

TOWN OF WEATHERSFIELD, VERMONT

SELECT BOARD

**Select Board
Martin Memorial Hall
5259 Route 5, Ascutney VT
Monday, October 19, 2020
7:00 PM
REGULAR MEETING**

**MINUTES
APPROVED 11/2/2020**

Select Board Members Present: N. John Arrison
David Fuller
Joseph Jarvis
Paul Tillman
Michael Todd

Select Board Members Absent:

Brandon Gulnick, Town Manager

Others Present:

Ray Stapleton	Chris Whidden	Darrin Spaulding
Bill Devon	Susanne Terrill	Olivia Savage

The Public was permitted to attend this meeting in person. Remote public participation was facilitated via the GoTo Meeting video-conferencing platform and conference calling. The number for people to join or call in to the meeting was published on the meeting agenda and on the Town's website. Mr. Gulnick monitored the calls and the video-platform while Mr. Fuller ran the meeting. The meeting was broadcast live on SAPA TV.

Call to Order

Mr. Fuller called the meeting to order at 7:02PM.

1. Comments from Select Board and Town Manager and Citizens on Topics not on the Agenda

There were no comments from Board members.

Mr. Gulnick stated that he would be meeting with Ginger Wimberg, Heather Shand, the Conservation Commission and anyone interested to discuss next steps for the future of the Tenney maple tree at the Park and Ride. VTrans would like to take the tree down before snow falls as it has declined significantly in the past year. Mr. Gulnick will share the results of this meeting with the Board at the next meeting. Mr. Fuller asked to have the Town Tree Warden involved in the discussion.

There were no comments from citizens.

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Mr. Fuller thanked the Weathersfield Historical Society for an informative and entertaining annual meeting. He also thanked Ginger Wimberg for her eight years as President of the Society. Mrs. Wimberg stepped down as President at the meeting. Ellen Clattenburg is the new President.

2. Review minutes from previous meetings – October 5, 2020

Additions/corrections/deletions:

a. None

Motion: To pass

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

Vote: All in favor

3. 2014 Purchase and Sale Agreement

a. Motion to Support Option 2 and to Support the Tax Collector's decision

This motion was still on the table after having been made and tabled at the September 21st meeting.

b. Update – Waysville Engineering

The Town engaged Waysville Engineering to look for evidence of septic discharge on the town-owned parcel on Thrasher Road. Mr. Todd and Mr. Fuller were present during the investigation. Multiple test pits failed to show any evidence of discharge. Therefore, there should be nothing to negatively affect the appraised value of the parcel.

However, there still remains a \$3,000 shortfall.

Mr. Gulnick restated the two options for the Board.

Mr. Todd withdrew his motion to support Option 2 (from the September 21st meeting). Mr. Jarvis withdrew his second.

Motion: To support Option #1 (to amend the Purchase and Sales Agreement)

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

Mr. Jarvis felt the Board would be setting a dangerous precedent if it exercised this option.

Mr. Fuller said other things have surfaced that make this not good for the Town; e.g. the lack of an easement across the Johnson property and the fact that the easement bisects the Abbott property (which had resulted from the lack of an easement across Johnson's land). He felt that choosing to exercise option #1, the Town would be unable to renegotiate these issues.

Mr. Tillman said he doesn't support an exchange of tax revenue for the Johnson easement.

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Vote on the motion: 4 opposed, 1 in favor

The motion was defeated.

Motion: To support Option #1 with the following amendments:

- Secure the Johnson easement;
- Relocate the easement across the Abbott property so that it follows a straight-line path to the forest;
- Have the Town Manager notify the Abbotts of the shortfall in principal; and
- Have the Selectboard craft and agree on a proposal to the Board of Abatement by December 15th

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

Vote: 4 in favor; 1 opposed

Motion carries.

4. Town Manager Report

a. Administrative Restructure; Homestead Penalty; Town Wide Reappraisal; Fire Department Contracts

Website redesign - The Board approved the design of the home page of the website.

Mr. Gulnick said the project will now progress to Phase 3. He anticipates that the new website should be finished by December.

Administrative Restructuring – The full-time finance director position has been eliminated. Kelly Fu, who joined the meeting remotely, will be the Town's part time accountant starting November 2nd. Mr. Gulnick also created a Principal Clerk position to serve as staff for boards and committees who currently lack staff support from the Town Office. Olivia Savage has been hired to fill the position. Funds from the full-time finance director position will cover both of these new positions. No additional funding will be needed.

Susanne Terrill's work tasks will shift somewhat as the result of the Principal Clerk. Ms. Terrill's duties will expand more in line with her experience and background.

Homestead Penalty – The deadline for filing one's homestead exemption was extended from April 15th to July 15th with an additional extension to October 15th if needed. To date, 12 parties have filed late and been assessed an 8% late filing penalty. Mr. Arrison said that sometimes the exemption cannot be filed on time due to circumstance beyond the landowner's control

The Board agreed that 8% was too high.

