

Select Board
Martin Memorial Hall
5259 Route 5, Ascutney VT
Monday, July 17, 2023
6:30 PM
REGULAR MEETING

Select Board Members Present: Michael Todd, David Fuller, Paul Tillman, Kelly O'Brien, Wendy Smith (remote)

Select Board Members Absent:

Brandon Gulnick, Town Manager

Others Present:

Olivia Savage	Jonah Blum	
Ray Stapleton	Emily Hackett (remote)	
deForest Bearse	Michael Kondrat	
John Keniston	John Arrison	
Ken Blum		

1 Call to Order

Mr. Todd called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

2 Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Tillman led the pledge of allegiance.

3 Approval of 7/13/23 Site Visit Minutes

Additions/corrections/deletions:

a. None.

Motion: To approve.

Made by: Ms. O'Brien **Second:** Mr. Tillman

Vote: 4 yay, 1 abstention

4 Public Hearing: Highway #95

Mr. Todd opened the hearing and read the [Notice of Public Hearing](#) to the public. Abutters and other interested persons participating in the hearing then swore an oath that any testimony given in the hearing is of the truth, under penalty of perjury, so help them God.

Mr. Fuller inquired about the original purpose of the road. The Highway Superintendent stated that it is probably from when the properties were separated, before Mr. Keniston owned both parcels. The Select Board discussed the evidence presented, concluding that this case seemed simple.

Mr. Todd declared the hearing closed.

The Select Board's decision needs to determine that the discontinuance is required for the "public good, necessity, and convenience of the inhabitants of the municipality" per section 710. The Select Board found that as there is no physical asset present, therefore, no public good. Additionally, the maps send people to the wrong roads, which is not only inconvenient but potentially dangerous to residents and visitors. There could also be potential maintenance costs of keeping the road, which would cost the public money. The Select Board will review the evidence that had been presented and will put it up for a vote at the next regular meeting.

5 Comments from SB, TM, and Citizens on Topics not on the Agenda

Ms. Bearse spoke on behalf of the Veterans Memorial Committee and discussed how at the Memorial Park, there are three podiums with panels used to honor Veterans or related individuals. Once the panels are retired, the committee tries to find a permanent home for them.

Motion: To approve the Veterans Committee hanging the necessary plaques inside the 1879 School House.

Made by: Mr. Fuller **Second:** Ms. Smith

The Select Board discussed the Grand List, how it deserves greater attention, and agreed that it should be on the next agenda. The Select Board reiterated that meetings, notices, schedules, etc., need to be consistently accurate.

6 Review Minutes from Previous Meeting(s): 6/19/23, 6/27/23

Additions/corrections/deletions:

a. None.

Motion: To approve the 6/19/23 minutes.

Made by: Ms. Tillman **Second:** Mr. Fuller

Vote: All in favor

Motion: To approve the 6/27/23 minutes.

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

Vote: All in favor

7 Town Manager Update

a. Tax Rate Revision

On 7/6/23, the Weathersfield Grand List 411 was distributed to the Town Manager's office. From there, the Tax Rate was computed, and a Special Meeting to set the Tax Rate was warned for 7/11/23. When the approved Tax Rates were entered into NEMRC, it was noticed that the Grand List

differed from the Grand List the Tax Rate was calculated on and differed from the one given. The Town immediately contacted the Chair and scheduled an Emergency Meeting for 7/12/23 to rescind the 7/11/23 tax rate vote, and to set the tax rate based on the final FY24 grand list.

This happened because on 7/6/23, a Lister accidentally printed the draft grand list prior to current use inclusion, and distributed it to the Town Manager's office. The Town Office controls have been changed to prevent this from happening again, and those controls are as followed, with changes in bold.

1. Education Rates are released from the Vermont Department of Taxes
2. Listers Distribute Grand List (Form 411) to the Tax Collector
- 3. Tax Collector verifies Grand List (Form 411)**
4. Tax Collector calculates the Tax Rate based on the Grand List
5. Select Board warns a Meeting to Set the Tax Rate based on the Tax Collectors Computation & the Grand List as provided by the Listers.
6. Tax Collector verifies Tax Rate and Grand List again
7. Tax Collector sets the Tax Rate in NEMRC, prints Tax Bills, and distributes to Doolittle's.
8. Doolittle's prints tax bills, stuffs them into envelopes with a Transfer Station Permit Sticker, and sends them to Quality Mailing House for postage & mailing.

b. Virtual Meeting Technology

The Town is working with CCI Technologies and SAPA to improve the Virtual Meeting Technology. The Town is holding a site visit and will have further updates as improvements are made.

c. Storm Update

The Highway Superintendent gave an update on the condition of the roads in Weathersfield and wanted to let citizens know that the Highway Department is aware of the potholes, but are focusing on preventing road washouts at the moment.

The Select Board thanked the first responders for the work that they do.

d. Melody Lane Update

The Town Health Officer and the Land Use Administrator went to Melody Lane and found the residents in question to be in compliance, with the appropriate permits. There was evidence that they were not living there via receipts and there was an outhouse on site, and thus, the claims were not

accurate. The Health Officer's portion of the investigation is closed based on the evidence presented.

8 Vote to Award Upper Falls Covered Bridge Bid

The Town advertised an RFP to repair the Upper Falls Covered Bridge following damage by a dump truck that exceeded the maximum vertical height clearance on November 22, 2022. The Town submitted a claim to their insurance company, and received a check based on the estimate given.

The RFP was advertised on June 6, 2023. There was a pre-bid conference on June 14th. The question period ended on June 16th. Bids were due on June 29th. A public bid opening took place on June 25th. The company that sent us the estimate initially did not respond to the RFP. The Town received 1 bid from Renaud Brothers Incorporated. This company did the rehabilitation of the Scott Covered Bridge in Townshend, VT, the rehabilitation of the Dummerston Covered Bridge, and a partial rehabilitation of the Creamery Bridge in Brattleboro.

The bid is \$29,500 and they are able to complete the project in October. The insurance money the Town received exceeds the bid received; however, the Town will hold it as a contingency until the project is complete and any remaining funds will be directed back to the insurance company.

Motion: To award the Covered Bridge Repair Project to Renaud Brothers Incorporated for a total cost not to exceed \$29,500.

Made by: Mr. Fuller

Second: Mr. Tillman

Vote: All in favor

9 Vote to Award FY24 Paving Project

The Town advertised an RFP to pave Sunset Boulevard (.26mi), Cherry Lane (.05mi), and Thrasher Road (.11mi). The RFP was advertised on May 22, 2023. A Pre-Bid Conference was held on June 14th at 10am. The question period ended on June 16th at 4pm. Bids were due on June 22, 2023, at 11:30am. A Public Bid Opening was held at MMH on June 22nd at 1pm.

The Town received 2 bids. BlakTop paving is the low bid at 102.77 per ton & their shoulder work is \$75.00 per cubic yard. Bazin Brothers per ton rate is \$160 and their shoulder work is \$65.00 per cubic yard. Although Bazin Brothers has a lower cost for shoulder work, their \$160 per ton rate for paving exceeds the saving in shoulder work.

The FY24 Highway Department Budget has \$50,000 for paving. The Highway Capital Maintenance and Improvements Reserve account has an

\$89,125.82 balance. Using \$9,250 from this reserve account will leave a balance of \$79,875.82.

Motion: To award the FY24 Paving Project to BlakTop Incorporated for a total cost not to exceed \$59,250, of which, \$50,000 will be used from the FY24 Highway Department budget and \$9,250 will be used from the Highway Capital Maintenance and Improvements reserve account.

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

Vote: All in favor

10 Vote to Award Crack Sealing Proposal

The Town received a \$56K Class 2 Paving grant from the State of Vermont. Funding needs to be expended prior to December 2023.

Motion: To award the FY24 Crack Sealing Project to INDUS for a total cost not to exceed \$48,744, to be paid for through the Class 2 Paving Grant from the State of Vermont.

Made by: Mr. Fuller **Second:** Ms. Smith

Vote: All in favor

11 Wastewater Feasibility Study – Kickoff Presentation

Representatives from Otter Creek Engineering gave a presentation about the Wastewater Feasibility study, which focuses on the villages of Ascutney and Perkinsville. The study itself is fully subsidized. The Town would need to decide on how to have discussions and there will be draft reports presented at 30%, 60%, and 90% meetings.

So far, it was found that the Town does not own enough land in the ideal project area, and so there is the potential that land owners would be approached, but the landowners are under no obligation to engage. The Select Board discussed how it might only be 5 to 10 acres needed to build a plant, and how the funding for private land, provided owner and the town were interested, would come from the appraised value of the land. The Select Board discussed reaching out to Windsor or Springfield to have conversations with them in the future if doing so becomes necessary.

The Select Board concluded that notices need to go out to the community and that committees need to be formed, one for Ascutney and one for Perkinsville, since both villages will have their own unique system and perspective. Further discussion will happen in future meetings.

