

Wallingford Selectboard

Meeting Minutes

January 18, 2022

Selectboard Members Present: Bruce Duchesne, Kathy Luzader, Patricia Pranger, and Nelson Tift. Rose Regula did not attend.

Others present: Sandi Switzer, Julie Sharon, Phil Baker, Kate Wanner, Debbie Scranton, Bruce Dobbins, Tammy Heffernan via speakerphone, Will Duane via speakerphone, and Greg McCormack.

Selectboard Chair Nelson Tift called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Agenda Amendments. None.

Minutes. P. Pranger made a motion that was seconded by K. Luzader to approve the 01/03/22 Meeting Minutes. Motion carried (4-0).

Pay Orders. K. Luzader made a motion that was seconded by P. Pranger to approve the 01/19/22 pay order total of \$31,881.37. Motion carried (4-0).

Honorable Mentions. N. Tift noted Sanford Witherall donated funds for the upkeep of the Sugar Hill Cemetery, Wes and Gail Macleod-Ball donated funds to the Conservation Commission, and Mary Holden donated funds to the Town Hall food shelf.

Road Commissioner's Report. Road Commissioner Phil Baker said there were mechanical issues with the 2014 Kenworth and it was towed to Turunen's in Poultney. Mr. Baker said he would be meeting on Friday with a representative from Milton Caterpillar about a new grader. He said some towns were leasing graders for 10 years. He said Milton does not require a down payment to lease and the first payment was due upon receipt of the grader. He said after 10 years, the Town could purchase it for \$1. He said John Deere in Springfield offered a five-year 0% financing deal, but he was unsure whether that would be extended to municipalities. Mr. Baker said a Case dealer in Georgia, VT had not returned calls. N. Tift said the Revenue Augmentation Trust funds would be one source of revenue for the grader purchase. No funds were included in the FY'23 budget for a grader down payment.

N. Tift asked about reducing paving line 5325 in FY'23 from \$65,000 to \$22,000 then using the Carryover of \$43,000 from FY'21 to offset the difference in paving for this summer. Mr. Baker recommended keeping the paving budget at \$65,000 and use the Carryover for higher than anticipated sand and gravel costs. There was an extensive discussion about this topic.

Town Administrator Sandi Switzer asked Mr. Baker if he was all set with his overweight vehicle permit related to the Amy Gilbert logging operation and use of Van Wyck Bridge. The Board reviewed documents sent to the Town by state Agency of Transportation's Pam Thurber related to the bridge load rating. N. Tift confirmed the maximum weight listed

on the overweight vehicle permit he signed for Mr. Baker's application was 55,000 pounds and up to 3 axles on the bridge at any one time.

State Mileage Certificate. By consensus, the Board approved the State Mileage Certificate with no changes.

Public Comments. Town Clerk and Treasurer Julie Sharon presented a petition submitted to her office for an article on the Town Meeting Warning related to the sale of cannabis. N. Tift read the petition aloud. Without objection, the petition was accepted and a related article will be included on the Warning.

FY'23 Budget. The discussion regarding the \$43,000 Carryover from the Highway Budget continued. N. Tift said the overall FY'23 spending plan included several increases and reducing the paving line item to \$22,000 while using the \$43,000 Carryover to maintain the same volume of paving would be fiscally responsible. He said the overall municipal tax rate would drop. Mr. Baker recommended leaving the paving line item at \$65,000. B. Duchesne noted the Highway budget included sharp increases in winter salt and gravel in anticipation of higher tonnage rates. J. Sharon said the municipal tax rate was \$.3936 and it would increase to \$.4038 if the paving budget was \$65,000 and it would drop to \$.3862 if the paving budget was \$22,000 utilizing the 2021 Grand List (she explained the actual tax rate would be based on the 2022 Grand List).

There was a discussion regarding amending the Selectboard stipends to match those paid by other towns around the county. B. Duchesne made a motion that was seconded by K. Luzader to set Selectboard stipends line 5001 at \$7,600 with each member receiving \$1,500 and the chair getting \$1,600. Motion carried (4-0).

