**Selectboard Meeting**

**Richford, Vermont**

**Approved Meeting Minutes**

**February 21, 2024**

Chair Pond called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm with members Sherry Paquette, Alan Fletcher, and Wally Steinhour present. Guests at the meeting were Town Administrator Marissa Tessier, Joey Randall, Justin Randall, Susie Cutting, Angie Tracy, Kelly Lawyer, Lawrence Paquette, Mike Mercure, Rowena Brown, John Libbey, Eric Collins, Robert Wetherby (Zoom), Norman Cohen (Zoom), Bob Harnish (Zoom) and Cameraman Gerry Vaisey.

The board said the pledge of allegiance.

Chair Pond started with Norman Cohen and Bob Harnish on zoom. They were attending the meeting to discuss the Declaration of Inclusion. Norman read the Declaration to the board. Franklin was the first town to adopt the declaration and there have been 135 towns who have adopted it since. Governor Scott is behind the effort and each year he has issued a proclamation establishing the 2nd week in Vermont Inclusion week. Bob gave some history on the declaration. This is a statewide initiative, and they are asking towns to endorse a statement that says we reject discrimination, we welcome people to our town, and we want residents to feel included and safe in our community and the town commits to fair and equal treatment of employees and residents alike. There isn’t anything political, it’s simply a call for respect. They have backing from many major Vermont organizations. Selectman Fletcher asked if other towns have not adopted it. Norman stated that there are towns that have not, and they expect to visit those towns again. Selectman Fletcher asked if he could say why they have turned it down. Norman stated that they are unclear as to why they have turned it down.

Selectman Steinhour made a motion to adopt the Declaration of Inclusion as read by Norman. Selectwoman Paquette seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Robert Wetherby wanted to go back to the emails he received about the violation of the open meeting law where Alan said the board is responsible for giving everybody answers and concerns to questions and things. Selectman Steinhour asked Robert to be more specific on a time frame and if he had a specific question. Mr. Wetherby wanted to know why he hadn’t gotten any answers. Selectman Steinhour wanted to invite Robert to a meeting of his choosing to attempt to provide answers to the questions he is seeking. Marissa will set up a meeting.

Chair Pond moved onto to the residents of East Richford who were there regarding the dry hydrant. The residents of East Richford are concerned with whether the hydrants are working or not because this could potentially affect their homeowner’s insurance. They would like the Town, the selectboard and the fire department to come up with a solution to this issue. Chair Pond stated that he is unsure of the laws, and they are seeking advice from the state to try and resolve this issue.

The residents also asked about the water project on the Golf Course and if it would affect the taxpayers. Chair Pond stated that it would not affect the taxpayers, but it would affect the residents on the water and sewer system.

John Libbey brought up an issue regarding parking near the brick house on Troy Street and Pine Haven Estates. He has sent letters to the property owner. John was wondering if the town could put up a no parking sign, because he is parking close to the Pine Haven Estates driveway and causing a blind spot for people pulling out onto the highway. Selectman Steinhour suggested possibly putting up a mirror on the building so you could see oncoming traffic better. John will look more into the setbacks. Eric Collins commented and said there is an orange book that gives state regs on how far back you must park from setbacks.

John asked Sherry about fixing the heat in his office. Selectman Paquette had reached out to John Mercy who was supposed to give her a price on a new radiator. She will reach out to him again.

Chair Pond asked John Libbey about 1977 Corliss Rd. The new owners have put multiple structures on it. They got a permit 2 years ago to build a house and nothing was done. Neighbors were complaining. John has sent letters but has gotten no response. He will send a certified letter. Eric Collins is assessing the property as camp at this moment.

Rowena Brown wanted to know why there wasn’t a sign out front last week determining voting was happening. Marissa explained that when the electronic sign was put in that was to replace the sandwich board, and there were multiple mentions of voting in the previous meetings. In the future when it is voting there will be a longer display on the sign out front to determine there is voting happening.

Rowena also had heard some concerns about policing. She was wondering if we could get coverage from other police departments. Selectman Steinhour stated that they have tried other departments and they decided to not take it on, but they are continuing to explore other options. He stated they are not ignoring the issue. Rowena also wanted to know when the new water and sewer guidelines were going to be out. Selectman Fletcher stated they were held up by a few things, but they should be ready soon. She also was wondering about the donation that was talked about in the previous meeting minutes., the minutes stated the amount from last year. There was no amount listed and she wanted to know what that amount was. Selectwoman Paquette stated they weren’t sure at the time but the next day she went in the office and Marissa looked up what was previously given, and it was $250.

