**Selectboard Meeting**

**Richford, Vermont**

**Approved Meeting Minutes**

**February 6, 2023**

Chair Pond called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm with members Wally Steinhour, Alan Fletcher, Sherry Paquette, and Kristen Sheperd present. Guests at the meeting included Carl Wetherby, Joey Randall, Zoning Administrator John Libbey, Lister Eric Collins, Lister Andrew Davis, Town Administrator Michael Olio, and Cameraman Gerry Vaisey.

The board said the pledge of allegiance.

Chair Pond recognized guests. He started with Carl Wetherby who asked if the board had any more information about the winter parking ordinance. Selectman Steinhour said they consulted with the attorney. The town has an obligation to keep the roads safe, and read state statute 23 V.S.A. Section 1752 pertaining to parked vehicles. He said Mr. Wetherby brought valid points to the selectboard, and he appreciates that. The selectboard has started looking into updating the ordinance. Carl agreed the ordinance needs to be updated, but he still thinks the selectboard has mishandled it. He continued saying it is more than just the towing, the whole ordinance is inconsistent. Selectman Steinhour said that is why the selectboard is revisiting it. The group then debated if the town has posted the winter parking ordinance in the paper in previous years. The town administrator read an email sent to Chair Pond from Linda Collins about her name being brought up at the previous meeting. It read “wasjust*watching the last meeting and my name was thrown out when the discussion centered*on winter*parking ban. This needs to be read at your next meeting. I ALWAYS posted the winter parking ban in the Courier Every year. This is a big problem every year because we only enforce it every now and then and not regularly. We even had our lives threatened at one meeting because a car was towed. Gary Snider was the town clerk. In the future if you have a question, please ask me before my name is tossed out as if I had done something wrong. Thanks. Whoever is in charge of the roads should be responsible for the towing and warnings. Linda”*

Lister Eric Collins had items to discuss with the selectboard. First, he informed the board that they would like to plan a class with the district advisors from the Department of Property Evaluation and Review. It can be attended by selectboard, justices, town clerk, etc. This class would give a better understanding of the grievance process for property assessments, and it would be good for everyone to attend since there is a town wide reappraisal. A date has not been selected, but it could be hosted at the Town Hall, and is approximately a four-hour class.

Eric’s second item was in May of 2022, there were a handful of properties that changed owners on Green Avenue. They were handled by two different lawyers for two different clients. He said the seller transferred property for recording at the town hall before actually owning it. During the process of sorting that out, another property was transferred from a party that was not involved in the sale. Eric said later on a third party got involved to transfer more property. The Listers noted the wrong deeds so they did not process the property transfer tax report. Eric said they sent out letters asking for corrected deeds. He wanted to make the Selectboard aware in case someone grieved to them about it.

Next, Eric asked what is the town’s policy on Jury Duty? He questioned if the town paid their employees for it or not. Selectman Fletcher said he was not sure without seeing the policy. Selectwoman Paquette had a copy of the personnel policy and handed it to Selectman Fletcher. He read section 26 pertaining to Jury Leave and it said the town will compensate employees for it.

The last item Eric discussed was a driveway permit for his driveway. In 2007 a driveway easement was signed between Eric and the town so a vehicle can be parked beside his house. In 2021, Zoning Administrator Libbey asked Eric to fill out a driveway permit for the work, and he did. Since it is on town land, the selectboard chair had to sign off on the permit. The permit was lost, so the process was recently done again. The question Eric had was who is going to pay for the permit? It is on town land, and the town does not pay for their own permits. If the Selectboard was not interested, then he would pay. Chair Pond asked each selectboard member how they felt about Eric not paying for the permit. They were all in agreement Eric does not have to pay since it is an easement on town property.

Discussion of town properties took place with Eric and the Selectboard. He said there are a lot of properties the town owns that serve no purpose, including the strip he uses as a driveway. He said he would be open to owning the driveway and reversing the easement, so the town has the necessary room to maintain the emergency building. Eric suggested any adjoining properties the town owns that serves no purpose, should be in consideration to sell. This would generate more tax revenue, albeit a small amount. Selectman Steinhour asked Eric what is the process for selling property as a municipality? Eric said to outright sell a property, it requires publishing, and a period of time to hear from the public. Selectman Steinhour followed up with could it go through a realtor? Carl added it depends on how the town acquired the property. A town cannot make a profit on land acquired through tax sale. Eric said the expenses to cleanup or fix a property can be recouped on tax sale properties. Selectman Steinhour said they have some research to do before moving forward then. Selectman Fletcher added the Town of Fairfax was sued for a property they received through tax sale, because residents felt like they did not sell it for enough money.

Zoning Administrator John Libbey informed the board that the Leah Britch case was settled. He asked if the board wanted him to sign on behalf of the town. The selectboard viewed the settlement. Selectman Steinhour asked what is the process, do they have to sign it here, and could Chair Pond sign it? John said that is up to the board to decide who they want to sign it, and then the selectboard agreed they would like to see a signed copy from the other parties before signing.

Selectman Steinhour made a motion to allow Chair Pond to sign the settlement pending on seeing a signed copy from the other parties. Selectwoman Paquette seconded the motion. Motion passed 5-0.

Based on the discussion with Eric, the agenda item ‘Discussion of Town Properties’ was sufficiently talked through.

Chair Pond wanted to discuss the Sheriff audit that is taking place for Franklin County Sheriff. Back in July the selectboard tasked the town administrator to setup a meeting with the Sheriff, and days after the meeting was set, a reimbursement check came to the town because FCSO was not able to cover the Town’s contracted hours. Chair Pond wondered since the department is being audited, could they inquire to see if there were other periods where contracted hours were not met. He would like to make sure we have gotten what we have paid for. The selectboard tasked the town administrator to research who to contact about this.

Selectman Steinhour said an accident was reported by Jolley’s Pinnacle Peddler, and the Sheriff was parked by the Vermont Electric Co-op storage building. He questioned why the officer was parked there. Chair Pond said it could be a collaboration with the Border Patrol as they cover that area.

The board moved to approve the 1/16/23 selectboard meeting minutes, the 1/16/23 budget meeting minutes. Selectwoman Paquette made the motion to approve both sets of minutes. Selectwoman Sheperd seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

Update From Town Administrator – Two grant opportunities are available, and both were applied for last year.

The Town Highway Class 2 Roadway Grant was announced, and the deadline for priority projects is April 15. The town applied last year for paving, but did not receive an award. The board said to pursue the grant.

The second one is the FEMA Assistance to Firefighters grant. It was applied for last year, but the town was not awarded. Chair Pond said he would like to reapply for it since the application is for upgrading personal protective equipment. He listed bunker gear, SCBA gear, and a compressor as the needs. There is a possibility that the municipality might qualify for the hardship waiver allowing the town to not have to pay a match. The board said to pursue this grant.

Selectman Fletcher cautioned the amount of grants the town has applied for. We do not want to get into a situation where we have to pay it back.

Selectwoman Paquette made a motion to allow the Town Administrator to administer the FEMA Assistance to Firefighters grant. Selectman Steinhour seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

Lastly the Town Administrator asked if the Selectboard was okay with a streetlight being installed for a resident. They would like one on the telephone pole in front of their house. Vermont Electric Co-op confirmed there is no installation cost to the town, all that is needed is an application. The selectboard said to apply for it.

Highway Report – Selectman Steinhour said not much to report. The sander broke down due to a chain snapping off. It is normal wear and tear. As discussed earlier, Selectman Steinhour said they are looking to update the winter parking ordinance. Chair Pond said he noticed the pavilion his son built in Davis Park was repaired and wanted to say thank you to the Highway Crew for fixing it.

Buildings Report – Selectwoman Paquette said the credit union and Connors Contracting is continuing to work on renovations in their section of the Post-Office building. They are utilizing old wood to keep a historical look. The hot water tank failed in the Post-Office building and will need to be replaced.

Carl asked how much is it going to cost to remodel that space? Selectwoman Paquette said the credit union is paying for most of the renovations, and the town is responsible for the ADA compliance portion. It is approximately $ 32,000, but an updated estimate was asked for. Carl then asked how much is the rent going to be? Selectwoman Paquette said it is a 5-year contract with three renewals at $ 1750 a month.

Carl wondered if hypothetically a new post-master for the Post-Office would not want people to use the front lobby to get to the entrance of the credit union. Selectwoman Paquette said the lobby is for everyone, the Post-Office does not own that. Carl added he thinks having the credit union is a good idea, but it could be crowded in the lobby area. Selectman Steinhour said the flow of traffic should not be drastically different from when FNESU rented their space. They had upwards of twenty employees flowing in and out of the first and second floor of the building.

Water and Sewer Report – Chair Pond said he did not have anything to report. Selectman Fletcher said the selectboard must go to the voters to approve the Green Avenue water project despite the State of Vermont mandating the town to do it. He added the board should consider committing APRA funds to minimize the need to finance since interest rates are high. They could also consider slightly raising rates to save for it. Next Selectman Fletcher said the board would need to treat their water and sewer rules as an amendment to an ordinance. He would like to start working on it. He suggested if we have public meetings for ordinances, the selectboard should do multiple at the same time. Lastly Selectman Fletcher said cleanup took place at the water plant.

Parks, Playgrounds, and Cemeteries Report – Selectwoman Sheperd said she attended a Rec meeting, and the fireworks were discussed because the Lion’s Club wanted to do them on the Harvest Fest instead of the 4th of July due to the cost. Selectwoman Sheperd said the Rec committee did not sound interested. Chair Pond explained the thought is having it during the offseason will make it cheaper and it would be as good of a show like years past. The Lions Club are the organizers of the fireworks event, so it is up to them when it takes place.

Selectwoman Sheperd said she will be heading up the Fourth of July parade committee. A problem from last year she would like to alleviate was the road closure issue. She will be meeting with the previous coordinator to better understand the work involved with organizing the parade.

Selectwoman Sheperd added the Winter Games are happening on February 18th. She also said the activity at the ice rink is amazing. Lastly the Rec committee was advertising to see if someone was willing to donate a used snowblower.

Other Business – Selectman Steinhour discussed the board’s need to appoint someone as the representative to the Northwest Solid Waste District. Selectwoman Paquette said she might be interested in attending the meetings, but would need more information on meeting dates. The selectboard tasked the town administrator to find out time and dates for the meetings.

Selectwoman Paquette brought up that someone is interested in a parking space in the municipal parking lot across from the Legion. This person wanted to be given a space since the town plows snow into their parking by the laundry mat. Selectman Fletcher asked why do we push snow into someone else’s parking lot? Selectman Steinhour said he would look into it with the Highway Foreman. Chair Pond said if we push snow into that parking lot, then we should accommodate, but the board will wait until Selectman Steinhour discusses with the Highway Foreman.

At 7:23 pm a motion was made by Selectman Steinhour to go into executive session to discuss personnel. Selectwoman Steinhour seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

At 7:56 pm a motion was made by Selectman Steinhour to come out of executive session. Selectwoman Paquette seconded. Motion passed 5-0. No motions were made as a result of the executive session.

Meeting adjourned 7:57 PM

Submitted by

Michael Olio – Town Administrator

Attest: