

Wallingford Selectboard Meeting
Minutes
September 9, 2019

Selectboard Members Present: Bruce Duchesne, John McClallen, Patricia Pranger, Rose Regula and Nelson Tift.

Others present: Julie Sharon, Sandi Switzer, Phil Baker, Cecile Betit, Joyce Barbieri, Kate Wanner, Deb Scranton, Marc Pramuk, Carla Kimball, Mark Barone, Mike Hughes, John Thomson, David Francomb, Lee Perry, Debra Perry, and Pat Stone.

Chair N. Tift called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. at Town Hall.

Agenda Amendments. None.

Minutes. P. Pranger made a motion that was seconded by R. Regula to approve the 08/26/19 Minutes. Motion carried (5-0).

Pay Orders. N. Tift made a motion that was seconded by J. McClallen approving the pay order total of \$129,111.67 after \$136.00 was added to reimburse Rosie Phillips for her lifeguard certification. Motion carried (5-0).

Road Commissioner Report. Road Commissioner Phil Baker said paving had been completed for the summer with the exception of Seward Hill Road. He said he is waiting for a price from Pike Industries.

N. Tift informed Mr. Baker that Dick Savery had presented Selectboard Meeting Minutes from 1994 and 2006 describing the Hillside Road boundaries.

Mr. Baker said he had done most of the FEMA repairs to Van Wyck Bridge and the road crew would be hauling the riprap next week. He added beams would be delivered to the town garage and the road crew would paint the beams prior to installation. Mark Barone asked the bridge weight rating and Mr. Baker estimated 24,000 after repairs. He suggested the state inspect it and provide a new rating.

Loader/Excavator Bids. N. Tift opened sealed loader bids with amounts as follows: Beauregard Equipment \$123,300; Nortrax \$130,000; Nortrax \$125,000; and Milton Cat \$124,900.

N. Tift opened sealed excavator bids with amounts as follows: Beauregard Equipment \$83,900; Champlain Valley Equipment \$93,198; Milton Cat \$95,000; Nortrax \$100,150.

It was agreed the road foreman and road commissioner would review the detailed bids and report back to the Selectboard at the September 23 meeting.

Green Mt. National Forest Acquisition of Fernfield Farm Property. Kate Wanner from The Trust for Public Land and David Francomb, District Ranger for the Manchester District of the Green Mt. National Forest, provided an overview of a plan to acquire 481 acres of the Fernfield Farm property located along Ice Bed and Hartsboro Roads and abutting White Rocks. Ms. Wanner described the property as containing significant forest resources, wetlands and wildlife habitat that would be added to the GMNF as a result of the acquisition. She requested a letter of support from the Town.

B. Duchesne expressed concern regarding the loss of tax dollars if the land went from private to public ownership. Ms. Wanner said with Payment in Lieu of Taxes, the net revenue loss would be \$257. She added residents during a Community Visit in 2018 identified expanding recreation capacity and building multi-use trails as top priorities. Ms. Barbieri indicated a past sale of Fernfield Farm property to the US Department of Agriculture provided financial benefits to the Town to offset loss of tax revenue resulting in the establishment of a Trust. Ms. Wanner said permanently conserving the land for public use was a benefit not only to the Town but visitors. Conservation Commission Chair Marc Pramuk noted the tax impact but also reiterated residents' desire for trail access at the 2018 Community Visit. He suggested GMNF, the Conservation Commission and other groups work together to create a South Wallingford to East Wallingford corridor in an effort to make Wallingford a destination for hikers and bikers. Conservation Commission Deb Scranton also spoke about the loss of tax revenue and the Trust set up as a result of a prior Fernfield Farm land sale. Board members agreed to seek public input on the land acquisition via Front Porch Forum and the municipal website before deciding whether to support the sale.

Telephone Backup Power Obligation. R. Regula made a motion that was seconded by P. Pranger authorizing Board members to sign a letter to the state Public Utility Commission regarding telephone provider backup power obligations. Motion carried, (5-0).

