

Wolcott Selectboard Meeting Minutes September 1, 2021

Wolcott Town Office/Zoom/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, Allen Carpenter, Richard Lee, Kurt Billings
Employees: Randall Szott, Belinda Harris Clegg, Chan Judd, Sr., Deb Klein
Public: Cresta Perkins, Leonard Percy, Lucien Gravel, Diane Olson, Karen
McKee, Ruthanna Demag, Crystal Judd, Monica Cross, Dolan Patrick
Reporter: Doug McClure, *Hardwick Gazette*

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

Amendments to the Agenda: Clegg requested “Audit” be added to New Business. Klein requested “Girl Scouts Tree Planting” and “Grant Approval” be added to New Business, an executive session be added after Unfinished Business, and to move Back Taxes/Payment Plans up in the Agenda.

Approve Minutes of August 18, 2021: Motion by Billings to approve the Minutes of August 18.
Seconded by Lee. Discussion: None. Voting: All in favor.

Comments from the Community/Correspondence: Chan Judd asked the board if the Town is buying a forest, and if so, why. Martin outlined the history of the elementary school’s interest in having an outdoor classroom. Several municipalities throughout Vermont have a Town Forest. The Trust for Public Land has contacted owners of potential forest properties to determine if they might be interested in selling. The agency is also working on potential funding. Regardless of the acreage, the final cost to the Town would be \$25,000. Other funding would come from grants. There are groups interested in using the land for various recreational activities, and events. Other potential uses could be sugaring or timber. No commitment has been made. The Community Engagement and Vision for the Town event on September 10 is a great time for people to get information on the forest and other topics, and to express their thoughts.

Judd also brought up the anonymously-written letter that has been going around town. Judd said whoever wrote about the roads and the road crew has no idea what they are talking about. He was appalled by the letter. Judd stated that if someone wants to voice their opinion, they should come to a meeting and do it in person. Martin thanked Judd and the road crew for their work.

Highway Department

Road Foreman Resignation: Martin announced that Dillan Cafferky called to inform her he is resigning as Foreman. Cafferky is leaving on the grounds of stress, and negativity in the Town. Cafferky feels he has worked hard, and has put his whole heart into the work he does for the

Town. The comments about the road crew in the anonymous letter were just the “icing on the cake” and he cannot do it anymore. Martin, on behalf of the board, said she would like him to come back, but is not sure he can be convinced. Klein agreed the letter was very destructive. Given the status of the job market, Klein recommended moving forward as quickly as possible with an ad for the position. Lee stated the letter was cowardly and libelous. Lee will work with Szott on developing a job description for the ad.

Truck Lease: Truck #13 continues to have repair issues. Klein reviewed a quote from Clark’s Truck Center in Jericho for a 7-year lease on a new truck. The plan would be similar to what the Town did for the grader and excavator. The cost would be approximately \$31,000 per year. A payment would be made each year and at the end of seven years, the Town would own the truck, or could sell it. Truck #13 probably has sufficient value to cover the first year’s payment. No new trucks are available. The Town could sign a proposal to reserve a 2022 truck that would be available in April. Martin noted that the money for the lease is money that is set aside for Highway Department equipment. It would not be additional debt, so it wouldn’t raise taxes. Judd believes it is in the Town’s best interest to replace Truck #13. It was suggested a 5-year lease would be better than seven since the trucks should be replaced after five years. Motion by Klein for the Town to work with Clark’s on a 5-year lease plan for a new truck, or if a 5 year plan is not available, then a 7-year lease plan. Seconded by Lee. Voting: All in favor.

School Street Bridge: The VTrans District Advisor will be in Wolcott on Thursday, September 9 at 1:00 p.m. to discuss the possibility of allowing two-way traffic on the temporary School Street bridge. Anyone interested in attending should contact Szott, the Town Administrator.

Town Administrator’s Report: Szott has been researching how American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funds may be spent. Szott will be available at the September 10 event outside Town Office to address questions regarding these funds.

Szott has been working with Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) on whether Towns have the authority to ban all firearms from Town buildings or property. VLCT recommended consulting the Town attorney. It might be that the Town could put up signage prohibiting firearms, but that might not be enforceable.

Szott noted that a FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant for stormwater management has an application deadline of October 1. A project idea will need to be developed, and the application written.

The board was reminded of the upcoming VLCT Town Fair. There are several topics of interest, including information on ARPA funds.

New Business

Town Hall Usage for Ballet: Wolcott Ballet submitted their annual request to rent Town Hall. The ballet would like to be able to use the facility every day except Sunday. There would be “intermittent” usage in July and August. Martin stated she would prefer more specific dates during those months. Town Hall can be used by others if the Ballet is given some advance notice. Motion by Martin to accept the Town Hall Rental Agreement from Wolcott Ballet. Seconded by Lee. Discussion: None. Voting: All in favor.

Back Taxes/Payment Plan:

Cresta Perkins: Martin stated the board received a letter from Perkins requesting that she be allowed to enter into a payment plan to catch up on back taxes on her property on Morey Hill Road. Her hours had been cut at work, but she is now back working full time. She currently owes \$2,570.71. Her proposal is to pay \$100 per week. She would then have taxes paid off in about six months. Klein noted that the Morey Hill property has been in violation of the Litter and Junk Ordinance for some time. Klein proposed that if a payment plan is agreed upon, that Perkins pay an additional \$20 per week to cover Wolcott Transfer Station fees for the junk and garbage that she needs to dispose of. It would be anticipated that the junk and garbage would be taken to the Transfer Station within a month. Perkins agreed that she has transportation, and can pay the additional \$20 week to cover the Transfer Station. Motion by Klein for the board to enter into a payment plan whereby \$100 per week is paid towards taxes with an additional \$20 per week is paid towards Transfer Station fees. Seconded by Lee. Voting: All in favor.

Leonard Percy: Martin stated the board received a letter from Percy requesting a continuation of the payment plan he entered into to catch up on back taxes on the two properties he owns on VT Rt 15 and Morey Hill Road. He has been paying \$500 per month. It was pointed out this is the third year Percy has requested a payment plan. Motion by Klein to deny continuing the payment plan. Seconded by Lee. Voting: (2) Klein and Lee in favor. (3) Martin, Billings and Carpenter opposed. Motion failed. Szott will prepare the paperwork for the Perkins and Percy payment plans.

Citizen Petition Discussion: Martin informed Karen McKee that the Petition submitted to the board at the August 18 meeting could not be accepted as worded. The Vermont Secretary of State's Office (SOS) was consulted with regard to the language about "term limits." Martin explained that Towns have to follow State statute. The language about term limits cannot simply be crossed out and the Petition resubmitted. The language in the Petition must be exactly as it was when it was signed. The Petition will have to be redone. It was noted that Dillan Cafferky was taken aback that the Petition sought to have foreman/commissioner an elected position. If that were the case, Cafferky felt he would have no job security as Road Foreman. He mentioned that as another reason for his resignation. Martin noted that the position requires someone who is highly qualified, and she would be concerned if it were an elected position. Szott provided McKee with the phone number for the Secretary of State's Office. They can provide assistance with the wording of a Petition so that it complies with State law.

Kurt Billings handed Martin a new Petition. The Petition reads as follows: "We hereby petition The Wolcott Select Board to hold a special town meeting to be held in the year 2021 to vote on the annual town budget articles separately in the town report by Australian Ballot: the Australian ballot shall be mailed (USPS) to each legal voter in and out of state for every vote on the town budget of that fiscal year. The Petition was turned over to the Town Clerk to check signatures.

Possible Investment of ARPA Money: Clegg asked the board about investing some of the ARPA funds to earn higher rates of interest. The board asked Clegg, as Treasurer, to investigate short term investments for discussion at the September 15 meeting.

Help for Transfer Station: The Vermont Department of Corrections will be able to provide an assistant at the Transfer Station through October 17.

Audit: This year's audit will be conducted by RHR Smith & Co. The company charges separately to conduct an audit of fixed assets. The cost is \$550. Motion by Lee to engage RHR Smith & Co. to conduct an audit of fixed assets for a charge of \$550. Seconded by Klein.
Voting: All in favor.

Grant Approval: Klein reported that the grant application he had submitted to Climate Catalysts Innovation Fund was awarded. The request was for funds to replace the lamp posts at Town Office with solar lamps. The grant award is \$2,000. Motion by Klein to move forward using the \$2,000 in grant funds to replace lamp posts at Town Office. Additional funds, if needed, would come from the Building Maintenance fund. Seconded by Lee. Voting: All in favor.

Girl Scouts Tree Planting: Martin stated the Girl Scouts would like to plant a tree in Wolcott as part of a community service project. Martin asked the board to think about a location, and type of tree, for the next meeting.

Possible New COVID Guidelines: The board discussed adjusting the mask policy in Town buildings. The concern is that the Delta variant is peaking, and the goal is to keep people safe. Motion by Klein to require masks be worn inside Town buildings until further notice. Seconded by Lee. Voting: All in favor. It was noted that if an employee is working alone, they need not wear a mask.

Thoughts on Community Engagement and Vision for Town: Martin gave an update on plans for the September 10 event. Lots of donations have been received. The road crew will work on signage and setting up picnic tables. School Street will be one-way to allow for parking. Select board members will be present and available for questions. They can also direct folks to booths for more specific information. All are invited to attend.

Hybrid Meeting Options: The board had an opportunity to review Dolan Patrick's report on equipment needed to better facilitate hybrid meetings in the future. This is important, otherwise the Town is shortchanging the public. The board expressed their gratitude to Dolan for volunteering to be present and record the Selectboard meetings using his own equipment. It was noted that other Town groups, such as the Development Review Board, need access to such technology. Funding sources were discussed. Grant money might be available, or there could be a reimbursement from ARPA funds. Town Office Equipment funds can be used. Motion by Klein to approve investigating best deals, and the purchase of recommended equipment up to \$1,500, or come back to the next meeting if needed. Seconded by Lee.
Voting: All in favor.

Executive Session: Motion by Klein to enter into executive session for personnel reasons. Seconded by Lee. Voting: All in favor. Szott was invited to participate. The board entered executive session at 7:56 p.m. The board came out of executive session at 8:22 p.m. Motion by Lee to approve a 2% raise for all Town employees, retroactive to the new budget year starting July 1, 2021. Seconded by Klein. Voting: All in favor. It was noted that ARPA funds may be used for the increases, so there would be no deficit in the Town budget.

Motion by Klein to authorize the board to negotiate with road crew employees and then come back to the board in open session. Seconded by Lee. Voting: All in favor.

Adjourn: Motion by Klein to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Lee. Voting: All in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Deb Klein

Next regularly scheduled meeting September 15, 2021