Select board Meeting

April 15, 2021

7:00pm

Virtual Meeting

Present were Darlene Wyman, David Bemis, Denise Randall, Danny Taylor, Dennis Mirante, Fact TV, Hannah Regier, Janet Perry, Lynn Morgan, Tina White, Sherry Maher, Matt Perry, , April Lyman, Wichi Artu, Krista Gay, Amber Stevens, Bonnie Hitchcock, Donna Currier and Don Capponcelli.

David called the meeting to order at 7:03pm.

Adjustments to the agenda: There were no adjustments to the agenda.

Minutes: David made the motion to accept the minutes of the prior meeting. Denise seconded. Darlene stated there had been some corrections. David stated they would approve the minutes and Darlene will email the corrected minutes to the board to review. If there are any objections it will be taken up at the next meeting. Sherry had a question concerning the vote that was not a unanimous vote concerning the gravel. It was not spelled out in the minutes who voted yes and no. David stated that this should be spelled out in the minutes.

Public comments: April stated she had a question about the commissioner selected for Taylor Hill. She was not aware of any meeting or anything posted and wanted to know when there was a meeting to discuss that person. David stated the town’s attorney had asked for names the board could get for that. There was not a public meeting as to who it was but put in a couple names to our attorney to forward and the judge will decide who is appointed. It is not the board who picks the commissioner but the judge. April stated she thought if there was an open meeting it needed to be warned. David stated it does. April asked who got together for that. David stated he submitted the names to the attorney. Darlene stated the warrants were left on the table for the board to sign and there was a weight permit that needed to be signed. Krista stated she was disappointed on how the board handled the questions at the last meeting in regards to the conflict of interest policy. As it was discussed the newest board member is a parent of one of the two town employees and is therefore directly related to hiring and salary decisions and is also a close family member to multiple individuals involved in the petition against the town. She asked the board to clarify whether they have a conflict policy and how it will be followed and more importantly what will be done in the situations that will inevitably over the term that involve either the road commissioner or the town employee for that petition. Denise commented she has been in contact with VLCT and the board has a conflict of interest policy and she has gone over the policy with Carl from VLCT and he sent her a copy of their policy to compare it and the recommendation he has made any and all that has to do with the employee and the board member with the relationship, she must recuse herself and may not vote and may not sit in on. As far as anything to do with Taylor Hill, she has to recuse herself because she is related although it was not clear and Denise will be in contact with Carl whether she is to leave the room when the board is in executive session about that or if only needs to recuse herself from the vote when the board leaves the executive session. Anything having to do with the parent and son, the board member must recuse herself. David stated the board’s attorney reviewed the policy and he came to a different conclusion that Janet could sit in on the discussions on Taylor Hill because she does not have a specific interest in that herself and was the basis of the inquiry about that. David stated Janet understands dealing with an employee that that would be a conflict of interest. But as far as Taylor Hill, the attorney has given the board the guidance that he does not believe that our policy would require or the model policy that VLCT currently has would not require her to step down from Taylor Hill. The attorney suggested that a person that lived on the road and recused themselves it would not be reasonable, it would be like if Denise or David recused themselves because they lived on Route 35. And with Janet not owning property on Taylor Hill, but if she did that could be an issue. Krista thanked the board for clarifying all this and just to clarify Janet will be sitting in on and voting for the Taylor Hill petition. David replied that was what the attorney said would be reasonable and proper. Krista thanked the board and for the record she stated she is an attorney herself and there could be a strong disagreement to that conclusion. Denise stated to clarify what Carl from VLCT mentioned to her that Janet should recuse herself and if she doesn’t, the board may ask her to do that if the board deems that to be so. Carl was hoping that anything came up due to the conflict of interest because of mother and son, that she would recuse herself on her own and not ask to be recused. Sherry wished to thank the board for clarifying the question on the conflict of interest. Sherry asked if there was a way others in the meeting would be able to see the board while they are in the town office. David stated if the town had to continue doing virtual meetings, the town could get a web cam to set up in the office. Denise stated that since there were only three board members and they could socially distance themselves, she suggested they meet in the town office for the meetings.

Boards and Officials: Hannah asked if the board received the emails for the budget report and balance sheet. The board stated they had not. Hannah will try to resend them. Lynn reported starting Monday the K-6 grades would be going to a 5 day school week. The Supervisory Union is looking into composting all food scraps at each campus, using it as a learning experience. This summer with funds from the federal government there will be a 6 week summer school for kids entering 1st grade to 8th grade. The Grafton Elementary school’s second grade teacher, Kelly Hallock, has received Vermont Teacher of the Year award. Denise asked if we had heard any more from the state on the withdrawal from Westminster from the union. Lynn replied they had sent in all the paperwork on that as of today and are still waiting to hear from the state. Sherry stated there wasn’t much of an update on the Meetinghouse from last month. The committee is still waiting a grant agreement from the Paul Bruan fund grant from Preservation Vermont which they haven’t received. They are working on getting clarity on the scope of work of the project the committee are hoping to pursue. She is getting concerned about any of the contractors still have space on their schedule for this season. David stated he had spoken to the person who is willing to help with grants and could attend the May meeting. David will give Sherry the information if she wishes to contact him. David stated the grant person would be paid on an hourly basis. Sherry asked if this was someone who will assist in grant writing, grant management or communication with the grantors. David stated it would probably be all three. Sherry stated it was good to know this for future projects, but did not see the need to spend town monies at this stage. David stated with the stimulus packages out there that there may be funds out there that are available to get in on and having somebody that is a professional would be helpful. Sherry stated this may be helpful for any interior work the committee could go ahead with. Denise asked if the monies for the grant person would come out of the town budget or from the grant. David stated we would have to assume it would come out of the town budget, but there may be grants that may pay for this person. Denise asked if this person would be contracted and not an employee of the town. David stated he would be contracted. David stated the solid waste district would be having a hazardous waste collection on May 28th from 2pm-6pm at the Springfield recycling center. Darlene stated she has flyers at the office and Hannah stated it is also posted on the web page. Sherry stated she would also get it in the Athenian.

Solid Waste RFPs: David asked if we had received any. Janet stated we received one from DeCamp Trucking out of Claremont, NH. The cost will be $36,501.00 per year. David asked if this was only for trucking. Janet stated this price included everything. Janet stated they did not have a problem with biweekly trash and biweekly recycling. The recycling needs to be bagged and cardboard broken down and tied together. The green Athens bags will still be used for trash. Janet will clarify what types of bags may be used for recycling. Janet will contact Hannah and Sherry to get the types of bags that may be used for recycling onto the web page and in the Athenian. Sherry asked Janet to clarify if the recycling is put out in a closed container does it still need to be bagged. Janet stated it has to be in bags. David suggested it may be because so it will not blow out of the truck. Janet was asked if she had contacted any other contactors. She stated she had contacted everyone that was listed with Solid Waste and in the yellow pages. Other options were discussed such as using Fast Trash through Solid Waste, using recycle bins at the town garage or using the recycling station in Rockingham. Denise stated if it came to changing trash removal it would have to be voted on at Town Meeting since it was also voted on to have curbside service. David stated the figure was not over budget. Tina asked because the trash was put out for vote at Town Meeting and it passed that we would go every other week. She understands that we will no longer have Triple T but because the townspeople voted on it, whatever company we go with would still have to be every other week. David stated it is. Tina asked why we were discussing other options if the town had already voted on it whether it would have to be this way until next year. David stated it doesn’t have to be this way until next year but that is what was expected and if no one had put in an RFP the board may have to look at something else. David stated that for this year we would have to stay with the curbside pickup that people were expecting when they voted. We did not know that Triple T would not be serving us until after the Town Meeting. David made the motion the board except the RFP from DeCamp trucking with the proviso that the quote includes tonnage and the town does not have to pay tonnage on top of that. Denise seconded with the request to have clarification on the tonnage question and that David sign once this issue is clarified. David stated if the tonnage was not included a special meeting would have to be held to discuss this. Put to a vote. The motion carried. Janet will contact DeCamp Trucking.

Warrants and Mail: David made the motion to approve and sign the warrant. Janet seconded. Put to a vote. The motion carried.

Roads: Matt stated everything is doing better after the last meeting and the episode with the Brookline Road by and below the beaver pond. Matt felt that once the snow from the storm has melted they should start the underdrain project for Brookline Road. David asked if the town had a grant for this. Matt stated we did not have a grant but it was in the budget for last year. David asked about the Better Back Roads grant. Matt stated this was to remove the ledge. Denise asked where the underdrain would be put in. Matt stated in would be right around 432 Brookline road at the bottom of hedgehog. David asked if the town crew would be doing the project or if it had to be put out to bid. Matt stated the road crew should be able to do it. Danny asked since this road seems to fall apart every year why an engineer didn’t look at it. Danny stated that it was stated the underdrain would hopefully work so why would we spend a lot more money on just a hope. David stated that the underdrain on Route 35 was working where it was put in a few years ago and suspect that it will help on Brookline road. Danny suggested that Better Back Roads would be able help with an engineer. David asked if the road crew was ready for the predicted snow storm. Matt said they were. st of the gravel budget has been used because of that. Denise asked Matt that on last month’s warrant there was a bill for welding. Matt replied they have not bought the welder yet. She also asked what the bill from Sanel/NAPA for cylinders was for. Matt stated he would stop in at the office on Monday to check on this.

Executive Session: At 7:58pm David made the motion to go into executive sessions to discuss a personnel matter where premature general public knowledge would clearly place the town of Athens at a substantial disadvantage. Janet seconded. Put to a vote. The motion carried. Executive session will be held by phone. David stated if there is something there the board feels they should not be in executive session or it pertains to a matter that Janet shouldn’t be in they will deal with it at that point and come out and announce that. The board came out of executive session at 8:24pm. No decisions were made in executive session. David made the motion to raise the elected and appointed town official’s wages to $11.75 per hour which meets the minimum wage retroactive to January 1, 2021. Denise seconded. Put to a vote. The motion carried.

Further Business/Adjourn: There being no further business David made the motion to adjourn. Denise seconded. Put to a vote. The motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 8:28pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Darlene Wyman, Town Clerk