

Wolcott Selectboard Meeting Minutes October 16, 2019

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

Present: Kim Gravel, Richard Lee, Michael Davidson, Eric Furs
Absent: Jenn Holton-Clapp
Town Employees: Bernard Earle, Lucien Gravel
Guests: Rob Moore, Paul Marangelo
Public: Mary Harris, Robert Harris, Judy Ward, Sally Martin, Lia L, Alyssa Martin, Karen McKee, Kurt Billings, Cindy Lowell, Don Lowell, Dave Holton, Mike Green, Bill Cotten, Kurt Klein, Diane Olson, Deborah Williams, Monica Cross, Greg Williams, Phil Teale
Reporter: Doug McClure, *Hardwick Gazette*

The meeting was called to order by Eric at 6:04 p.m.

Comments from the Community:

The Ordinance Committee is drafting an amendment to the Junk Ordinance to address “free piles” and would like to have the changes reviewed by Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT). The board wants to review the changes before it is submitted to VLCT.

The board was asked about the progress on the eviction proceeding on the Town-owned property on East Hill Road. Eric stated the attorney has requested a copy of the deed. Eric will follow up on the status.

It was brought to the board’s attention that a loose panel on the School Street bridge needs to be tightened before winter.

The board was asked about the resignation of Skip Patten as Highway Foreman. When asked why Skip resigned, Eric stated the board had received a two-sentence email from the Town Office informing them Skip was resigning and had given his two week notice. Eric stated he did not know why Skip resigned. It was suggested that the board does know why Skip quit; that someone was hired to tell him what to do. It was suggested that the Town has never been run like this before; that a lot of new people have come in who don’t know what they are doing. The board was asked where ads for road crew positions have been posted. Eric said he could not speak to the process, that it is done through the Town Office. Eric stated that there has been a period of time when the board has not received any applications. Part of the reason the board brought the Commissioner on is because it just wasn’t happening, and ads have been running since May. It is something the board will look into. One individual volunteered to help run equipment in an emergency. It was suggested that when there are jobs, and no people to fill them, it is cheaper to offer no benefits, plus five holidays and unlimited unpaid vacations and pay \$30 per hour rather than pay \$20 per hour with benefits. The board has discussed this. Another individual said she feels bad about losing Skip after so many years, and losing Bernard. The board was asked whether they wanted to find out what they could do keep them or help them. Eric stated that Skip hasn’t called him. The board feels it has been fair. Skip just received a raise; the third raise in two years. The board said Skip had agreed to work with Lucien and they do not know what went wrong. Kim agreed that the board needs to talk with Skip. One individual suggested that the road crew has not been working hard enough the last three years.

The board was asked if there should be a major snowstorm in a week and a half, whether the Town is ready. Eric said it is up to Skip and Bernard, if they stay for as long as they have said. The board will talk to Lucien about the time after that. Bernard stated the sand is all in, but the salt has not been ordered and the trucks are not yet set up. It was suggested this Town has a big problem that won't go away without people with the expertise jumping in to help solve this. He went on to say that we are close to being a dead Town walking right now.

Approval of Minutes of October 2, 2019: The board asked that the Minutes be amended by adding the sentence: "But the board concluded it was against Town Policy" following the first sentence on page 2: "Kim pointed out that Linda could have kept her insurance as it was, but presented the board with a much better deal to save the Town money." Motion by Eric to approve the Minutes as amended. Seconded by Richard. Voting: All in favor.

Budget Hearing - Fire Warden: The board reviewed the written request for \$850.00 for the next fiscal year. The amount requested is an increase of \$50 over the current budget. The basis for the increase is due to increased mileage required to look at burn sites to service permits. Also, there has been an increase in the amount of paperwork required by the State. Motion by Michael to approve the request of \$850. Seconded by Kim. Voting: All in favor.

Paul Marangelo - Fort Hill Bridge Project: Paul Marangelo, Senior Conservation Ecologist with the Nature Conservancy in Vermont, provided an update to a presentation that had previously been given to the Town regarding the removal of the Fort Hill bridge. Funding for the project was secured about two years ago. Removal of the bridge will benefit wildlife moving through the area, and should help alleviate ice jams in the Wild Branch. Paul addressed several questions from the community. Once the bridge, which is owned by the Town, is removed it will be given to the Nature Conservancy. Removal of the bridge should start next summer or fall.