12 ARPA Discussion

The Town has had several Public Input meetings at the 1879 Schoolhouse and meetings with others in the community about their thoughts on the expenditure of

the remaining funds. The Town has committed \$480,267 to date, and has \$337,787 remaining to allocate. So far, the Town has received the following proposals:

Proposed Expenses	Expense	% of ARPA
Hoisington Field	\$ 70,000.00	9%
Tree Maintenance	\$ 15,000.00	2%
Posts - Veterans Park	\$ 30,000.00	4%
MMH Drainage	\$ 20,000.00	2%
Trails	\$ 17,500.00	2%
Mapping - Scenic Views	\$ 15,000.00	2%
Digitization Town Clerk	\$ 25,000.00	3%
MMH Paving	\$ 28,000.00	3%
FD Training Stipends	\$ 20,000.00	2%
Town Welcome Signs	\$ 43,200.00	5%
MMH Electricity Improvments	\$ 35,000.00	4%
Security System - MMH	\$ 7,500.00	1%
Virtual Meeting Improvements	\$ 10,000.00	1%
Town Garage Generator	\$ 45,000.00	6%
Digitization of Land Use Records	\$ 25,000.00	3%

The Town might be able to fund each of the abovementioned proposals but not with ARPA funds alone. The Town does have estimates for some of the proposals. Below is a high-level list of the projects and expenditures done so far, including the amount the Town allocated and the percentage of the total ARPA funds per each of those expense categories.

Approved Expenses	Expense	% of ARPA
Small Businesses	12,000	1%
COVID (Supp, Test, Clean)	4,344	1%
Fire Departments	20,159	2%
Police Department	45,724	6%
Late Filing fees	13,818	2%
Roofing Projects	252,629	31%
Water District	75,000	9%
Food Shelf	9,290	1%
Martin Memorial Hall	41,475	5%
Building Assessments	5,828	1%

The Select Board stated that the list of ideas need to be put online for citizens to view. The Select Board discussed prioritizing needs over wants to start with and investing in projects that will have a long term impact, such as what was done with the roofing projects. The Select Board reiterated that this list was not created for all the items on it to be accomplished, that not all of it can be funded by ARPA, and it might be the case that some items are only partially funded.

The Select Board discussed prioritizing projects having to with maintenance or upkeep to owned property and how it would be beneficial to pay off some long term debts given the current economic conditions. The Select Board discussed

whether or not certain items would be reoccurring and/or result in a cost in the future and how that would not be desirable.

The Select Board discussed the impacts of the storms that have happened this year throughout Weathersfield and surrounding communities, particularly the impact on farms. The Select Board stated that there may be federal funds available for those directly impacted via FEMA and the Department of Agriculture and that funding may also be available for driveways that may have been washed out.

13 Appointments

- a. Budget Committee (5 Vacancies)
- b. Conservation Commission (2 Vanacies)
- c. Energy Coordunator (1 Vacancy)
- d. Green Up Coordinator (1 Vacancy)
- e. Lister (1 Vacancy)
- f. Parks and Recreation (2 Vacancies)
 - i. Patience Bearse
- g. Veterans Memorial Committee (2 Vacancies)
- h. Zoning Board of Adjustment

Motion: To appoint Patience Bearse to the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Made by: Mr. Fuller

Second: Ms. O'Brien

Vote: All in favor

14 Approve Warrant

To approve the warrants for 6/19/2023 as followed:

General Funds
Operating Expenses: \$30,329.23
Payroll: \$17,552.31

Library
Operating Expenses: \$800.00
Payroll: \$2,307.70

Highway Fund
Operating Expenses: \$21,775.33
Payroll: \$9,093.68

Police E-Ticket Grant: \$503.43

Solid Waste Management Fund
Operating Expenses: \$19,631.97
Payroll: \$1,710.86

Grand Totals:
Operating Expenses: \$73,039.96
Payroll: \$30,664.55

Made by: Mr. Tillman

Second: Mr. Fuller

Vote: All in favor

15 Any Other Business

During a Planning Commission meeting, there were questions surrounding the water tanks around town and who has a right away and access to those. The Town Manager will look into this for the next Town Manager Update.

The Town received money from the State for the Tenney Maple Memorial at the Ascutney Park and Ride. The tree was deemed a health hazard and some of the wood was transformed into chess boards. The Library Board of Trustees has it on their agenda to receive one of those chess boards if anyone is interested.

16 Adjourn

Motion: To adjourn the meeting.

Made by: Mr. Fuller

Second: Mr. Tillman

Vote: All in favor

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Nichole Gagnon

WEATHERSFIELD SELECT BOARD

Michael Todd, Chairperson

Paul Tillman, Vice-Chairperson

Wendy Smith, Selector

David Fuller, Selector

Kelly O'Brien, Clerk