There was a discussion regarding VTel's workshop on September 26 at Town Hall. Cecile Betit said attendees should have the opportunity to pose questions and detail their own experiences as a result of VTel's installation of fiber optic cables that made telephone service reliant upon electricity.

It was agreed Ms. Betit would attend PUC's workshop on September 19 on behalf of the Town. It was further agreed Ms. Betit could post a short survey on Front Porch Forum related to this matter.

Taylor Property. R. Regula made a motion that premature public knowledge of probable civil litigation related to the Stan Taylor town line boundary matter would put the Town at a substantial disadvantage. B. Duchesne seconded the motion. Motion carried (5-0).

R. Regula made a motion that was seconded by N. Tift to enter executive session at 7:58 p.m. with the Town Administrator and Joyce Barbieri for pending or probable civil litigation under 1 V.S.A. Section 313 (a)(1)(E)(F). Motion carried.

Board members emerged from Executive Session at 8:15 p.m. R. Regula made a motion seconded by P. Pranger that directed Attorney Charles Merriman to send a letter on behalf of the Town to Attorney William Meub indicating collection of a portion of the property taxes resulting in double taxation on behalf of Mr. Meub's client, Stan Taylor, would be temporarily suspended; directed the assessor to take the necessary steps to ensure the Town is not obligated to make the educational portion of the suspended tax payment to the state; and authorized Mr. Merriman to seek Ms. Barbieri's deed research on the matter. Motion carried (5-0).

Public Comments. Wallingford Volunteer Fire Department Fire Chief Michael Hughes requested permission to hold a coin drop on Main Street from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on October 11 with a rain date of October 12. P. Pranger made a motion that was seconded by R. Regula approving the fire chief's coin drop request. Motion carried (5-0).

S. Switzer asked the fire chief about ladder equipment available for Town Hall slate roof repairs. Mr. Hughes said he would speak to other departments to find out what was available.

Ms. Barbieri expressed concern action items listed in the revised Town Plan were not being addressed. Board members agreed planning commissioners should be invited to an upcoming meeting to discuss this matter.

Property Map Maintenance Agreement. P. Pranger made a motion that was seconded by R. Regula approving the one-year Dean Russell Property Map Maintenance Agreement. Motion carried (5-0).

There was a discussion that annual maintenance may not be necessary and the Town should consider updating maps every two years in the future.

Errors and Omissions. P. Pranger made a motion that was seconded by J. McClallen approving Assessor Lisa Wright's errors and omissions request to add the Route 103 Hawkins property to the taxable base. Motion carried (5-0).

Selectboard Comments. N. Tift requested VTTrans make road repairs to the Hull Avenue and Route 7 intersection.

B. Duchesne noted a memo indicating Prudential Committee interviews had been scheduled to fill an upcoming vacancy. He said the Prudential Committee had not conducted interviews in the past. R. Regula said the Prudential Committee made recommendations and the Selectboard appoints.

Other Business. There was a brief discussion regarding Disability Rights Vermont's report regarding polling place accessibility. Board members agreed the road commissioner should inspect the parking space behind Town Hall and recommend improvements.

S. Switzer said she learned from VTrans Eric House that The Bus and not the Town would have to apply for a Bus Stop sign to be installed in front of Wallingford House.

S. Switzer said Lee Perry was at the meeting earlier in the evening and indicated he would have information related to the balance in a delinquent tax bank account at the Board's meeting on September 23.

There was a discussion regarding a memo Assessor Lisa Wright sent to Fire District 1 and 3 officials regarding incorrect fire protection taxes included on 274 bills. N. Tift made a motion that was seconded by R. Regula directing the assessor not to send revised tax bills to recipients within a \$10 plus or minus threshold of the corrected amounts. Motion carried (5-0).

J. McClallen made a motion that was seconded by R. Regula requesting the town clerk and treasurer track labor and material expenses related to the tax bill revisions and send an invoice to Wright Appraisal. Motion carried (5-0).

The meeting adjourned at 9:06 p.m.
Sandi Switzer/Town Administrator

Date Approved: 09/23/19