

**Wolcott Selectboard Meeting
Minutes
December 21, 2022**

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, Kurt Billings, Richard Lee
Employees: Deb Klein
Public: Dolan Patrick, Rep. Dan Noyes, Sen. Richard Westman

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

Amendments to the Agenda: None.

Approve Minutes of December 7, 2022: Motion by Billings to approve the Minutes of December 7. Seconded by Carpenter. Discussion: Martin noted that the meeting was attended by Roger, not Robert, LaChance. Voting: 4 in favor to approve the Minutes as amended. Lee abstained since he was absent from that meeting. Motion carried.

Correspondence/Comments from the Community

The Town received its first check from Helpsy in the amount of \$57.89 for textile donations. The Town received a thank you card for allowing the cancer network to collect bottles and cans at the Transfer Station. This year they raised \$3,013.15. It was noted that the Transfer Station will be closed on Sunday, December 25 and Sunday, January 1.

The Selectboard thanked Rep. Noyes and Sen. Westman for attending the meeting. Rep. Noyes stated the legislative session is coming up, and to let him know of issues folks may have. The board discussed with Noyes and Westman the rising cost of law enforcement for the towns that contract services with the Lamoille County Sheriff's Office. This year, Wolcott could be facing an increase of as much as 8% over last year's cost for law enforcement. Approximately 30% of the Town's annual budget is obligated for law enforcement services. The legislators were asked for any insight into how rural towns can continue to contract for law enforcement services without receiving financial support from the State. Noted in the discussion was that one piece of the problem of increased costs is due to the unequal retirement programs for Sheriff's Offices throughout the State. Lamoille County, unfortunately, has a 30-year retirement plan which makes it very difficult to retain officers when they can transfer to an agency that has a 20-year retirement plan. Training new officers is very expensive for the departments. Sen. Westman and Rep. Noyes will again introduce legislation for uniform retirement plans for law enforcement agencies. They have been speaking with the newly-elected State Treasurer about the importance of this issue.

The board also discussed with the legislators the high cost of maintaining North Wolcott Road. The road is a paved connector road, connecting VT Rte 15 and VT Rte 14. It is designated a Federal Aid Highway, but that does not provide additional funding sources from the federal government for maintenance or repairs. The board will consider asking Lamoille County Planning Commission (LCPC) to conduct a road study with an emphasis on heavy truck traffic. With that information, the heavy traffic load could be

compared to the load on other State Highways. Perhaps a separate category could be created for the North Wolcott Road so that federal grant dollars would be available, and not just State money.

Budget Hearing

The Selectboard began discussing the overall budget. The Town should know by the end of the month the amount of the fund balance. The board is still waiting for other impactful information. The Highway Department budget has increased but that is due primarily to inflationary prices for necessary items such as salt, rock, gravel, and culverts. More research will be conducted, and further discussion will take place before the board finalizes and signs the budget in January.

Project Manager Report

Klein and Dillan Cafferky, Road Foreman, met with Todd Eaton, Vermont Local Roads Branch Manager with VTrans, at the one-lane bridge on Gulf Road. The Town was seeking Eaton's opinion on what, if any, signage would be recommended for the bridge. Eaton's recommendation was to do nothing. Because there is a good line of sight on either side of the bridge, a regulatory, or stop sign, is not advised. If the board wished, there could be a yield sign erected on both sides. The bridge currently has barrier signs to indicate its location, however, one of the four signs has disappeared from the post and needs to be replaced.

Klein attended a required Department of Transportation training for supervisors of CDL drivers on Reasonable Suspicion regarding drug and alcohol use. Klein recommended the board consider adopting a policy on the issue so that guidelines would be in place. Board members can review the 25-page model policy developed by League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) and consider it at the January 4 meeting.

A concern about ditching on Richard Woolcutt Road had been brought to the attention of the board and the Road Foreman. It was determined that Comcast had subcontracted the work, and the subcontractor had failed to obtain Town permits or permission from landowners. The subcontractor repaired damage to the road. The Town will seek a retroactive permit so the location of the cable will be known.

Klein will contact Champlain Oil regarding the parcel on VT Rte 15 that is being offered for sale to the Town. The Town can at least start negotiations pending results of the Brownfield study. Townspeople would have to vote at Town Meeting to approve the purchase.

The Town-owned property on East Hill can be offered for sale. Voters would have to approve the sale at Town Meeting. The Town would likely offer to sell the parcel for the amount the Town spent on legal fees, clean-up of the property, and any other expenses incurred. The amount might be around \$8,000 to \$10,000, but a more precise figure will be known by the January meeting.

Selectboard review/action

Lamoille Valley Rail Trail: Martin and Klein met with a reporter with WCAX who is covering a story on completion of the rail trail, and the impact it may have on Towns.

Adjourn: Motion by Martin to adjourn. Seconded by Billings. Voting: All in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Deb Klein

Next regularly scheduled Selectboard meeting – January 4, 2023