

WESTFIELD SELECTBOARD MEETING

Minutes

March 10th, 2025 – 5 p.m.

Westfield Town Office, 38 School Street

Meeting Recordings Available to View at <https://www.youtube.com/@TownofWestfieldVT>

Town Officials Present: Jacques Couture, Selectboard Chair; Richard Degre, Selectboard; Dennis Vincent, Selectboard; LaDonna Dunn, Town Clerk; Lisa Deslandes, Treasurer; Niki Dunn, Selectboard Clerk; Ellen Fox, Development Review Board (Partial Attendance); Eric Kennison, Road Commissioner (Partial Attendance); Pat Sagui, Development Review Board (Partial Attendance)

Others Present: Steve Button (Partial Attendance), Rosemary Croizet (Partial Attendance)

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1. **Call Meeting to Order – Jacques Couture, Chair:** Jacques called the meeting to order at 5pm.
 2. **Public Comment – 5 Minutes:** None
 3. **Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda:** Added 9D & 9E.
 4. **Approve Minutes: (emailed in advance)**
 - a. **Approve Minutes of the 2-17-25 Selectboard Meeting:** Richard motioned to approve the minutes of the 2-17-25 meeting, Dennis seconded. Motion passed.
 - b. **Approve Minutes of the 3-4-25 Annual Town & School Meeting:** Tabled until next meeting so changes can be made.
 5. **Organizational Tasks/Appointments (24 V.S.A. §871):**
 - a. **Elect Chair & Vice Chair (Currently Jacques Couture & Richard Degre):** Richard motioned to elect Jacques Couture as Chair and Richard Degre as Vice Chair, Dennis seconded. Motion passed.
 - b. **Elect Selectboard Clerks (Currently LaDonna Dunn and Niki Dunn-minutes):** Dennis motioned to nominate LaDonna Dunn and Niki Dunn as Selectboard Clerks, Richard seconded. Motion passed.
 - c. **Oath Given to New Selectboard Member, Jacques Couture, by Town Clerk:** LaDonna gave Jacques Couture the oath verbally.
 - d. **Establish Regular Meeting Dates & Times (Currently 3rd Mon. Each Month at 5pm):** Dennis motioned to keep the meeting dates and times the same (3rd Monday of each month at 5pm), Richard seconded. Motion passed.
 - e. **Re-Adopt Selectboard Rules of Procedure: (emailed in advance)** Richard motioned to re-adopt the Selectboard Rules of Procedure, Dennis seconded. Motion passed.
 - f. **Designate Three Posting Locations (Currently Clerks Office, General Store and Recycling Center):** Dennis motioned to keep the posting locations the same, Town Clerks Office, Westfield General Store and Recycling Center, Richard seconded. Motion passed.
 - g. **Select Newspaper of Record (Currently Newport Daily Express):** Richard motioned to keep the newspaper of record as the Newport Daily Express, Dennis seconded. Motion passed.
 - h. **Appointment of Tree Warden (Currently the Selectboard):** Richard motioned to appoint the Selectboard as the Tree Wardens, Dennis seconded. Motion passed.
 - i. **Appointment of Pound Keeper (Currently Normand Piette):** Richard motioned to appoint Normand Piette as the pound keeper, Dennis seconded. Motion passed.
 - j. **Appoint NEKWMD Supervisor and Alternate (Currently Jacques Couture and Richard Degre):** Dennis motioned to appoint Jacques Couture as the Supervisor and Richard Degre as the alternate, Richard seconded. Motion passed.
 - k. **Re-Adopt Purchasing Policy: (emailed in advance)** Dennis motioned to re-adopt the Purchasing Policy, Richard seconded. Motion passed.

- I. **Re-Adopt Policy Regarding Conflict of Interest and Ethical Conduct: (emailed in advance)** Dennis motioned to re-adopt the Policy Regarding Conflict of Interest and Ethical Conduct, Ricard seconded. Motion passed.

6. **Library Report: (emailed in advance)**

- a. **Discuss VLCT Legal Opinion on Library Policies/ Trustee Responsibilities: (emailed in advance)** Jacques feels it's clear that creating policies is up to the Library Board of Trustees. He would like to come up with an agreement between the Selectboard and the Library Board of Trustees regarding the financial aspect. This will be discussed next month when members of the Library Board of Trustees are present. LaDonna noted that the library has been named in a trust, and they may be getting a donation from that.