The board moved to approve the 2/5/2024 meeting minutes.

Selectman Steinhour motioned to approve the 2/5/2024 meeting minutes. Selectwoman Paquette seconded. Motion passed.

Highway report – Been a mild winter, having to do some early mud season work, hauled a lot of gravel. The roads are rough but passable. Rowena brought up a safety concern with plowing on Townhouse hill. The town crew is plowing up the wrong way. Chair Pond stated they have flashing lights going when plowing. Selectman Steinhour wasn’t sure what the best solution for this would be, but he assured Rowena he heard her concern.

Buildings Report – Looking for grates for the ambulance bay drains. Selectwoman Paquette was going to meet with someone about the railings at the post office and town hall, and for the grates. Rowena asked about the roof at the library, Sherry is getting quotes to have the rest fixed. Also, the railing at the library is a safety hazard, and the bathroom door is not lockable. Selectwoman Paquette will call the lock smith to come out and look at it.

Water & Sewer – Selectman Fletcher stated there was a meeting with Jeremy and the engineering company who are going to do a study on our sewer lagoons. This study will give us recommendations on how to lower the levels of phosphorus in our lagoons. They will look at how we operate and what chemicals we use. The costs for the town will be very minimal for testing. Selectman Fletcher also wanted to add that the article that was posted in the messenger had the wrong cemetery. Eric Collins asked how far the line was going. Selectman Fletcher stated they are replacing the line that is already there and not extending it. Chair Pond said there was a leak on Green Ave that was fixed.

Town Administrator Update – The library was awarded a grant in the amount of $15,000 to replace the windows. Deer Run submitted an increase to the mowing contract in the amount of $1100 because of the extra mowing added to the Richford Center Cemetery.

Selectwoman Paquette made a motion to approve the increase of the mowing contract. Selectman Steinhour seconded. Motion passed.

Marissa received a phone call from Samantha at The St. Albans Probation and Parol office. She stated Richford was a on list that would offer clients community service if we had availability and wanted to know if we wanted to stay on the list. The board agreed to stay on the list.

Greta Brunswick had reached out regarding the sidewalk scoping study. The firm that the board had recently approved for a proposal has backed out. The proposal for the scoping study from VHB is $3,152 over which would increase the local match from the town. Marissa was looking for a motion to accept VHB as the new firm for the scoping study, and to also to contract with VHB for the original proposal and to direct Marissa and Greta to coordinate with VHB to prepare the contract.

Selectman Steinhour made a motion to contract with VHB for the original proposal. Selectwoman Paquette seconded. Motion passed.

Town Clerk Kiley had asked Marissa to approach the board about allowing her to approve renewals for liquor licenses. The state has created a portal for businesses to renew their license. The board needed to convene the liquor control board. Selectwoman Paquette made a motion to recess the selectboard meeting, and to convene as the liquor control board. Chair Pond seconded. Motion passed.

Chair Pond made a motion to allow Kiley to approve liquor license renewals so long as there isn’t any changes or new business application. Selectman Steinhour seconded. Motion passed.

Selectwoman Paquette made a motion to adjourn the liquor control board and return to the regular selectboard meeting. Selectman Steinhour seconded. Motion passed.

Parks, Playground & Cemetery – Nothing to report.

Other business – There needs to be an addendum to extend the current trash contract with Wetherby’s. The board would like Kiley to write a letter extending the contract that is currently in place, and Sherry will bring it over for John to sign.

Selectman Steinhour made a motion for Selectwoman Paquette to work with Kiley to get an addendum signed. Chair Pond seconded. Motion passed.

Lister Eric Collins requested to go into executive to discuss a contract.

Selectman Steinhour made a motion to go into executive session at 6:16 pm to discuss a contract. Selectwoman Paquette seconded. Motion passed.

At 6:29 pm Selectwoman Paquette made a motion to come out of executive session. Selectman Steinhour seconded. Motion passed.

No decision was made as a result of the executive session.

Meeting adjourned at 6:30 pm

Submitted by

Marissa Tessier – Town Administrator

Attest: