pull over constantly with the grader when he is up there to let cars, trucks and RV's go by. He feels that the road is holding up well, but the town is spending a lot of money to keep it that way. He would like to see if the state would take care of it again, as they have in the past. He thought that if they could do a traffic study there then it would show them just how often the road is used. Richard felt like it would help if you could get Montgomery and Lowell to talk to the state also. Eric also noted that he was on a road similar to Route 58 in Maine, and it is also closed in the winter and it had two big steel gates that closed it off during the winter months. He thought that might be worth looking into.

9. Treasurer's Report – Lisa Deslandes:

A. Approve Warrants for June: 6/7/23 \$22,866.65 (bills) & \$4,769.59 (payroll); 6/21/23 \$19,485.38 (bills) & \$5,697.74 (payroll); 6/26/23 \$6,500 (bills): Richard motioned to approve the warrants for June, Dennis seconded. Motion passed.

B. Review Budget Reports, Balance Sheet & Investment Accounts (emailed in advance): The board reviewed prior to the meeting and had no questions.

C. Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) for State Buildings and Hold Harmless Payments for 2023: LaDonna let the board know that these are estimates. State buildings are \$5,365 and Hold Harmless is \$50,811. LaDonna noted that they budgeted \$68,000.

10. Approve Issue Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for Village Wastewater Project: Pat Sagui emailed the board members in advance. Dennis motioned to approve issuing the request for qualifications; Richard seconded. Motion passed. Jacques noted that the board needs to hold an informational meeting at some point. Dennis wondered if this is going to affect people not going on the system as far as cost. Richard feels that it is not going to be cheap. Jacques feels that the study may have some ideas on ways to save costs. Dennis knew of some people in Troy who couldn't hook up to the town sewage system, however if they were able to get on it then they had to get on it. Jacques would like to put it on the agenda next month and then they can discuss when to hold the meeting and how to go about it. The board won't know the boundaries of the system yet but could let everyone know about it. Jacques would also like to discuss how to present the information and thought they could maybe get some guidance on this.

11. Sheriff's Reports for May and June: May: 0 Tickets, 0 Warnings, 0 Fines, 0 Arrests 3.75 hours; June: 1 Ticket, 3 Warnings, \$105 fines, 0 Arrests 19 hours. LaDonna would like to ask them why they bill the town for hours when they are serving papers if they are already being paid by the person/ company who hired them to serve the papers. Lisa noted she hadn't seen them on North Hill Road or Kennison Road since the meeting where it was discussed that they would be patrolling North Hill Road more.

12. Community Center:

A. Review Upcoming Sidewalk Repair Work and Timing of Project: Richard McAllister will be doing the work on July 25th and 26th, and he needs Eric to prep it before then. Eric will reach out to Richard McAllister.

B. Review Plumbing/Heating Changes: Jacques went over today, and the part has not been installed yet. Richard talked to Todd, and he said he would bring the part over if the board would like someone else to install it. Dennis wondered what plumbers deal with things like that. Richard thought Nadeau's Plumbing and Heating and Fred's Plumbing and Heating were the only choices. The board decided to get the part from Todd and have someone else install it. Lisa felt that a quote would be needed from the two plumbing companies before work began. She also knows of two local plumbers that can be called for quotes. Lisa will get their phone numbers.

13. Recycling Update:

**A. Recycling Attendants Schedule for August:
5th – Jacques Couture**

12th – Maurice Doyon, Roger Tetreault

19th – Richard Degre

26th – Dennis Vincent

Jacques asked for longer boxes for lights, and they should be bringing some 8-foot boxes. Dennis let the other board members know about an email regarding Styrofoam. All tape and stickers need to be removed and no cardboard can be attached to it. He has also seen a lot of stickers still in the compost and some people have been putting plastic bags in there also. These are not allowed in compost bins.

14. Application for Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP) Assessment: LaDonna and Jacques worked on this earlier in the day and it is finished.

15. Resignation of Emergency Management Coordinator, Dan Backus / Appoint New Coordinator: Maurice Doyon has spoken to Dan Backus about this position and is willing to be appointed. Richard motioned to appoint Maurice Doyon as the Emergency Management Coordinator; Dennis seconded. Motion passed.

16. Update on Delinquent Dogs – LaDonna Dunn: LaDonna let the board know that she is making progress, however there are still three outstanding. The constables have also been working on getting this resolved.

17. Review Revisions/Sign Speed Ordinance – LaDonna Dunn: Jacques thought that the wording on Article 6 could be changed to say no parking on the traveled portion of the road. He noted that parking on the side of Route 100 is becoming dangerous in certain areas, especially when people are holding sales at their homes and cars are parking on both sides of the road (yard sales, antique sales, etc.) Richard motioned to approve the speed ordinance, Dennis seconded. Motion passed.

18. Discuss Trash Problem on Buck Hill Road: Richard has a game camera that they can put up in the area. Dennis thought that putting up no dumping signs might also help. He will see if there are any of these signs at the hardware store.

19. Discuss/Authorize Purchase of Dog Kennel, Snare, Gloves and Animal Microchip Reader for Constables: Jacques felt that this was a reasonable request. Dennis motioned to approve the purchase of a kennel, gloves, snare, and microchip reader, for a total cost of no more than \$500, Richard seconded. Motion passed.

20. Executive Session (if necessary): Jacques motioned to enter into Executive session at 7:20 pm for staffing reasons; Dennis seconded. There was a motion by Richard and seconded by Dennis to exit Executive Session at 7:30 pm. Motions passed. No action was taken.

21. Other Business:

A. Next Meeting Date August 21st: Next month's meeting is August 21st at 5 pm.

B. Municipal Technical Assistance Program (MTAP): LaDonna emailed the information about this to the board. The town was pre-approved for the Municipal Assistance Program. She hasn't investigated it much yet but believes that it assists the town with getting money that may be available to us. Dennis motioned to Approve moving forward with the Municipal Technical Assistance Program; Richard seconded. Motion passed.

22. Adjourn: Motion by Richard, seconded by Dennis to adjourn the meeting at 7:35 pm. Passed unanimously.

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

WESTFIELD SELECTBOARD:

X

Jacques Couture
Selectboard Chair

X

Richard Degre
Selectboard

X

Dennis Vincent
Selectboard