Rob Moore, LCPC - Road Erosion Inventory Project: Rob Moore, Regional Transportation Planner with Lamoille County Planning Commission, provided a brief overview of the road inventory being done to comply with the Municipal Road General Permit (MRGP). The MRGP is to reduce stormwater erosion from municipal roads. The plan will bring road drainage systems up to basic standards. Full compliance is required by 2036. The inventory is being conducted in 100 meter segments. Rob hopes the road inventory for Wolcott will be completed in the next couple of weeks. Once the field work has been completed, a tentative five year work plan will be developed. Additional presentations will be given to the board before the end of the year.

New Business:

Paving on North Wolcott Road: Discussion ensued regarding repairs to the North Wolcott Road following the Pepsi truck accident, reimbursement for repairs, and the need for guardrails.

Personnel Policy: The board received from VLCT a 36-page sample policy than can be amended for the Town. VLCT can assist in that process, and review at the end.

Unfinished Business:

Reflectors on guardrails at VT Rte 15 and East Hill Road: Since the guardrails are State property, District 8 will send a foreman to look at the issue.

Town Hall Handicap Ramp: The insurance carrier for the Town requires that the ramp be repositioned for safety reasons. The board was provided with an estimate for the work. The board wants to seek additional estimates.

Winterizing Depot Building: N.A. Manosh wants to access the building in order to provide an estimate on the cost of winterizing.

Road Crew Staffing: The board received a resignation letter on October 15 from Skip Patten. Skip's last day as Highway Foreman will be October 29. Lucien thinks there may be two people who can start work on the road crew November 1. Lucien has talked with two other people who are interested in the Foreman job. The board will let Lucien use his judgment in discussing salary and benefits with job prospects. Following his negotiations, he can come back to the board. It was suggested the board create a salary scale for the road crew and make it part of the personnel policy. The board discussed changing the insurance plan for the Highway Department. The issue of salt was raised again. Bernard said there is enough salt on hand for half a snowstorm. Lucien would like to contact Manosh, Salvias, Gravel, and Grimes to get cost estimates for sand for next season.

Reclassification of Reed Road to Class III - Sign Report: The Highway Department will use the turnaround at the top of the road this season. Motion by Eric to sign the reclassification document making Reed Road a Class III road. Seconded by Richard. Voting: 3 in favor, Kim recused herself from the vote since that is the road on which she lives.

Town Road and Bridge Standards: The board will work on this.

School Children Visit Selectboard Meeting: Eric had emailed the 6th grade teacher, but will now email the 4th grade teacher. The board feels it would be better to have school children attend Town Meeting rather than a Selectboard meeting.

Solar Signs: Lucien reported that a post is now in for one of the solar speed limit signs. It was suggested the speed limit on VT Rte 15 coming from Hardwick and approaching East Hill Road be lowered to 35. Eric stated the Town cannot change the speed limit on a State highway.

Beaver baffles: The board was shown photos of the beaver dams along East Hill Road. Part of a dam has been removed. Baffles may be added next year.

Review Correspondence:

Town Hall Rental Requests: Motion by Kim to grant rental request for 10/27/2019 from 1:00-6:00 p.m. Seconded by Eric. Voting: All in favor. No alcohol will be served. Motion by Kim to grant rental request for 11/24/2019 from 10:00-5:00 p.m. Seconded by Michael. Voting: All in favor. No alcohol will be served.

Transfer Station Audit Sheet: Reviewed.

Sheriff's Office - September Report: Received. A discussion ensued regarding the services provided to the Town by the Sheriff's Office. It was stated that calls have been made to the Sheriff's Office reporting crimes, but the Sheriff's Office does not respond. Michael will get more information and then follow up with the Sheriff's Office. It was also mentioned that there are a great number of speeders on VT Rte 15 through town between 5:00 a.m. and 7:00 a.m. and when school gets out. Eric said the Sheriff's Office can be contacted to conduct a directed patrol.

Efficiency Vermont offer: Michael will follow up.

Sign Payroll and other Orders: Done.

Michael referenced a discussion at the last meeting about changes to the insurance policy for employees 65 and over. The board may have some modifications to wording, but it doesn't change the intent. The changes will be sent to the VLCT legal department on Monday. Eric stated the wording should be finalized by the next meeting.

Adjourn: Motion by Eric to adjourn at 7:50 p.m. Seconded by Kim. Voting: All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Deborah Klein

The next regular Selectboard meeting - November 6, 2019