Motion: To drop the homestead penalty from 8% to 3% for the tax year 2021

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

Vote: 4 in favor, 1 abstention

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Mr. Gulnick said he has had the opportunity to work with both fire departments in 2020 and asked the Board how these entities would be defined in the future.

The Town Clerk asked if the Board would consider not meeting on November 2nd as the meeting space has to be set up for voting the next day. The Board felt more inclined to reschedule the meeting or to move to a different location than to cancel the meeting.

Town wide reappraisal- Mr. Gulnick explained reappraisal - what it is and how it works. The listers have withdrawn their request for a reappraisal at this time.

5. Capital Equipment Note – Tandem Axle Dump Truck Loan

Steve Hier joined the meeting remotely. He said the truck will cost less than the Town authorized for payment (\$220,000 vs \$198,020). \$75,000 will come reserves, so we will need to borrow \$123,020. People's United Bank will loan the Town this amount for seven years at 2.5% interest.

Motion: To authorize the Selectboard Chair and Clerk to sign the loan agreement as described

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

Vote: All in favor

The Board agreed to take up the discussion on the Transfer Station at this time.

Transfer Station Permit Sticker Policy – First Reading

The Board began discussion of the interim policy. It is set to expire June 2021. The new policy would tie transfer station stickers to vehicle registrations rather than to land parcels. Stickers are free to Weathersfield residents. People must come to the Town Office to get their stickers (instead of mailing them in the tax bills.) Board members were concerned that administering and enforcing the new policy would put a burden on the employees at the transfer station.

Bill Devon of Weathersfield Center Road complained that he had lost his original sticker and was told at the Town Office he would need to pay \$50 for a new one. He felt that was too high a price. (He was ultimately given a free sticker at the meeting.)

Motion: To accept the interim policy with a cap of two free stickers per parcel for Weathersfield residents only until June 30, 2021

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

Vote: 3 in favor, 2 opposed

Motion: To offer a refund or a credit in punches (to those who have paid \$50 for a sticker)

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

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Vote: All in favor

6. Set Public Hearing Date/Time: Zoning Bylaw Updates

Zoning Administrator Chris Whidden presented the Board with a list of proposed zoning bylaw changes. The changes have been accepted by the Planning Commission and now require a hearing with the Selectboard. The Board can adopt the changes following the hearing or pass them on to the Town Meeting in the spring.

Motion: To set a public hearing date for the proposed zoning changes submitted by the Planning Commission for November 16th at 7PM

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

Vote: 4 in favor, 1 opposed

Motion carries.

7. Transfer Station Permit Sticker Policy – First Reading

(See above)

At 9:00 PM, Mr. Arrison motioned to extend the meeting for 30 minutes. Mr. Todd seconded the motion and all were in favor.

8. FY22 Fire Department Contracts

Two contracts are proposed. They are “dramatically” different from one another.

Mr. Arrison said he doesn’t like having two different contracts and that he prefers contract #1 as it gives the Town more control. He said with two contracts, nothing will change.

Motion: To accept contract #1

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

The question was asked if contract #1 applies to both departments. As written, it applies to both.

Josh Dauphin, Chief of West Weathersfield Volunteer Fire Department, felt contract #1 was the best for the Town as it has “teeth” and creates accountability.

Amendment to the motion: To have a decision by no later than December 7th

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

Vote: 4 in favor; 1 opposed

Motion carries.

At 9:28 PM, Mr. Todd motioned to extend the meeting another 15 minutes. Mr. Tillman seconded the motion and all were in favor.

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(Note for the record: Ascutney Fire Chief Darrin Spaulding, who has been appointed as spokesperson for AVFD, had been at the meeting earlier, but had left by the time this discussion was started.)

Mr. Todd asked for time to hear back from AVFD and to discuss some changes he would like to propose to the contract (training requirements, emergency medical services, fundraising).

Mr. Fuller said he wants to be sure the departments get the financial resources they need and continues to believe that a hybrid model (Town + non-profits) is still possible.

Motion: To table

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

Vote: All in favor

9. Appointments – No appointments were requested or made.

10. Approve Warrants

Motion: To approve the warrants for 10/19/2020 as follow:

General Funds	Operating Expenses	\$31,337.75
	Payroll	\$12,791.03
Highway Fund	Operating Expenses	\$16,197.63
	Payroll	\$7,066.28
Solid Waste Management Fund		
	Operating Expenses	\$10,303.02
	Payroll	\$1,538.72
Library	Operating Expenses	\$0.00
	Payroll	\$1,907.60
Grants		
Special Revenue		\$0.00
Reserves		
Long Term Debt		
Grand Totals	Operating Expenses	\$57,838.40

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\$23,303.63

Vote: All in favor

Vote: All in favor

The Board came out of executive session at 10:10 PM. No action was taken.

Vote: All in favor

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Michael Todd, Vice- Chairperson