**Selectboard Meeting**

**Richford, Vermont**

**Approved Meeting Minutes**

**September 11, 2023**

Chair Pond called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm with members Sherry Paquette, Alan Fletcher, and Kristen Sheperd present. Guests at the meeting included Robert Wetherby (Zoom), Rowena Brown, Will Ducolon, Joey Randall, Zoning Administrator John Libbey, Lister Eric Collins, Lister Kim Collins, Archie Pond, Richford Cemetery Associates Robert Haggerty and Réal Smith, Marissa Tessier, and Town Administrator Michael Olio, and Cameraman Gerry Vaisey.

The board said the pledge of allegiance.

Chair Pond recognized guests. He started with Robert Wetherby who asked when the illegal meeting minutes would be posted from the discussion of his letter over email. Chair Pond said Selectman Steinhour has been the point of contact for this issue, so he will have to be informed, but he is not aware of needing to post minutes. Chair Pond said they will have to consult with VLCT.

Rowena Brown asked if a date was set for the fall brush pickup? She would like to coordinate pickup when cleaning out the parks. Chair Pond said Selectman Steinhour would be the one to ask for that.

Lister Kim and Eric Collins wanted to talk to the selectboard in executive session about a matter they were dealing with. They felt it should not be shared publicly at this time.

Henry Haggerty and Réal Smith attended the meeting to give an update on the Richford Center Cemetery. Henry reported in 2022 the cemetery had $ 10,458 in expenses and $ 6,900 in income. In 2023 there were $ 32,166 in expenses and $ 3,598 in income. The major expenditure in 2023 was from work on the cemetery road system and brush cleanout. Henry said next year they will work on expanding their lot and will need to get in contact with the Newport surveyor who was hired for the job to discuss the project with them. Henry talked about green burials. It has not been discussed as a board for the cemetery, but he recommended going to the Secretary of State’s website to read about it. He cited VSA Section 18 5302-10, which states a natural burial ground may be established on or after July 1st, 2015. He is not in favor of them in the Richford Center Cemetery since it requires designated space and land is limited. Réal Smith said the trash receptacles at the cemetery are full, and wondered if someone could reach out to Wetherby’s Rubbish Removal to empty them. Selectwoman Sheperd said she would reach out. Henry said there is an old shed behind the cemetery that needs to be torn down and wondered if the highway crew could do it? The message will be relayed to Selectman Steinhour. Réal reported the cemetery stopped winter burials due to the damage it caused last winter, and they have been closing the cemetery during the winter months. The gate is closed from November 1st to May 1st.

Archie Pond attended the meeting as a Lions Club Member. The Lions Club put in two spots for the Harvest Festival and were denied doing a 50/50 raffle. He said the club does a lot for the town from sponsoring events, covering half the costs of fireworks, school vision screening, maintaining the bridge clock and lettering, supplying glasses for people, etc. Selectwoman Paquette said the Lion’s Club does a lot for the community. She continued saying the selectboard is not involved with the event and encouraged him to go to a Richford Recreation meeting which will be held on September 25 at 5:00. Marissa Tessier extended the invitation for the Lion’s Club to come up with something for them to raise money. Archie asked if the Selectboard was okay with the Lion’s Club hosting a coin drop on September 30th if they cannot do a fundraiser at the Harvest Festival. The selectboard had no issue with it.

Zoning Administrator John Libbey was contacted by a realtor who was interested in purchasing the commercial lots across from Pinnacle Jolley to put in a green cemetery. He said if the selectboard was not interested they would not purchase the land. The board was in consensus not to have a green cemetery there due to it being one of the remaining undeveloped commercial lots in town. John asked why the water levels are low in the Main Street Park fountain? Sometimes it is high and sometimes it is low. Selectwoman Paquette thought the town crew turned the water on and off. Chair Pond said to contact Jason and ask him to look at it.

Will Ducolon attended the meeting to discuss putting up a gate on the Bear Run Road. Selectman Steinhour and Chair Pond looked at the property. Chair Pond asked does the board wants to give up rights to the road? His thought was to support putting up a gate, but not giving up the right of way. Selectman Fletcher agreed. Lister Eric Collins said he reviewed the deed of the land trust above Will’s property, and it is not for land conservation. There could be potential for development they ever decided to. Chair Pond reaffirmed his proposition to have a gate with no lock. Will said that does not help his situation with trespassers as he would want it locked for security reasons. Eric said since Will owns land on both sides of the road, so it is technically a pent road, and he may put a lock on it if a key is left with the Fire Department. Chair Pond said that would need to be verified before they approved it. Will asked what is the purpose of keeping the rights? Chair Pond said once the rights are given up from the town, it cannot be undone. Selectman Fletcher asked he if considered posting his land? Will said he has tried everything since owning the property, and it has not stopped people from trespassing and breaking in. Will is frustrated with this and wondered what would happen if he put up a locked gate. Would there be fines or repercussions? Chair Pond said he cannot say for sure what would happen. He emphasized they will investigate if it can be locked from the information Eric provided. Selectwoman Paquette said they are meeting the following Monday, September 18th and could have an answer by then.

Franklin County Sheriff John Grismore sent a revised contract for the upcoming year. After reviewing the differences between the current one and the revised, the Selectboard determined to continue with the current contract.

Chair Pond motioned to continue with the current Frankling County Sheriff Office contract. Selectwoman Paquette seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

The selectboard moved to approve the 8/21/23 meeting minutes. Selectwoman Sheperd motioned to approve the minutes. Chair Pond seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

Update from Town Administrator – The UMATR Town Infrastructures grant for 2024 was announced. Dan Seeley would like to work with Jason to apply for it.

Selectwoman Paquette motioned to approve an application for the 2024 UMATR Town Infrastructures grant. Chair Pond seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

The next community trash day will be held on October 14th.

Highway Report – Selectman Steinhour did not attend the meeting. There was nothing to report for Highway.

Buildings Report – Selectwoman Paquette said the new furnace at the Post-Office was being installed from Mercy’s Heating. For the town hall, Selectwoman Paquette is looking for someone to finish the drywall work in the boiler room.

Water & Sewer Report – Chair Pond said there was a water main leak on South Main Street just past the Pinnacle Jolley. It will be fixed tomorrow. Also, there is a water leak on the end of North Avenue and Elm Street that is supposed to be fixed Friday. Chair Pond said he forwarded a report from the valve exercising program to Selectman Fletcher. Chair Pond said he has yet to review it. Selectman Fletcher said he would like to go into executive session for personnel.

Parks, Playgrounds, and Cemeteries Report – Selectwoman Sheperd asked when she should reach out to winterize the playground building. The board said it is usually done in mid-October.

Nothing was discussed in other business.

Selectwoman Paquette motioned to go into executive session for the Listers and to discuss personnel at 5:00 pm. Chair Pond seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

At 5:29 pm, Selectwoman Paquette motioned to come out of executive session. Selectman Fletcher seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

As a result of the executive session, Selectwoman Paquette motioned to approve the Listers to seek legal council to resolve a tax issue. Selectman Fletcher seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

Meeting adjourned 5:30 pm.

Submitted by

Michael Olio – Town Administrator

Attest: