

WESTFIELD SELECTBOARD MEETING

Minutes

July 21st, 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; Eric Kennison, Road Commissioner (Partial Attendance); Pat Sagui, Planning Commission/ Development Review Board (Partial Attendance); Mike Piper, Constable (Partial Attendance); Karen Blais, Library Board of Trustees (Partial Attendance); Jenn Stelma, Library Board of Trustees (Partial Attendance); Danny Young, Lister (Partial Attendance); Shelley Martin, Lister & Town Health Officer (Partial Attendance); Ellen Fox, Planning Commission/ Development Review Board (Partial Attendance)

Others Present: Casey Baraw (Partial Attendance), Steve Button (Partial Attendance), Kurtis Johnson (Partial Attendance), Lee Forbes (Partial Attendance), Bruce Johnson (Partial Attendance), Laura Troian (Partial Attendance, Via Zoom), Chris Troian (Partial Attendance, Via Zoom), Rosemary Croizet (Partial Attendance)

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1. **Call Meeting to Order – Jacques Couture, Chair:** Jacques called the meeting to order at 5:00PM.
 2. **Public Comment – 5 Minutes:** None
 3. **Additions and/or Deletions to the Agenda:** The agenda was revised with the current year's tax rates, the original agenda had last year's tax rates on it. **Added** 11F Repair Overhead Door at Town Garage.
 4. **Approve Minutes: (emailed in advance)**
 - a. **Approve the Minutes of the 6-16-25 Selectboard Meeting:** Dennis motioned to approve the minutes from the June 16th Selectboard meeting, Richard seconded. Motion passed.
 5. **Listers Update – Danny Young & Shelly Martin:**
 - a. **FY25/26 Tax Rates – Education Tax Rate Homestead \$1.9171, Non-Homestead \$1.9812; Municipal Tax Rate Homestead and Non-Homestead \$0.9534; Veterans Exemption Tax Rate Homestead and Non-Homestead \$0.0062: (emailed in advance)** Danny noted that two veterans have not yet filed homestead declarations. Richard motioned to adopt the municipal (\$0.9534) and veterans' exemption (\$0.0062) tax rates for FY25/26, Dennis seconded. Motion passed. Richard motioned to not waive any late fees on tax payments, Dennis seconded. Motion passed.
 - b. **Annual Electric Transmission and Distribution Utility Valuation Assessment: (emailed in advance)** Danny explained that the legislature had the tax department change the way utilities are assessed. This resulted in a large change in the assessment in some towns. Vermont Electric Cooperative's Grand List Value for 2024 was \$2,253,200 and for 2025 it is \$1,660,300. Vermont Transco's Grand List Value for 2024 was \$139,100 and for 2025 it is \$121,700. These numbers are already incorporated into the new tax rate.
 6. **Library Report:**

- a. **Discuss Memorandum of Understanding between Library and Selectboard:** Karen and Jenn joined on behalf of the Library Board of Trustees. They presented the memorandum of understanding that they drafted using South Burlington's as a model. The Selectboard reviewed the document and had a few minor grammatical edits but felt that the document looked good overall. The Selectboard will send their edits to the Library Board of Trustees and look forward to approving this at next month's meeting. LaDonna questioned if the debit card was discussed at the last meeting and Karen noted that they would like to meet with Lisa before going further on that. Karen and Jenn noted that the flower box that was replaced in front of the library looks great.

7. Discuss Legal Trail Ordinance and Permit:

- a. **Revisit Compliance of Ordinance:** Jacques noted that the Selectboard appreciates the input from the public on the Ordinance. Bruce Johnson feels that the wording on adding gravel to roads is very vague, is there a time period of how often he can dump gravel, and does he need to come in to a Selectboard meeting each time he wants an exemption. He uses the road for sugaring and agricultural uses, and he would like something added regarding agricultural work. He also felt that there is extra wording in the terms and conditions of the permit that is not in the Ordinance. A clause about putting the road back into the same condition if not better should be added for logging. Lee Forbes questioned if they should come before the town before any logging happens. He noted the Orange Book states that they need to. Kurtis Johnson feels the Orange Book should be used to regulate the roads, it states that the town has no liability for what happens on the Legal Trails. He would like the wording in Section 5 subsection B to read, 'in excess of an agreed upon yardage will require selectboard approval or a permit'. Jacques questioned where the agreed upon number would come from, or what a realistic number would be. Dennis Vincent felt that an acceptable amount to repair the road, without putting an actual number, would work better. Ellen noted that the 24 yards was more for people who are just using the road to get to a camp, not people using the roads for agriculture. Ellen questioned where the gravel goes when you put loads on and then need to go back and do it again in the same year. Bruce noted it can wash out over time. Jacques felt that referencing the Orange Book would be good. Lee Forbes noted that it's good to regulate what is happening on the roads, but it's too restrictive. Ellen felt the exact amount could be removed but it could be an agreement with each person who is upgrading the roads. She also felt that this could be a one-time agreement and that people would not need to come back to the Selectboard every time they add gravel to the road. The Selectboard noted that the Ordinance was triggered by the change of use for one property owner on Crawford Trail. Steve Button questioned if the Ordinance was adopted already. The Selectboard explained that it was adopted at the June meeting but does not go into effect for 60 days and can be changed before that. Jacques also noted that this is needed in certain situations, like when loggers use the roads. Who covers the enforcement of the Ordinance was an issue that was brought up multiple times. Steve Button feels that the first person who gets the permit on the road is the person who will be responsible for the road forever, which leaves the other property owners off the hook for repairs. Ellen also noted that when people sell their property it can create issues. Richard suggested that only the people who apply for a change of use would need to get this permit. Kurtis felt that notification should have gone to the landowners prior to adoption of the Ordinance. Kurtis also feels that the permit fee is too high, and he does not think residents should have to pay it at all. The Selectboard agreed that they will take another look at the Ordinance and do some revisions. Dennis Vincent noted that the Selectboard may have focused too much on Crawford Trail and not enough on all the other legal trails in town. Richard motioned to send the Ordinance back to the committee to make revisions based on comments received at tonight's meeting, Dennis seconded. Motion passed. Bruce Johnson will be the point person to contact regarding Corrow Basin Road for future meetings regarding this. Dennis feels that the Ordinance should cover change of use, and the Orange Book should cover regular maintenance. It was

noted that the loggers don't let the town know that they are using the trails and there is no way to know if they damage the roads. Pat questioned if the town is authorized to make the loggers get a permit, she is willing to investigate that more. Jared Nunnery may be able to help get a list of the foresters in town. Ellen would like to invite him to the next work session. LaDonna noted that enforcing the Ordinance is going to be difficult in the town as there is not the staff to take this work on. Rosemary would like to see the Ordinance and enforcement stay in place. Tentative dates for a work session were set for August 11th or 25th, at 5pm. The date will be set once all parties confirm they are available to attend. Rosemary questioned what is going on currently on Crawford Trail Road. The Selectboard noted that the property owners are currently working on the road, and it looks to be well done. Richard noted that some culverts and water bars were put in. There were some larger rocks put into the area where the wetlands are, and no trees were cut. Rosemary noted that for some of the property owners it is their home, not a camp or pastime and she would like the board to remember this going forward.

