

**Town of Starksboro
Selectboard Meeting
March 20, 2018
Unapproved minutes**

Board Members present: Eric Cota, Tony Porter, Peter Marsh, Koran Cousino
And Rebecca Elder, Selectboard Assistant

Visitors: Mary O'Brien, Betsy Dunham

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m.

Changes to agenda:

Some adjustments to the order of items. Election of officers to be first, then the report, following by minutes and bills/orders, then the board will move to Gazette discussion with visitors.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Motion: Tony Porter nominated Koran Cousino to the position of Chair of the Selectboard; Eric Cota seconded the motion.

Vote: All in favor

Motion: Peter Marsh nominated Tony Porter to the position of Vice-chair of the Selectboard; Eric Cota seconded the motion.

Vote: All in favor

Road Foreman's report:

- Current stock of salt is down to 6,000-8,000 lbs – The crew is only using it in the village; following instruction to use it sparingly.
- Sand supply is running low at the garage.
- Regular maintenance on the trucks
- Got the new tires on the grader and put on last week
- Ordered the one-ton pickup because orders by 3/15 receive the 2018 price; state contract deadline. Truck should arrive in 8 weeks.
- Koran asked for an update on the utility truck (the other truck that was approved by voters at town meeting). Tom said he is waiting on Kenworth to let him know if adding 4WD will require additional distance in the wheel base
- Discussed stainless steel body, getting a price. Some adjustments needed for heavier single axle. Tom prefers that (won't have to paint in 4-5 yrs down the road)
- Koran asked Tom about the Hurd easement to confirm the approach proposed is not a problem for the road crew. Tom stated he is not concerned about trucks going under the lines and the poles will be in wetland area where no other use would be permitted anyway.

Welcome to New Board Member

Koran welcomed new selectboard member Eric Cota. She emphasized there is a learning curve to come up to speed on the many issues that come before the Selectboard. All questions are good and she encouraged all members to speak up to clarify issues during discussion.

Minutes of 2/5/18

Motion: Tony Porter moved and Peter Marsh seconded the motion to approve the minutes of the 2/5/18 meeting. **Vote:** All in favor (4/0)

Minutes of 2/20/18

Motion: Tony Porter moved and Peter Marsh seconded the motion to approve the minutes of 2/20/18.

Vote: All in favor. (4/0)

Minutes of 3/1/18

Motion: Tony Porter moved and Koran Cousino seconded the motion to approve the minutes of 3/1/18.

Vote: All in favor (3/0). Peter Marsh recused.

Review of Orders

Peter Marsh has a question about the water bill. He stated that there are 3 town buildings which should total \$120 and 2 buildings are 60. Are residences \$240/yr and nonprofits \$60/yr? Tony recalls this conversation from last year but doesn't know if it was settled.

- Two properties are rentals - is the pottery studio/food shelf one and the PO the other?
- Are the studio and food shelf being billed each? Food shelf only has toilet and sink.
- Who currently does the billing? Perhaps Hank or Mitch. Tony Porter will call Mitch tomorrow to find out.
- Does the town own the rescue building? No, the FD owns it and the Town voted to make it tax exempt.
- Peter thinks it should be 4 buildings at \$60 each – Can Amy or Celine explain?

Koran: This question needs to be answered ASAP b/c there are bills that need to go out tomorrow

Holding vote until later in the meeting to allow all members to review the bills/orders.

- Information needed: Was there a 2 or 3-year approval for mowing for ballfields? Rebecca to check past minutes.

Review of mail:

- NEMRC – costs for licenses and modules

Gazette Discussion

Koran provided a brief overview of the history of the conversation and where it stands. There was some miscommunication about the schedule and whether or not a printed version would continue to be mailed via bulk permit to all residents. It was noted that there are costs associated with producing the Gazette as well as significant staff time that is spent printing and preparing the publication. The Selectboard had wishes to bring up the topic during Town Meeting's non-binding business in order to get a sense of how people felt. Susan Jefferies asked for an informal show of hands of those who were supportive of receiving the Gazette electronically (via website vs. continuing to receive via postal mail).

Koran clarified that the Selectboard was not intending to restrict anyone's access to town information. Regardless of the decision of whether to continue the bulk mail approach, anyone who wishes to receive a printed copy of the Gazette can contact the town office to be added to the mailing list. In addition, the board did not intend for the monthly issues to simply appear on the website without other distribution and alert methods. (i.e. An opt-in option to receive the monthly issues via email direct to one's address; an announcement with link on Front Porch Forum, etc.) There are many programs available that could support this approach. The message conveyed at Town Meeting did not cover all these options and the board feels that the discussion is not an "either/or" conversation but rather an exploration of a variety of communication tools that could be more cost effective and reduce the staff time invested each month. Koran also mentioned that the Gazette is often 10-12 pages or more and that length makes the project lengthy and extends beyond Town news.

The message printed in the March issue of the Gazette came out before the meeting and discussion. The board had not made a final decision. Somewhere along the way there was a miscommunication. Koran had spoke with Cheryl to get the town clerk's perspective on the work and the tool itself. She confirmed that the creation and production is very time consuming and that while the information included is important she would be willing to consider and use a different vehicle for delivery if the Selectboard decided on a different approach.

Visitor and town resident Betsy Dunham distributed a document she wrote with a collection of information she and fellow resident Mary O'Brien had assembled. The included data pulled from town reports and selectboard minutes. Betsy and Mary both expressed their opposition to a change in distribution via postal mail. They said a paper copy reaches every household. There are people who don't use computers or do not have access to the internet and would be left out of the communication loop. Betsy stated that the costs seem low versus the public benefit of distributing to all town residents and tax payers. The bulk mailing to all portrays a sense of inclusiveness and includes second home owners and people who lives here only part of the year. Mary and Betsy conducted their own information phone survey. Mary called 16 people, Betsy called 15. Koran asked the demographics on who they called. Generally an older group, but some ranging in ages from 30s to 80s.

Data:

- The minimum to use the bulk permit is 200.
- Bulk mailing permit - \$145/mailing
- The Gazette is currently sent to 924 recipients.
- Costs for production include toner, paper, supplies
- There is potentially a great deal of paper waste for a variety of reasons (i.e. discarded copies at post office, multiple copies reaching familes/landowners with multiple parcels in town, etc.)
- There are many who do not want to receive this information in paper form. The bulk mail approach doesn't allow for flexibility. There should be an option to OPT OUT.
- FPF info: Betsy spoke with FPF to confirm the following: 938 memberships on Starksboro list – 700 households (some households have multiple addresses)

Koran reiterated that some of these nuances were lost in the abbreviated communication. The board was looking at how to make this a more streamlined, less time-consuming project while also reducing paper waste and offering residents more than one option for receiving the Gazette. As more electronic tools are available, many residents are asking to receive less paper. The board is hoping to find a balanced approach.

Considerations for future:

- Website – not everyone has or uses the internet. The website is passive: one must go there and remember to look each month.
 - An RSS feed option could help ensure the current issues make it to people's inboxes if they opt in.
- If there is a change to distribution plans in the future, there needs to be multiple notices to residents in advance (a couple month's notice).
- If an electronic newsletter is developed, include instructions on how to use FPF and the website, perhaps coaching people on where to find the information and use it.

Koran: The board has talked about these things; not everything is included in the minutes.

Tony: There was no formal vote by the board. It was intended to be a non-binding discussion item.

Koran stated that the board understands these points and will continue to consider them. Tony said he only heard from 4 residents directly, all people who don't use computers. He remembers when the Town

chose to stop mailing the town reports – some people were upset, but in the end everyone who wants one gets one either via mail (request) or picking up copies at one of many locations in town.

Mary O'Brien: If they were mailed, more people might look at it more.

Koran: It was a much more expensive piece to mail because of size and weight. Number of copies printed and never used has decreased.

Koran said she appreciated all the work Betsy and Mary did and brought tonight. But reiterated that the board is not trying to exclude anyone and was leaning toward an opt out – logistically not possible with bulk permit. Our intention was to put out feelers to get thoughts.

Betsy said she started thinking about how many people are really interacting on FPF; librarian said people come in to use computers to do homework and access information of all kinds. Starksboro is a small enough town to include everyone.

Peter noted that when you include staff time and the copier lease costs the equation is more complicated. He is not sure if it is a good use of Amy's time. Tony said that the Town had to lease another printer, so it was part of the decision. But we don't save that much. Koran said the conversations so far had been more about Amy's time and less about costs.

Peter said from a historic perspective, up until a year ago, the SB news got into the Gazette and FPF not very frequently. Even though the board had been in conversation with people over the years, after signing a contract recently, the board received a signed petition from the public requesting it to be reconsidered. Learning from that experience, the Selectboard has tried to get more information out in various ways. It is important to get information out to citizens.

Betsy said there could be some changes in format to compact the information, reduce duplicate info, eliminate table of contents, etc. She suggested some design changes. Koran agreed that there are many ways to make this more efficient, but options also have to be considered in the context of all the work of the town clerk's office and the staff time available to cover a lot of tasks. The Gazette is only one. Koran wanted to reassure that the board was not trying to restrict access. We make a lot of decisions about things that happen in the town, and we hope to communicate more efficiently to the people in the office and the people of the town.

Betsy asked what the next steps would be. Koran said the board needs to talk about how to move forward. Betsy said she would be willing to write a note for FPF to remind people that not everyone is on that forum and suggest people may also want to submit notices to the Gazette. Peter said it is important to remember that the Gazette is a town government publication so the board is not in a position to include information that isn't town related. The school paid to include the monthly sheet. He also noted that there had been a volunteer in the past who included some information that was interpreted or seen by some as opinion or with potentially political leaning. The town is the publisher of the document and is responsible for content.

Koran said that New Haven is the only other town to distribute a newsletter in the five towns. New Haven's is strictly limited to town news with no advertisement, no items like the Jerusalem Schoolhouse, or historical information sharing.