7. **Development Review Board (DRB)– Pat Sagui:**

- a. **Discuss Legal Trail Agreement/Policy:** The board reviewed the policy prior to the meeting. Pat questioned the section on surety bonds, she wondered who holds the bonds and if it was the town. Ellen thought that if a surety bond is acquired and the property owner sells the property then the new owner would need to get a surety bond to continue using the legal trail as their right of way. Jacques questioned what happened if the town had to use the bond to get work completed when a homeowner does not follow through then the bond is gone, what happens if they don't follow through with the agreement again. Ellen noted that how to hold the landowners accountable for following through on the agreement is the part of the policy she still has questions about. Pat wondered if the other alternative would be that the town must sue if the property owner did not follow through. LaDonna would like the MAC Center at VLCT to look at the policy and see if they know of other towns that use surety bonds or what other towns may be doing with this similar issue. Jacques would also like to know how it worked out in other towns when a landowner did not follow through with the agreement. Ellen felt that the determination of the dollar value of the bond should be some type of formula to keep it equitable. Dennis questioned what happens if more people put homes on a road where a landowner already has an agreement in place with the town, are they also responsible. Ellen felt that would seem fair to her. Rosemary wondered if this was applicable to all town legal trails. Jacques explained that this is a new territory for the town, and it may not be a one size fits all approach. Plans between each homeowner may look different. Rosemary questioned the accountability portion of this draft policy and wondered how the policy in its current form would help a homeowner proceed if they had a concern about how the road is being maintained. Jacques noted that the homeowner would bring the issue to the Selectboard and if the Selectboard had an agreement with the landowner who is not following through with the agreement then they would investigate that. Jacques felt that it could be unachievable for some people to acquire the surety bond and would also make selling the property in the future difficult. Ellen felt that it may be better to have benchmarks where the landowner checks in each year rather than requiring them to obtain a bond. LaDonna wondered how you would determine who is responsible for things like cutting down trees on the road when other people use the road for things throughout the year like forestry and sugaring. It may not be the landowner with the agreement making the changes to the road but are they the only ones held responsible for the damage. Rosemary noted that the area of the trail that crosses her property is all wetlands and the work done on that section of road is critical. Ellen noted that the property owners are allowed to have passage where it existed in the past, but the road cannot be widened in the wetland area. LaDonna would like to have a work session with some examples of what may happen and how the town would respond and work on the policy in that way before it is approved. LaDonna will let the Selectboard and DRB know what VLCT says. Steve Button owns property on a legal trail and wondered if there would be notification going out to landowners regarding this legal trail policy. Ellen noted that using a property as a camp does not trigger this policy, it is when someone gets a change of use permit to use the property year-round. Rosemary noted that looking at the selectboard agenda each month helps to know when work is being done on this. Ellen

noted that before the policy is finalized, they could get a list together of all property owners on legal trails.

8. Treasurers Report – Lisa Deslandes:

- a. **Approve Warrants for February 2/6/25 \$6,896.30 (Bills); 2/10/25 \$48,201.10 (Bills) & \$8,279.83 (Payroll); 2/24/25 \$48,399.88 (Bills) & \$7,263.18 (Payroll): (emailed in advance)** Richard motioned to approve the warrants for February, Dennis seconded. Motion passed.
- b. **Review General & Highway Fund Budget Status Reports: (emailed in advance)** Board reviewed.
- c. **Review Investments: (emailed in advance)** Jacques questioned if the grader tire funds came out of the investments. Lisa noted that the money for those came out of the highway budget.
- d. **Employee Handbook:** Tabled until next month.