8. Update on Village Wastewater Study:

- a. **Petition and Questions from Jennifer Grace: (emailed in advance)** Jacques spoke with Jennifer a few days prior and assured her that this is a study only at this point. The Selectboard agreed to not post the petition with the Selectboard minutes as there are no names on it.
- b. **Discuss Possible Presentation from Lynette at DEC:** Shelley noted that Lynette can give a 1-hour presentation on what to look for if the town decides to go forward with a wastewater project. LaDonna noted that she spoke with Lynette and typically she meets with Selectboards prior to the study, but she is willing to still give the presentation. She is planning on attending the meeting on the 24th of June. Pat noted that Tom Brown at the state is who recommended that the Selectboard move forward with the study phase.
- c. **Discuss Forming Wastewater Committee:** It was recommended to have people on the committee from all viewpoints.
- d. **Discuss Format and Refreshments for Public Meeting on July 24th:** AES Northeast will be in attendance to explain what they are currently doing for the study. Pat recommends that people submit their questions in writing at the beginning of the meeting and can give comments that don't require a response at the end of the meeting. Pat will be moderating the meeting and will keep it flowing. LaDonna would like the Selectboard to explain how this came about at the start of the meeting. The engineers should only be answering the technical questions, the Selectboard should explain the benefits to the town. Pat noted that this came up during the Zoning Bylaw process and she got the ball rolling as a citizen by getting in touch with Tom Brown at the State of Vermont. Jacques would like to explain that the accessory dwelling changes is what prompted this to come up during the Zoning Bylaw revision talks. Ellen noted that there is also no way to replace a lot of the systems in the village because of the high water table and lack of space. Ellen also felt at the time that this initially came up there was a lot of money available to help with these types of projects. LaDonna and Pat will speak with Lynette and AES Northeast to discuss the flow of the meeting. Jacques questioned looking into some more equipment in the future to help Zoom attendees see and hear the meetings better.

9. **Approve Local Emergency Management Plan (LEMP):** LaDonna sent this to the state, and they will look at it and give suggestions on any changes before the Selectboard approves it.

10. Treasurers Report – Lisa Deslandes:

- a. **Approve Warrants for June 6/03/25 \$5,657.13 (Bills), \$8,368.71 (Payroll); 6/10/25 \$20,089.33 (Bills); 6/16/25 \$19,491.20 (Bills), \$5,156.46 (Payroll); 6/24/25 \$49,595.76 (Bills); 6/30/25 \$25,674.69 (Bills): (emailed in advance)** Richard motioned to approve the warrants, Dennis seconded. Motion passed.
 - b. **Review General & Highway Fund Budget Status Reports: (emailed in advance)** Board reviewed.
 - c. **Review Investments: (emailed in advance)** Board reviewed.
 - d. **FY26 PILOT Payment - \$5,674: (emailed in advance)** Board reviewed. This is the payment the town receives for state land and buildings.
 - e. **FY26 Hold Harmless Payment - \$59,214: (emailed in advance)** Board reviewed. This is the payment the town receives for land enrolled in current use.
 - f. **Eric Kennison W2 for 2020: (emailed in advance)** In 2020 none of the W2's for the town employees were sent to the IRS. This issue has been resolved with everyone else, but Eric's accountant is still working on resolving the issue with his. The current bill Lisa has received for his accountant's time is \$320. The Selectboard agreed to pay the bill to Eric's accountant.
- 11. Highway Update – Eric Kennison:** Eric noted that there may be some complaints coming regarding Bathalon Farm Road as it's in disrepair again. The Selectboard discussed this issue with the property owner last year.
- a. **Grants In Aid Pre-Construction Scoping Summary GA0932 – To be Completed by 9/30/25:** Eric needs to find a site for this work.
 - b. **Sign Grants In Aid FY26 GA1165 Grant Agreement – To be completed by 9/30/26: (emailed in advance)** Board signed the grant agreement.
 - c. **Status of Selling/Disposing of Used Grader Tires and Sander:** These items have not been posted on Facebook yet. Ellen noted that VLCT also has a board to post used town equipment.
 - d. **Status of Culvert on School Street/ Ballground Road:** The property owner agreed to purchase the culvert and Eric will install it. He originally put in a culvert that wasn't appropriately sized, and it needs to be upgraded. Will Young has been speaking with the property owner regarding this. The owner of the property has applied for a driveway permit.
 - e. **Update on Corrow Basin Culvert:** Eric was sent preliminary drawings of the culvert. It went into production last Friday and will take 5-7 weeks before it's ready to be put in.
 - f. **Repair Door at Town Garage:** Lisa has been trying to get in contact with Ethan Bathalon to get the door repaired. The insurance company has been pressuring the town to get it done. Richard will try to get in touch with Ethan as soon as possible.
- 12. Update on MERP Grant Projects: (emailed in advance)** Lisa got the bill from Poulin Lumber for \$40,099.03 for the purchase price of all the windows. She spoke with D&D Electric, and they will change the lighting at the Community Center in September. The door being changed at the library will go to the Community Center when the work on the bathroom is done. There may need to be discussion with the Library Board of Trustees about closing the library while the bathroom is being renovated. Jeff Dunn is hoping to get the windows done around September/ October. There

