

**Wolcott Selectboard Meeting
Minutes
March 6, 2019**

All Minutes are draft until approved by the Selectboard.
Please see future Minutes for approval of these Minutes.

Present: Eric Furs, Kimberly Gravel, Michael Davidson, Jennifer Holton-Clapp,
Richard Lee
Town Employees: Linda Martin, Bernard Earle
Public: Kurt Klein, Belinda Clegg, Bill Cotten, Ryan Bjerke, Joe Hester-Ingram,
Lucien Gravel
Guest: Tyler Billingsley, East Engineering
Reporter: Doug McClure, *Hardwick Gazette*

Eric called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

Motion by Eric to enter executive session to address labor relations with employees. Seconded by Michael. Voting: All in favor. Entered executive session at 6:04 p.m.

Meeting was called back to order by Eric at 6:23 p.m. No action taken as a result of executive session.

Organizational Meeting of Selectboard:

Election of Chair: Motion by Kim for Eric to serve as Chair. Seconded by Richard. Voting: All in favor.

Election of Vice Chair: Motion by Eric for Kim to serve as Vice Chair. Seconded by Michael. Voting: All in favor.

Election of Clerk: Motion by Eric for Michael to serve as Clerk. Seconded by Richard. Voting: All in favor.

Adopt Rules of Procedure: Motion by Eric to table until the next regular meeting. Seconded by Michael. Voting: All in favor. This is to allow for additional discussion about possible revisions.

Set Date and Time of Regularly Scheduled Meetings: Motion by Eric to meet the first and third Wednesdays of each month. Seconded by Richard. Voting: All in favor.

Designation of Newspaper for Notices: Motion by Kim to designate the *News & Citizen* as the newspaper for notices. Seconded by Jennifer. Voting: All in favor.

Amendments to the Agenda

Assistant to the Selectboard: Michael began the discussion regarding a new position of Assistant to the Selectboard. Michael distributed to the board members copies of three different job descriptions.

The first description is for a Selectboard Clerk. The Clerk would handle such duties as preparing the Agenda, preparing Minutes, and managing the website. It is envisioned this position would be five to ten hours per week.

The second description is for a Selectboard Assistant. The Assistant would work on Town Policies and Ordinance revision, office management procedures, would work in the office during the day, assure coordination, work on grants, manage the landfill, and public relations duties. This position would be 20 hours per week.

The third description is for an Assistant Administrator. The duties of this position would be a combination of the Selectboard Assistant and Zoning Administrator. This position would be 30 hours per week, and would qualify for insurance coverage.

The Selectboard was asked what prompted the discussion now. Eric stated the board needs to be informed, make knowledgeable decisions, and operate the Town more effectively. Michael added this is not the Town Clerk's job. Bill Cotten said he and John Wheeler made a presentation to the Selectboard before the budget was put together in favor of an administrative assistant.

It was pointed out that the board is suggesting restructuring the positions of existing employees. When asked what money the board has available to move around, Kim stated it would be the money for the Zoning Administrator, a portion of the fund balance, and cutting the hours of the Assistant Town Clerk position to 16 hours.

It was pointed out that in order to use the funds budgeted for the Zoning Administrator, the Board would have to fire the current Zoning Administrator whose term does not end for two years. It was also pointed out that the voters already accepted the budget for the Assistant Town Clerk at the normal hours. The board was encouraged to not act hastily, but to be thoughtful and transparent since a change would impact others. Eric indicated this is just the beginning of a discussion. Bill stated he would like to see the 30 hours per week option, but does not want to see anyone hurt by that. Maybe have another town meeting and look at additional finances. It was suggested that what is needed is what is in the best interest of the Town. Richard stated the 20 hours per week option might be a good choice to get it started. When the Zoning Administrator's term is up, then it could be rolled into the new position. There is concern no one would take the position if benefits are not included. Jenn is nervous about meeting responsibilities when the board does not have two people in the office, and what knowledge and experience a new hire might have. She feels this position is in the best interest of the town. Concern was expressed about the board following hiring procedures, with proper advertisement and interviewing. There is worry the position is being designed for a specific person. Another idea was to make the position 40 hours per week and have the new position oversee the road foreman as well. It was suggested going with the Clerk position initially and then see what duties need to be added on. Then plans could be made for the next budget. Michael's concern is the person starting out in the Clerk position would not have the requirements needed for an Administrator, so then the Clerk would need to be fired. Linda said that in the past, boards have had someone working five hours per week, but that person relied too much on the Clerk to tell them what to do, so it did not work well. Michael indicated that to start, perhaps there could be a Selectboard Assistant and then when the current Zoning Administrator's position is up, that person could take over zoning and the position would be expanded to a full-time Town Administrator. That time could be used as a probationary period for the employee. It was suggested no one will work 20 hours per week because there are no benefits. Linda pointed out that the Town policy could be changed so that a part-time person at 20 hours per week could have some benefits. Also, some people get insurance through a spouse, or they could be offered a stipend. The concern there would be whether other part-time Town employees would then be eligible for some benefits that they do not now receive. It was added that a person who can chase down grants could really pay for their position. Eric stated that a lot of towns will hire a full-time grant writer. Michael stated the 20 hours per week job could be bumped up another 10 hours and they could seek out grants. Then when the Zoning Administrator leaves, that duty could be added to increase the hours.

Motion by Eric to table the discussion until later in the meeting. Seconded by Richard. Voting: All in favor.

Once discussion resumed, Linda stated that if the board is taking funds away from the Assistant Clerk budget, and it is legal, then she will need to adjust the job description before she can advertise the position. Linda will get back to the board on the number of hours she feels would be needed for the position, eliminating hours previously spent working on board matters. Michael stated the board will check into the legality of decreasing the hours of the current Assistant Clerk position, as well as the legality of moving funds from one line item to another.

It was pointed out that at yesterday's Town Meeting the board seemed to be considering administrative restructuring of the Town and how it works. The question was whether this new position plays into that. The board acknowledged that it is a step in that direction. The board will research what is involved and what the benefits would be. It would be replacing an antiquated model. Linda explained that towns are instrumentalities of the State and have to follow State law. A town can create a Charter, and thereby deviate from State law. Voters would have to vote on the changes and it would have to go through the legislature for approval. Towns usually appoint a Charter Committee to determine ways in which they want to deviate from certain State laws. The question arose as to who is in charge of the Town. A consultant may be needed. Eric referenced a VT Digger article about small towns professionalizing by switching from a Town Clerk to a Town Manager position. He will check into that. Title 24 of the Vermont Statutes pertains to municipal government. The board was reminded that some of these decisions can be made down the road, but there is a more immediate problem. It was suggested there may need to be a Town Meeting to ask for additional money. The board views this to be a transitional position. The position is based on a job description in Duxsbury. The position would exist for at least one year, and other changes would have to be presented to the citizenry at a series of special meetings. The question arose as to who would train the individual. It was pointed out that a full-time person in Hyde Park is paid about \$60,000 per year. Concern was expressed that this issue has arisen now, and it was not brought up the day before at Town Meeting.

Eric suggested scheduling another meeting after some fact-finding. Motion to schedule a Special Meeting for Wednesday, March 13, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. to discuss the Selectboard Assistant position. Seconded by Michael. Voting: All in favor.

Tyler Billingsly - North Wolcott Road Repairs: Tyler Billingsly, East Engineering, was in charge of the bidding process for repairs to the North Wolcott Road. Six bids were received by February 21. Tyler submitted to the board a letter of recommendation to award the bid to the low bidder, G. W. Tatro Construction in Jeffersonville. The bid is for \$160,180. Of that, about \$33,000 is contingent earth work, if that is needed. If that work is not needed, the amount could come in a little lower. Tyler pointed out that about 50 to 70 feet of the stone bank has eroded uphill. If the board wishes that to be repaired, it would be an additional \$2,550 cost to the Town. The board can decide later, but it makes sense to do it at the same time. Jim Cota with VTrans has no problem with the bid. The VTrans portion is 80/20. The next step is for the board to decide whether to sign the contract. Work would start in May or June once the water comes down. Motion by Kim to accept the bid from G. W. Tatro Construction for \$160,180. Eric amended to add the line item for \$2,550 for stone. Seconded by Richard. Voting: all in favor.

Approval of Minutes: Motion by Eric to approve the Minutes of the February 20, 2019 Selectboard meeting as written. Seconded by Kim. Voting: All in favor.

