

TOWN OF WEATHERSFIELD, VERMONT

SELECT BOARD

Select Board

Martin Memorial Hall
5259 Route 5, Ascutney VT
Monday, April 15, 2019
7:00 PM

REGULAR MEETING

MINUTES

APPROVED 5/6/2019

Select Board Members Present: N. John Arrison
Daniel Boyer
David Fuller
Kelly Murphy
Michael Todd

Select Board Members Absent:

Ed Morris, Town Manager

Others Present:

Edith Stillson	J. Compo	Josh Dauphin
Paul Tillman	T. Compo	
Ray Stapleton	M. Spaulding	

1. Call to Order

Ms. Murphy called the meeting to order at 7:00PM.

2. Agenda Review

There were no changes to the agenda.

3. Review minutes from previous meetings – 4/1/2019

Motion: To approve

Made by: Mr. Todd **Second:** Mr. Boyer

Additions/corrections/deletions:

(a) Page 7 – informal poll – change “Volunteer Chief” responses to 2 yes; 3 no

(b) Change the date at the bottom of the page

Mr. Fuller took issue with the way the polling results were recorded in the minutes as it doesn't show the instances when he was uncertain or did not know how to respond. Ms. Murphy said the reported results (with the above correction) correlate with the video recording of the discussion.

Vote: Unanimous as amended

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4. Comments from Select Board and Town Manager

Ms. Murphy asked Mr. Stapleton for an update on the flooding situation in town. Mr. Stapleton reported that Little Ascutney Road had a ditch wash and the portion of Little Ascutney Road known as Murray Flats was flooded by the North Branch of the Black River. All the fines were washed off the road, so that section will have to be resurfaced with good gravel. Mr. Stapleton has talked to someone from the state who will help determine pricing. There were no other flooding issues.

Ms. Murphy thanked Mr. Arrison for the best April Fool's joke ever played. It was incredibly believable.

- a. **Thank-you letter (cell tower)** – A thank-you letter was in the board's packet. Ms. Murphy asked for feedback from the board. No changes were requested. It will be sent to the legislators and state employees who helped. The board agreed to sign the letter as written.

Mr. Morris said the 2nd annual Easter Egg Hunt was a success. 74 kids and 82 adults attended. The weather was great for the event and everyone appeared to have had a good time. 1100 eggs were hidden. It took about 10-15 minutes for the kids to collect them all. Thank you goes to the library staff, the Parks and Recreation Committee, and other volunteers for hosting the event.

Mr. Fuller mentioned the upcoming auction being held at Martin Hall on April 28th. All proceeds are to benefit the family of Ellie Rosen who is suffering from a rare form of brain cancer.

5. Comments from Citizens on topics not on the agenda

There were no comments from citizens.

6. Large Assembly Permit – Ethan McNaughton

Ethan McNaughton is planning a memorial 5K road race and 1/2-mile children's' run on June 29th in honor of his late wife, Laura. All proceeds will go to a scholarship fund. Mr. McNaughton is proposing to close off a portion of Plains Road for the event. Parking would be on the side of the road with overflow in the Plain Cemetery access road or the Clattenburgs' field.

Mr. McNaughton has spoken to a number of residents on Plains Road – no one has had any objections.

The campground would not be impacted in any way.

Portapotties will be provided.

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He has ample volunteers to assist. The event should be pretty much over in an hour once it's underway. The kids' run will start at 8:30 AM; the adults' at 9:00 AM.

The route will be entirely on Plains Road and Plains Road Extension.

Chief Daniels has no objections. Mr. Morris recommended that Mr. McNaughton work with Chief Daniels and himself to finalize logistics. Ms. Murphy suggested contacting Golden Cross Ambulance to alert them of the event.

Motion: To approve the application by Ethan McNaughton for a large gathering permit for a memorial 5K road race and ½-mile children's run along Plains Road and to waive the fee.

Made by: Mr. Fuller **Second:** Mr. Todd

Vote: Unanimous in favor

7. Fire Discussion

Ms. Murphy had conducted an informal poll with the board members at the last meeting as a way of getting some insight on how to start this discussion. However, no clear direction came from it other than the agreement to take a part-time fire chief off the table. She asked the board for feedback on how to move forward.