are two tanks about $\frac{3}{4}$ full of fuel oil that are no longer needed, one at the Town Garage and one at the Community Center. The fuel can be used in the grader during the summer and can be winterized to be used in the winter. Eric would like to run the fuel through a filter first. Eric noted that in the past Robert Pion charged him \$85 an hour to pump fuel out. Eric felt if Mike Piper was willing to do the pump out the town could offer him some of the fuel to do that. Richard is interested in buying the tank at the Town Garage if the town wants to sell it. Richard felt the furnace at the Community Center might sell for \$1,000.

- 13. Discuss Ballground Property Complaint:** Laura and Chris Troian joined via Zoom to discuss the oil that was spilled on a property on Ballground Road. The area has been used to dispose of trash and cooking oil. There has also been a tractor trailer parked on the property for 4-5 years that is unregistered. They do not believe the trailer is used for agricultural purposes. Their biggest concern is the cooking oil that has spilled all over the ground and if it is contaminating the groundwater. They are also concerned with their property value decreasing due to this. Jacques explained that no notices of fines have been given. The town has consulted with the Town Attorney on this matter, and he did not feel that the cooking oil is considered a hazardous waste, it is not on the EPA hazardous waste list, although he **did** consider that it **could** affect the groundwater. The Troian's have reported the matter to the health board **already**. The health board did feel that the cooking oil is toxic. They also contacted Shelley Martin but have not been able to speak directly with her yet, they have left messages for each other. Laura questioned if a letter was sent to the property owner and Jacques confirmed that a letter was sent but no time period to get the property cleaned up was given. He did note that the trash was cleaned up, it is now in the trailer but is no longer on the ground. Dennis Vincent feels that the town has done what it can within their rights and that it may be up to the state to pursue this further. The Selectboard will look at the zoning bylaws to see if there is anything that can be done about the unregistered trailer on the property. They did speak to the son of the property owner, and he said he had figured out a way to dispose of the cooking oil in the future. Chris Troian noted that Pike Industries will take the used cooking oil to spray down their equipment.

14. Recycling Updates:

a. Schedule for August:

August 2nd – Richard Degre
August 9th – Maurice Doyon, Roger Tetreault
August 16th – Jacques Couture
August 23rd – Dennis Vincent
August 30th – Dennis Vincent

- b. Upcoming Mandatory Training: (emailed in advance)** Jacques would like to attend this.
- c. Compost and Sawdust:** There is plenty of sawdust. Shredded paper can also be used in place of sawdust.
- d. Discuss Raising Mattress/ Boxspring Prices:** The town is now being charged \$45 for every mattress and boxspring by the trash hauler. To save some money the mattresses can be broken down into the metal springs and two bags of trash and there is a video of how to do this on the town's website. Dennis motioned to charge \$45 for all size mattresses and boxsprings starting immediately, Richard seconded. Motion passed.

15. Sheriffs Report for May: (emailed in advance)

- a. Traffic Concerns on North Hill Road:** These are the same concerns that have previously been brought up.

16. Executive Session (if needed): Richard motioned to enter executive session at 7:46PM for personnel reasons, Dennis seconded. Motion passed. Exited executive session at 8:08PM.

Richard motioned to hire Ashley Guyette as the cleaner for the Library and the Town Office, pending her references, for \$30 per hour, Dennis seconded. Motion passed.

17. Other Business:

- a. **Letter to Selectboard from Sandy Snyder: (emailed in advance)** The board received her letters, and they appreciate the insight.
- b. **Thank You Card from Vermont Symphony Orchestra:** Informational.
- c. **Selectboard Email Accounts:** Niki can set up the new emails for the Selectboard at their convenience.

18. Adjourn: Dennis motioned to adjourn at 8:10PM, Richard seconded. Motion passed.

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

X

Jacques Couture
Selectboard Chair

X

Richard Degre
Selectboard

X

Dennis Vincent
Selectboard