9. Highway Update – Eric Kennison:

- a. **Cameras at Town Garage: (emailed in advance)** Cameras are not installed yet. Lisa will call Jason from D&D Electric to see when this will be done and also to enquire about the possibility of a more high definition camera that would capture license plate numbers. Jacques noted the lenses on the cameras probably need to be cleaned occasionally.
- b. **Security System at Town Garage: (emailed in advance)** Eric noted that if the alarm system goes off it's the fire department that reports to the alarm, not the Sheriff. He feels that it is not needed at this time.
- c. **Complete Work Start Notification for Corrow Basin Culvert: (emailed in advance)** A change was made to note that this is for the Corrow Basin Culvert, not the Taft Brook Culvert as noted on the original agenda for the meeting. The plan is to get this culvert completed this year. LaDonna will speak with Ted Sedell to see where the grant agreement is before moving forward with this. Eric and Jacques signed the Work Start Notification. Eric is not sure yet how long it will take to get the materials needed for the project.
- d. **Insurance Claim for Garage Door:** Eric talked to Ethan Bathalon about the quote on fixing the garage door. Richard had a new garage door and opener ordered already. Lisa noted the insurance company is ready to send a check for the damage, but she told them to wait until the cost of the labor is determined. The plan is to fix the exterior areas around the door at the same time that the door is replaced. This will be easier to do when the weather warms up. Jacques would like the insurance company to hold off on sending the check until the work has all been completed.
- e. **Sandpile:** The sandpile is getting pretty low. Eric will need to purchase sand from Caulkins if they run out. Eric would like to create a retaining wall/ barrier between the sand pile and the field behind it. This is a good time to do it since the sand will be mostly gone.

10. MERP Update–Town Office Windows & Historic Preservation Review: (emailed in advance)

Richard will get another bid on the windows and contact Poulin Lumber to see when they are sending their bid. Lisa noted that the historic building approval came through for the town garage and library. Work specified on the grant agreement at those two buildings as well as the Town Office can begin immediately. The Community Center windows, and attic insulation were questioned under the historic review. The Selectboard noted that the windows in the Community Center are not original and were replaced around 1997. Niki will email Doug with MERP to set up a meeting to discuss changing the grant agreement scope of work to hopefully include the windows at the town office and changing the bathroom at the library to be ADA compliant. We will need to request bids for certain aspects of this project. Niki and Lisa will work on getting a spreadsheet together to track the bidding process and will also work on getting the specs together for each aspect of the project that will be put out to bid. The ads for the bids will go in the Chronicle.

11. **Sign Engineering Services Agreement (ESA) with AES Northeast for Proposed Village Wastewater Project: (emailed in advance)** Tom has approved the agreement and AES Northeast has signed the agreement. The Selectboard signed the agreement and certification and then LaDonna will get it uploaded to move forward in the process. Pat explained that AES is doing a feasibility study that will include a recommendation at the end. It is a forgivable loan for \$125,000. Jacques noted that the town can decide not to move forward at the end with no repercussions. Pat noted that the contract lasts 18 months.
12. **Review County Tax FY25: (emailed in advance)** The County Tax came in \$1,000 over what was budgeted. Board reviewed.
13. **Discuss Changing Phone System in Town Office:** Lisa called Comcast to see why the bill included television. At the time the town signed up for the phone service it was cheaper to have television and phone bundled, but they will remove the television portion of the bundle and it will save around \$80 a month. LaDonna explained that Dennis Beloin mentioned the system Jay just got is an internet phone and it would be cheaper than what we are paying now. It would allow calls to be transferred to people and set up their own voicemail. It would create one phone number and then they could reach the Library, Community Center, Treasurer, etc. Dennis Beloin will get a quote on the cost of the system. This will be on the agenda again next month.
14. **Recycling Updates:** Jacques would like to check with Corey to see if they have updated their suggested price for mattresses, box springs and toilets, etc. If they don't have updated prices, then the board will decide on the new prices.
 - a. **Schedule for April:**
 - April 5th: Jacques Couture
 - April 12th: Maurice Doyon, Roger Tetreault
 - April 19th: Dennis Vincent
 - April 26th: Richard Degre
15. **Sheriff's Report January 2025: (emailed in advance)** Board reviewed. 22 Tickets, 4 Warnings, 2 Fines Totaling \$723, 1 Arrest, 67.25 Hours.
16. **Executive Session (if needed):** Richard motioned to enter executive session at 7:00pm to discuss personnel, Dennis seconded. Motion passed. Exited executive session at 7:34pm, no action taken.
17. **Other Business:**
 - a. **Reminder: Agency of Transportation Annual Meeting 4-25-25 at 12:30 at the Town Office:** Informational.
18. **Adjourn:** Dennis motioned to adjourn at 7:35pm, Richard seconded. Motion passed.

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

X

Jacques Couture
Selectboard Chair

X

Richard Degre
Selectboard

X

Dennis Vincent
Selectboard

DRAFT