By consensus, the Board set Highway paving line 5325 at \$22,000 with the Carryover of \$43,000 to be dedicated to paving. B. Duchesne made a motion that was seconded by P. Pranger to approve an FY'23 budget of \$1,300,279.05 with an amount to be raised in taxes of \$946,537.06. Motion carried (4-0).

Town Meeting Warning. Town Moderator Tammy Heffernan recommended the Board conduct a remote annual Informational Meeting like last year in order to keep everyone safe as a result of current pandemic concerns. Ms. Heffernan said she made an adjustment to the Revenue Augmentation Trust article to include language related to the value of the trust as of 12/31/21. She said she reviewed the draft Town Meeting Warning featuring 10 articles including the petitioned cannabis article. She had no other changes.

K. Luzader asked about audio issues if the Informational Meeting were to be held remotely. Ms. Heffernan said she joined the annual meeting last year remotely and did not observe any audio issues. K. Luzader made a motion that was seconded by B. Duchesne to accept the annual Town Meeting Warning updated with remote meeting information. Motion carried (4-0).

State Fish and Wildlife Land Acquisition Proposal. Kate Wanner of Trustees of Public Land provided an overview and maps related to a proposed purchase of 347 acres from

Bird, Korchak and Fernfield Farms properties abutting the White Rocks Gateway (which will soon be added to the Green Mt. National Forest). She said the State Fish and Wildlife agency would be the new owners. She said 100 acres were in the floodplains and the land acquisition would help wetlands revert back to natural wetlands, decrease flooding, and improve water quality in the river corridor.

State Fish and Wildlife's Will Duane said his agency owned property in neighboring Danby and Mt. Tabor and they were excited to provide more public access. He said management of the land would include logging where appropriate for the benefit of existing hemlock stands. He said there would mostly be wildlife management with no plans for major road or trail work. He said the state would maintain it "as is" and would add a small parking area and kiosk.

Ms. Wanner said Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILT) increased by the same tax rate the landowner paid, so there would be no negative revenue impact. Debbie Scranton said the Conservation Commission supported the land acquisition. Ms. Wanner said the state acquisition would ensure public access as private owners could potentially post the land. She explained the public would be allowed access for hunting, fishing, paddling and back country skiing if the state owned it. By consensus, the Board agreed to endorse a Letter of Support for the state Fish and Wildlife acquisition of the 347 acres.

Quarterly Financials. Board members reviewed quarterly financials prepared by the town clerk and treasurer.

School Director Recommendation. By consensus, the Board recommended Mill River Unified Union School Directors appoint Maria French to a vacant seat.

Zoning Administrator. By consensus, the Board reappointed Erika Berner as zoning administrator for a three-year term. It was noted Ms. Berner was up for review in June along with other municipal employees.

Annual Town Report Dedication and Selectboard Report. B. Duchesne congratulated the town administrator who wrote the annual Town Report dedication. K. Luzader noted the town administrator's Selectboard Report was well-written. There were no changes to either document.

Selectboard Concerns. K. Luzader expressed some concerns about sidewalk plowing near the Route 140 bridge. B. Duchesne responded Fire District #1 was in charge of plowing sidewalks.

B. Duchesne said the flashing radar sign was not working. The town administrator said she would ask the road crew to check into it.

Other Business. N. Tift said Assessor John Tiffany issued a letter denying tax exempt status to Narragansett Indian Tribe Historical Office.

The board chair said Nan Dubin would be arranging a candidate forum at the Rotary building for upcoming elections.

N. Tift said the first ARPA Committee meeting would be held on January 25th.

N. Tift outlined a Notice issued by the health officer for 115 River Street.

By consensus, the Board agreed the roadside mowing estimate from David Hosely and the tennis court resurfacing quote from Advantage Tennis accepted at prior meetings would not require multiple bids/estimates as they were specialty services and the Town was familiar with the contractors and satisfied with previous work and rates.

The Board reviewed Tree Warden Rob Barker's Canopy Grant application. There were no objections. B. Duchesne extended the Town's appreciation to Mr. Barker for offering to donate his services if the grant was awarded. The meeting adjourned at 7:47 p.m.

Submitted By: Sandi Switzer/Town Administrator APPROVED THIS 7th Day of February, 2022