

**Wolcott Special Selectboard Meeting
Minutes
December 30, 2020**

Virtual Meeting/Phone-in: 6:00 p.m.

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

Present: Linda Martin, Kurt Klein, Kurt Billings
Absent: Kim Gravel, Richard Lee
Employees: Randall Szott, Belinda Harris Clegg, Deb Klein
Present: Bruce Wheeler, Eric Furs, Jim Olsen, Peter Danforth, Lusana Masrur,
Ayeshah Raftery
Reporter: Doug McClure, *Hardwick Gazette*

Martin called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Amendments to the Agenda: None.

Approve Minutes of December 16, 2020: Motion by Klein to accept the December 16 Minutes as written. Seconded by Billings. Voting: All 3 in favor.

Comments from the Community: Eric Furs wanted to respond to emails he had received from the Town Administrator and the listers office regarding his lister position. It was suggested Eric may wish to contact the Vermont Department of Taxes. Klein and Martin have reached out to the listers to address Eric's concerns.

Highway Department: No report.

New Business:

North Country Animal League (NCAL) Appropriation Request: Lusana Masrur, Development & Communication Manager for NCAL, provided to the board an overview of the many services they provide to Wolcott and other areas for stray and surrendered dogs and cats. This has been a tough year in which they have seen a reduction in revenue. NCAL is seeking a first time \$1,000 appropriation from the Town. Motion by Klein to include NCAL's request for a \$1,000 appropriation as a separate article on the Warning for Town Meeting. Seconded by Billings. Voting: All 3 in favor.

Lamoille County Conservation District Appropriation Request: Peter Danforth, Director, reviewed how the organization has assisted Wolcott residents in the past, and how help with projects can be provided to the Town in the future. They are seeking an appropriation of \$500. Martin sits on the organization's board, so would recuse herself from voting. With only two other Selectboard members present, a motion could not carry. Matter will be continued to the January 6, 2021 meeting.

Prevent Child Abuse VT Appropriation Request: Ayesah Raftery, Development Director, spoke to the board about their mission statement and the services they provide to Wolcott residents and others in the area. They are seeking a first time appropriation of \$200. Motion by Klein to include Prevent Child Abuse VT's request for a \$200 appropriation as a separate article on the Warning for Town Meeting. Seconded by Billings. Voting: All 3 in favor.

Report from Law Enforcement Committee: Jim Olsen serves as Wolcott's representative on the Law Enforcement Study Group. The group consists of representatives from Wolcott, Johnson, Hyde Park, and the Sheriff's Office. Jim reported that he is gathering data on services provided by the Sheriff's Office to the Town of Wolcott, particularly response times and results for calls for service. The group is seeking to determine how the Sheriff's budget is figured out for each Town, and what options besides the Sheriff's Office may exist for providing law enforcement services. Olsen is hopeful the Sheriff will meet with the group soon. The Selectboard is looking forward to seeing the Sheriff's proposed budget for the next fiscal year. The board thanked Olsen for his efforts in this group.

Report from Communication Union District (CUD) Representative: Bruce Wheeler has been representing Wolcott as part of the NEK Community Broadband group. The group is working to bring high speed internet to every home and business at an affordable price. The CUD consists of 27 Towns. The CUD is looking at grants right now. Christine Hallquist has been hired. Although the CUD is moving along, it may be awhile before Wolcott sees fiber. Bruce stated Michael Davidson is again willing to serve as Wolcott's primary representative on the CUD, with Bruce serving as the alternate. Motion by Klein to reestablish Michael Davidson as Wolcott's primary CUD representative with Bruce Wheeler as the alternate. Seconded by Billings. Voting: All 3 in favor. The board thanked Bruce for his work.

Final Budget Review: Klein noted that while many departments have submitted their proposed budgets for 2021-2022, not all have. There has been no budget proposal received from the Sheriff's Office or Hardwick Rescue. What has been received so far will be put into a spreadsheet for board members to review before the January 6 meeting.

Town Report Scheduling: It was noted that not all departments have submitted their individual department reports to be included in the Town Report. Those departments will be encouraged to meet the January 6 deadline.

Selectboard Town Report: Board members are to pull together bullet points for what should be included in the Selectboard's report.

Unfinished Business:

Maintenance job: Klein and Szott had an initial phone conversation with the applicant. Follow up will take place.

Mailbox Policy: The board was provided with a copy of a proposed policy reflecting changes that had been discussed at the December 16 meeting. The board has the option of adopting a policy whereby a mailbox destroyed by the Town's snowplow may be replaced with a standard

mailbox, or have no policy. Discussion ensued. Motion by Billings to adopt the Mailbox Policy. Seconded by Klein. Voting: All 3 in favor.

Approve Minutes of December 2, 2020: Tabled to the January 6, 2021 meeting.

Town Meeting Australian Ballot Discussion: The board discussed the advantages, and the challenges, of going to Australian ballot instead of a floor vote at an open meeting on Town Meeting day. Due to the pandemic, the board does not think it safe to hold an open meeting. Even if the public were allowed in the school gym, only 50 people would be able to attend given social distancing. The board can hold a virtual informational meeting at least 10 days before Town Meeting day. Information could also be disseminated through Front Porch Forum. The State Legislature still needs to approve Town's going with Australian ballot instead of holding a regular Town Meeting. Motion by Klein to adopt the Australian ballot format for the 2021 Town Meeting, assuming it is approved by the legislature. Seconded by Billings. Voting: All 3 in favor.

Note Taker for Law Enforcement Committee: The Law Enforcement Study Group has requested the participating Towns of Wolcott, Johnson, and Hyde Park to contribute to the costs of a scribe for their meetings. Discussion ensued. Jim Olsen, Wolcott's representative will gather more information for the board before a decision is made.

Executive Session: Motion by Klein to enter executive session to discuss personnel issues. Seconded by Billings. Voting: All 3 in favor. Szott was invited to participate. The board entered executive session at 7:48 p.m. The board came out of executive session at 8:25 p.m. No action was taken.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by Deborah Klein

Next regularly scheduled meeting - January 6, 2021