

Wolcott Selectboard Meeting Minutes August 7, 2019

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

Present: Eric Furs, Richard Lee, Michael Davidson, Jennifer Holton-Clapp
Absent: Kimberly Gravel
Town Employees: Linda Martin, Allison Bigelow, Skip Patten, Bernard Earle
Public: Lucian Gravel, Kurt Klein, Linda Brady, Bill Cotten, Monica Cross, Greg Williams, John Wheeler, Chad Roy, Jim Paradee
Reporter: Doug McClure, *Hardwick Gazette*

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

Amendments to the Agenda:

Contract with Auditors: The board reviewed the document from Fothergill, Segale & Valley, CPA, outlining contractual requirements for conducting a Town audit. Motion by Richard to approve the document for signature. Seconded by Michael. Voting: All in favor.

Road Crew: Jim Paradee is available to assist the Highway Department with grading Town roads until a permanent employee is hired. Jim will contact Michael to discuss whether Jim will work as a Town employee or as an independent contractor, and what his rate of pay would be.

Letter from Tom Martin: The letter received from Tom Martin was made a part of the record. Michael advised the board had previously approved a salary adjustment for Tom Martin as lead lister. Motion by Michael to set the hourly salary of lead lister to \$17. Seconded by Richard. Voting: All in favor.

Comments from the Community:

Chad Roy stated the School House Restoration Committee would like to be on the Agenda for the August 21 Selectboard meeting. Eric indicated the estimates for repairs Chad submitted at the last meeting have been reviewed. Linda Brady stated she recently attended a workshop where funding sources were discussed. Chad and/or Linda will email Selectboard members by Friday with additional information.

Greg Williams commented on the poor appearance of the flower pot in the parking lot along Vt Rt. 15. Eric agreed to look into the matter. Greg expressed concern about getting experienced operators to work for the Highway Department if the starting salaries are too low. Greg inquired as to the rental rate for the temporary bridge on School Street, and whether VTrans can raise the rate at some point in the future. Greg pointed out that everything the Town does costs more money in the future. He advised the board to look ahead, and pointed out the old bridge should have been repaired years ago. The board confirmed the Town has a contract with VTrans to pay \$202 per month to rent the temporary bridge. The board also pointed out that the State does not recommend two-way traffic on the bridge. The Town could allow two-way traffic, but would have to accept liability for accidents that could occur. Eric stated the temporary bridge will remain one-way.

The Agenda was amended to address Highway Department issues at this point in the meeting. Discussion ensued regarding bids for blacktopping on Town Hill Road. Skip will follow up.

Claude Cross has left his employ with the Highway Department. Skip, as foreman, is the only full-time employee remaining on the Highway Department. There are two vacancies. Bernard offered to assist the Highway Department on a temporary basis by hauling sand or serving as an emergency crew member. Motion by Eric to employ Bernard Earle to work with the Highway Department on a temporary basis as needed at an hourly rate of \$20. Seconded by Richard. Voting: All in favor.

The board was asked about the status of the Vermont Town Road & Bridge Standards that expired July 31. Eric will look into it.

The board was asked about how money collected from tickets issued in Wolcott by the Sheriff's Office is distributed, and what percentage is provided to the Town. It was suggested that the State should provide assistance to small towns for policing issues.

Approval of Minutes of July 17, 2019: Motion by Eric to approve the July 17 Minutes as written. Seconded by Richard. Voting: All in favor.

Allison Bigelow, Assistant Town Clerk - Introduction: Linda Martin introduced to the board Allison Bigelow, who is serving as the Assistant Town Clerk. Allison lived on Town Hill Road for many years. She currently has family living in Wolcott. The board welcomed Allison to her new role in the Town Office.

Kurt Klein - Resource Allocation: Eric thanked Kurt for sending to board members an email in advance of the meeting outlining what he wished to discuss. Eric stated it helps to be able to read and think about the information in advance. That can help expedite meetings. Kurt stated he wants to raise a red flag regarding the vote at the Special Town Meeting on August 14 to transfer funds for use in paying for a full-time Town Administrator (TA). Given that the road crew is diminished, he expressed concern about spending priorities. He believes a competitive salary structure needs to be in place now to attract qualified applicants for the road crew considering there is a small pool of experienced workers from which to draw. Base level pay in Morrisville, Hardwick and Johnson is \$25 per hour. While Jim and Bernard have stepped up to assist Skip, that is only a temporary solution. Kurt appreciated the board's earlier action regarding the salary for the lead lister position. Kurt pointed out that the overall morale of Town employees is important, and competitive compensation should take priority over a full-time TA position. He suggested the TA could start as temporary, or part-time, until a full-time TA budget can be voted upon. While Kurt sees the need for a TA, he reiterated his concern about prioritizing how the money will be spent. He analogized that the board needs to fix the foundation before putting on a new roof.

Michael stated he is open minded to Kurt's ideas, but hopes the board can do both. Eric pointed out that it was a committee that came up with the idea for a full-time TA. Jenn opined that people don't stay in their jobs because of money; they may have a passion. Bill Cotten is in favor of transferring the \$20,000 from the capital fund to go towards paying a TA. He pointed out that the board does not know now how the process will go. It may be the board will only find someone to work part-time.

Bill said the board cannot view the TA as the answer to all problems. He suggested that the board address two issues right away before a TA would be hired: 1) the road crew, and 2)

insurance for an employee age 65 or older. Duncan Hastings could be consulted, or there could be a working committee. Kurt agreed and pointed to the work Monica Cross did for the board on the insurance issue. Eric said he cannot make a decision on insurance. The board needs a consultant. It was suggested a committee would be a good idea. It was pointed out that Townspeople can help. A committee to address health insurance for employees age 65 and older was formed. Volunteers include: Kurt Klein, Bill Cotten, Monica Cross, Linda Martin, and Michael Davidson.

New Business:

Set Tax Rate: Linda presented to the board a spreadsheet showing how the tax rate was determined. The Homestead tax rate is 2.3682. The non-residential tax rate is 2.3480. Motion by Eric to accept the tax rate as presented. Seconded by Michael. Voting: All in favor.

VT DOC Agreement for Community Service Work: The board reviewed the agreement submitted by the Vermont Department of Corrections for community service work done at the transfer station. Motion by Eric to accept and sign the agreement. Seconded by Richard. Voting: All in favor.

Unfinished Business:

Reed Road accepted as C3 Town Highway (TH#10): A section of land along Reed Road has been deeded to the Town for use as a turn-around for road equipment, as required. Motion by Eric to accept Reed Road as a C3 Town Highway. Seconded by Richard. Voting: All in favor.

Report on accepting Pinnacle Lane as a Town Highway: The board reviewed a document listing a number of conditions that must be addressed in order for Pinnacle Lane to be taken over by the Town. Motion by Eric to accept and sign the document as presented. Seconded by Michael. Voting: All in favor.

Review Correspondence:

Sign Payroll and other Orders: Done

Transfer Station Audit Sheets: Reviewed.

State of Vermont - Department of Taxes: Reviewed.

VLCT Announcement: A Municipal Budget Workshop will be held September 18.

Tom Martin, lead lister: The letter from Tom Martin was addressed during Amendments to the Agenda.

Adjourn: Motion by Michael to adjourn the meeting at 7:39 p.m. Seconded by Jenn. Voting: All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Deborah Klein

*Special Town Meeting - August 14, 2019
The next regular Selectboard Meeting - August 21, 2019*