Betsy said she thinks these are activities and information sharing in town that encourage people to come together. Tony said yes, that is true, but organizations need to produce their own publications and the town cannot cover the expenses for making a much longer newsletter to include non-town business. Those are essentially advertisements.

The board said posting on FPF to encourage people to participate is a great idea. Tony reiterated that the board would like to have time to discuss further with the town clerk and assistant clerk. Koran said she doesn't think the conversation is over, that there are efficiencies to be explored and this is a topic to be continued under consideration.

Rebecca suggested that the bulk mail permit could also be used to seek more input from the town residents. A survey could be distributed to collect a larger number of responses and/or a stamped, addressed postcard sent to each address asking for preferred method to receive the Gazette.

Continuation of the Gazette

Motion: Tony Porter moved and Peter Marsh seconded the motion to continue bulk mailing of the Gazette for the near future. **Vote:** All in favor

Vistors departed.

Technology Memo

Koran said the board would benefit from a prioritized list of needs. Immediate needs: Town clerk computer replacement and upgraded Office suite; Zoning Administrator computer replacement.

Rebecca mentioned that desktop computers are less expensive than laptops, but they would be more difficult to secure and/or put in the vault each night. Eric Cota said that the Bristol town clerk's office has desktops. However, Bristol also has a security system with coded entrances; primary and secondary locked doors in front. Bristol also has police monitoring.

The board then discussed of various security concerns and how to protect both individual and board accountability issues. Clear policies will help establish guidelines.

Motion: Tony Porter moved and Peter Marsh seconded the motion to purchase the email addresses with the online version Office 365 licenses for five selectboard members.

Vote: All in favor

Follow up:

1. Priority list for computers and Office 365 licences.
2. Rebecca to gather quotes for replacement computer costs. Include laptop vs desktop with similar specs.
3. Koran will communicate with town office that Rebecca will be asking some questions about the current computers and preferences.

Motion to approve the orders and bills to be paid:

Motion: Tony, Peter motion to approve the bills as presented with the suggestion of the water bill to be paid or 4 buildings at \$60 each. **Vote:** All in favor

Items for the next meeting's discussion:

- Mowing bids
- NEMRC accounting

The next IT conversation will be a special meeting to review information about costs, IT support needs, computers, and input from employees.

Thatcher Hurd updates & next steps

Koran framed the conversation and provided a short history for Eric. She has spoken with Thatcher Hurd directly. Her questions at the last meeting were to make sure the town's best interest is primary and the board's decision will not inhibit anything else to be done in the future.

The next step is for a site plan hearing to be scheduled with the DRB. The DRB will review the project based on answers to the criteria listed in the zoning bylaws. Eric Cota asked what the alternatives to the current plan would be. Koran explained there could be poled placed up and around the road but that isn't preferred by the road crew. Koran said that cost isn't the issue but rather what is best for the town now and in the long term. It is important to hear from citizens. The people who work in the pit are fine with the proposed plan. Peter said given the building envelope boundaries, the wetlands, and the pit there are already many limitations on future use. The group agreed to proceed.

Motion: Peter Marsh moved to authorize signing of the DRB application to review the granting of a Right of Way easement to Thatcher Hurd conditional upon DRB approval and to sign the easement to Green Mountain Power for said right of way. Tony Porter seconded the motion. **Vote:** All in favor

Koran signed the application on behalf of the Selectboard. The Zoning Administrator will bring the application to the DRB. Peter Marsh will draft the write up to respond to the zoning criteria and will attend the hearing when scheduled.

Hazard Mitigation Plan

No action needed. Plan has been edited to include suggestions from both the Planning Commission and the Selectboard. The ACPRC representative has forwarded the draft plan to FEMA for approval.

Parade request

Tony sent an email and the person nominated is willing to participate. He sent the information to the organizer in Bristol.

Hazard waste

The board agrees with the requested site and specs at the town garage. No conflict with the recycling collection. Rebecca will draft letter and get signature then mail. Koran or Tony can sign on behalf of the board.

Cleaning service update

Reports from the garage, library, and town office are good. Rebecca will coordinate any special requests for cleaning or schedule changes.

Other business items

Retreat date: Friday, April 6 at 5:30 p.m. at the Town Garage conference room.

There could be a follow up to the retreat discussion with an invitation to the town clerk, listers, and road crew foreman to discuss items related to town work and policies. This will be discussed further and a date set later. This meeting should be set during business hours.

Selectboard time sheets: Rebecca will create a quarterly timesheet report for the regular and special meetings. Board members will be responsible for tracking their own time on other projects, work for the town, and mileage.

Koran and Rebecca will attend the Select Board Institute training offered by VLCT this Saturday. They both will also attend the municipal accounting seminar in Montpelier next Tuesday. They will bring information back to the board.

Motion to adjourn: Tony Porter moved and Eric Cota seconded the motion. **Vote:** All in favor

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Elder
Selectboard Assistant

DRAFT