Mr. Arrison said he wasn't in favor of another long string of meetings about it. He felt strongly that the answer should come from the fire departments themselves.

Mr. Fuller said he wanted both departments to be in agreement on which way to go.

Mr. Boyer said at the end of the discussion and just before the vote, both departments were about 90% in agreement. All that remained was AVFD and their assets. He felt that the remaining issues could be resolved. He agreed that both sides have to agree.

All acknowledged that AVFD maintained its opposition to a municipal department throughout.

Mr. Todd said he needed to know more about the history of the discussions before he could formulate his opinion. Mr. Morris offered to provide whatever information or assistance that Mr. Todd might need.

Ms. Murphy said that the two departments and many citizens had invested a lot of time in coming to many meetings and participating in as many discussions, yet she believes that many people voted out of fear and misinformation.

Mr. Fuller disagreed with Mr. Arrison as to the level of contention between the departments or with the board.

Ms. Murphy asked how the board could hold a conversation when only one department is participating. Mr. Fuller said it can't be done by reliving the past. He said not to challenge the voters or how they came to vote the way they did. He said he thought the departments

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were working better together by eliminating the dividing line and toning both departments for all calls.

Josh Compo said the line hasn't really disappeared.

Ms. Murphy said she thought both departments were being toned due to a lack of volunteers.

Mr. Dauphin said that was correct; that the idea had come from a recommendation in the Woods report. He, too, said the dividing line is still there.

Mychael Spaulding repeated his same concern – that there are still serious safety issues to be resolved.

Mr. Morris said that John Wood had said the town needs to get in or get out. We have all the liability because we're so intermingled.

Mr. Dauphin said his department has already said we want you to take over our assets; have a contract with the other department.

Ms. Murphy said that won't work. She said we as a board need to own this – we need to decide to hand them a check or get these logistics under control – otherwise we'll just be spinning our wheels again.

Josh Compo said this design is unsustainable; we truly want to get to a better place. He urged the board to not be so timid. He said there is no easy way out and some tough words may need to be said.

Mr. Dauphin agreed. He said we can't please everyone; we want to make a better, safer way for everyone.

Mr. Arrison said West Weathersfield could be our department. We could fund a chief for them. He didn't know what to do with Ascutney, however.

Mr. Morris said that NFPA standards are not being met. He acknowledged that we can't meet them all, but there are some fundamental ones that we can and should be meeting – some are cited in the Woods report.

Mr. Dauphin said he didn't want to lose his life because his department can't keep up with everything. He wants the town to step up and create this department. He doesn't want to be responsible for all of it nor do his officers; he wants to get to a better place.

Ms. Murphy said that liability shouldn't be the only item driving this discussion. She said this is not a slap in the face of the older veterans; why wouldn't we want to create unity and safety?

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Mr. Arrison said that right now the volunteers can be sued individually.

Mr. Morris said the Woods report is dead-on; he said just ask Springfield and Windsor; former Claremont Fire Chief Bergeron said it was accurate.

Mr. Arrison said he was almost ready to make a motion to designate WWVFD as the municipal department.

Josh Compo said he would like to discuss Mr. Arrison's point and he wants to know how Mr. Fuller and Mr. Todd think a volunteer chief would work. He asked to have these topics on the next agenda to start the conversation.

Mr. Fuller said he would not leave AVFD behind.

Ms. Murphy said the board had made every effort to include everyone in all the discussions on this matter. In no way had the board ever been negligent.

This discussion will be on the next agenda (and the one after that...)

8. Approve Town Meeting Warning

The draft warning was in the board's packet.

Motion: To approve the warning for the Special Meeting to be held on Monday, May 20th at 7:00 PM with voting by Australian Ballot to be held Tuesday, May 21st, 2019.

Made by: Mr. Fuller **Second:** Mr. Boyer

Discussion: Mr. Fuller said that people will want to know what will take the place of the fire commission. The board needs a back-up plan. Mr. Morris and Mr. Dauphin said that the chiefs meeting with Mr. Morris was the preferred method; that the chiefs had been asking to dissolve the commission for the last year.