New Business:

Receipt of Funds - Hyde Park/Wolcott Revolving Loan Fund: This year's check is in the amount of \$3,993.68. Motion by Kim to designate the \$3,993.68 to the Highway account for the North Wolcott Road repairs. Seconded by Michael. Voting: All in favor.

2020 Annual Letter to Towns from Jim Cota: VTrans Regional District Manager, Jim Cota, sent an informational letter addressing many issues that will be reviewed by the Selectboard.

Vermont Emergency Management Request: A letter was received from Alexa Repko, Assistant Planner with Lamoille County Planning Commission (LCPC), requesting formal permission to share Local Emergency Management Plan (LEMP) information with Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) members upon request. Ryan Bjerke indicated there should be no problem related to the sharing of information. Motion by Eric to sign the letter agreeing to share information. Seconded by Richard. Voting: All in favor.

Old Business:

Insurance Coverage - Linda Martin: Kim stated that prior to signing payroll orders last week regarding insurance for Linda, she wished to hear the audio recording of the December 16, 2018 Selectboard meeting for which she had been absent. At that meeting, Linda presented to the board that she had been informed she no longer qualified for the Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS) family plan and that she had to apply for Medicare. In order to get BCBS supplemental insurance, she would have to apply for Medicare Part B as well. In reviewing the audio tape, Kim heard Linda discuss a family policy, but the orders submitted for signature consisted of two separate policies: one for Linda and one for her spouse, Tom. Linda pointed out there is to be family coverage, and this is covering a family. Kim stated BCBS will not give a family policy. Eric stated since it is not a family plan, it is against board policy to insure someone who works 12 hours per week like Tom. Eric stated there is a possibility the board acted against Town policy. The board does not want to set a precedent for insuring someone who works 12 hours per week. It was pointed out that at the December meeting the board agreed to cover insurance costs for Linda and her spouse going forward, and that it was a savings to the Town of about \$11,000 by not having the BCBS family plan. Eric stated that just because Linda used to have family coverage, it does not mean she qualifies anymore. The board was asked if it is a penalty for an employee to turn 65. Eric read section 17 of the town policies. It was pointed out to the board that the policy can be amended. The board does not wish to set a precedent. Although the policy does not specifically address "family" plan, it is a plan that is available through BCBS.

Eric said the board also picked up the Medicare Part B for Linda which they should not do, because that could set a precedent for other employees. Jenn stated she had no idea that Medicare was an individual plan. Eric believes Linda is entitled to what coverage she can get from BCBS, and that consists of only an individual plan. Linda pointed out that she has to have Part B in order to qualify for the supplemental insurance from BCBS. It was pointed out that the insurance issue needs to be looked at hard because it has the potential of being discriminatory. Jenn proposed that the board look at what happens when an employee turns 65. Richard feels that given the amount of money the Town has saved, it is a small thing and worth the change of policy to cover Part B. It was suggested that the policy can be changed to read that any full-time employee who reaches the age of 65 with a family plan is entitled to BCBS coverage and reimbursement for Part B. It was pointed out that on one hand there can be a strict interpretation of the town policy, and on the other a desire to maintain the type of coverage that was available prior to turning 65 in order to help employees and their family not go belly-up.

Motion by Eric to rescind the motion made by Richard at the December 19, 2018 meeting regarding health insurance for Linda and Tom according to Article 37 of Robert's Rules of Order, allowing Linda to keep the money she has already received to reimburse her for Part B, and the Selectboard will investigate what to do moving forward regarding covering Part B for full-time employees age 65 and over. Seconded by Jenn. Voting: All in favor.

Motion by Richard to authorize Kim to sign the orders relating to the BCBS insurance payment and reimbursement to Linda for Part B coverage based upon the previous motion, and due to the error made by the board. Seconded by Michael. Voting: All in favor.

Motion by Kim that until Town policies are reviewed, and information is collected by Jenn, and a change is made, that the board not cover Part B expenses for full-time employees. Seconded by Richard. Voting: All in favor.

Motion to Adjourn: Motion by Kim to adjourn the meeting at 8:55 p.m. Seconded by Richard. Voting: All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Deborah Klein

*A Special Selectboard Meeting is scheduled for March 13, 2019
The next regularly scheduled Selectboard Meeting will be March 20, 2019*