Vote: Unanimous in favor

9. Audit Discussion

The auditors will attend the May 6th meeting. The town treasurer and finance director will be there as well.

The board had a letter from Steve Hire and Darlene Kelly summarizing the audit.

Mr. Morris said the primary issue the auditors had was that the town had too many places in which it was storing money (along with the lack of written policies and procedures for financial matters). This was not a finding that the town was mishandling money.

Mr. Morris said the auditors are willing to let the town out of the contract this year if we choose. However, Mr. Morris preferred to give it one more year to try and make it work.

Mr. Fuller said he prefers keeping the funds where they are. Being a small town, it can be a nightmare to find things if they are all combined in a few large funds.

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Mr. Morris said he didn't think it will cause a problem, but it can be discussed further. He said we can try it for a year – if we don't like it, we can revisit it later.

Ms. Murphy said she still wants to see the time frames needed for completing the auditors' requests. She said she didn't want to hear we don't have time to make the policies and procedures book.

10. Town Solar Project

Mr. Morris provided three proposals for solar projects. He said he was not seeking an in-depth discussion or decisions at this meeting.

Mr. Morris said the option of owning our own panels would require more research.

Green Lantern is looking for some direction from the town before net metering credits change in July; they will need a letter of intent by mid-May.

Mr. Fuller would like to know more about the town-owned option. Could we run just the transfer station? He said he would never sign off on the Bow array. He said this project was not on the list of topics the board was going to discuss this year.

Mr. Morris said that wasn't the total list; that we're still working on other things; it is something for the board to discuss to help reduce the tax burden.

Mr. Todd asked if these proposals were contingent on having three sites? Mr. Morris wasn't sure.

Mr. Todd was concerned that the solar arrays would take land away from other uses that might be more profitable to the town. He was not in favor of the Bow site.

Mr. Arrison said he was not totally opposed to the Bow site because we wouldn't be building on the land; it could be a dual use.

Mr. Morris said that the town has much more control over these projects than had been previously stated. The town can ask for a bond for complete remediation, for example.

The board will discuss this more at the next meeting. Ms. Murphy asked Mr. Morris to find out if the three sites are a contingency.

11. Discuss Selectboard member serving on Planning Commission

(Continuation of previous discussion) Mr. Morris asked to have the discussion address selectboard members on all other boards, not just the planning commission. He had solicited feedback from a wide array of towns on the matter and received a wide array of opinions which were included in the board's packet. He said whatever the board decides, it should be in the Conflict of Interest Policy in accord with VLCT recommendations.

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After some discussion, it appeared that the consensus of the board was to allow selectboard members to serve on other boards.

Motion: That we put in our conflict of interest policy that no more than one member of the selectboard can serve on any other board or commission whose members are appointed by the selectboard

Made by: Mr. Boyer **Second:**

The died for lack of a second.

After more discussion it was agreed that there was not a problem and that the board should just move on.

12. Appointments

a. Conservation Commission – Ellen Clattenburg, Tyler Harwell

b. Parks and recreation – Nick Stapleton

Motion: To appoint Ellen Clattenburg and Tyler Harwell to the Conservation Commission and Nick Stapleton to the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Made by: Mr. Fuller **Second:** Mr. Todd

Vote: Unanimous in favor

13. Approve Warrants

Motion: To approve the warrants for 4/15/2019 as follow:

General Funds	Operating Expenses	\$31,134.20
	Payroll	\$15,198.41
Highway Fund	Operating Expenses	\$44,454.66
	Payroll	\$8,334.16
Solid Waste Management Fund		
	Operating Expenses	\$3,643.62
	Payroll	\$1,505.63
Library	Operating Expenses	\$0.00
	Payroll	\$1,939.48
Grants	Operating Expenses	\$0.00
Agency Monies	Operating Expenses	\$0.00
Reserves		\$0.00
Long Term Debt		\$0.00
Grand Totals	Operating Expenses	\$79,232.48

