

**Town of Starksboro  
Selectboard Meeting minutes  
December 19, 2017  
APPROVED**

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**Board members present:** Koran Cousino, Susan Jefferies, Keegan Tierney, Tony Porter  
Rebecca Elder (SB Assistant)

**Visitors present:** Tom Estey, Amy McCormick, Norm Cota, Chuck Webber, Bill Coon, Peter Ryersbach, other Board of Abatement members, Digger Faesy, Megan Nedzinski, Jeff Dunham, Marjorie Dickstein, Pete Antos-Ketcham, Jeff Keeney, Dennis Casey, Heather Ragsdale

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Susan Jefferies called the meeting to order at 5:45 p.m.

**Road Report**

- Didn't get paid for 4 hrs on holiday – needs to let Amy know
- Tom distributed a proposed budget for expenses and purchases.
- New plow truck with sander and wing with stainless steel body costs \$4K more than a standard body. In past, Tom has repainted the truck for ±\$4100 (includes paint and labor)
- G & E \$99,500 (last year was \$120,480)
- Added chloride
- Equipment rental expenses are up
- Crushing costs include hydraulic hammer, loader, truck and expenses
- Salt costs up – Ordering pre-wet salt with added magnesium that works faster and at temps 10-15 degrees colder (regular salt stops at 10 degrees)
- New garage operational costs - Moved in at the end of May so won't have a true sense of expenses until a full year has passed. The building is significantly larger.
- Available funds should be used to begin acquiring some tools to replace items Tom has provided.
- New one-ton truck needed. Cost \$±166,000 est. GVW (gross vehicle weight) 25,000 instead of 19,000. The truck chassis usually last longer than smaller models.
- S. Jefferies will insert proposed road and garage budget items into draft budget.

**Listers – Errors and Omissions** (see attached summary)

- 12 properties listed
- Some were affected by Current Use values – There more enrollment this year; added acreage for Whitcomb, Runcie. Some changes at the state level meant people enrolled more land but are actually paying more taxes. State applications are supposed to be in by Sept 15; but there is often changes and updates until the end of the calendar year.

**Motion:** Tony Porter moved and Keegan Tierney seconded the motion to approve the errors and omissions for 2017 as presented. **Vote:** All in favor.

**Past Minutes**

**Motion:** Keegan Tierney moved and Koran Cousino seconded the motion to approve the minutes of 12/5/17 with minor corrections. **Vote:** All in favor.

**Motion:** Tony Porter moved and Keegan Tierney seconded the motion to approve the minutes of 12/12/17. **Vote:** All in favor.

**\* \* \* Board of Abatement meeting \* \* \***

Meeting called to order at 6:30 by Chair Norm Cota.

The board had one item for discussion: Paul and April Parent property, Hillside Manor Mobile Home Park, Lot #16.

- Addison County Community Trust (ACCT) went through abandonment process. The town was not informed that the mobile home had been removed. There is no recourse on past taxes.

- Stopped accruing taxes in 2015 when Amy McCormick was alerted of the process.
- \$4220.95 owed over 6 tax years. More than half is accrued interest and penalty fees.

Q: Does the town have any recourse if someone who owed back taxes wanted to live in Starksboro again? A: The listers did not know but will explore options.

**Motion:** Peter Ryersbach moved and Bill Coon seconded the motion to accept the abatement on the amount owed by the Parents. **Vote:** All in favor.

The Board of Abatement meeting adjourned at 6:35.

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*Selectboard Meeting continued*

### **Bills and Orders**

**Motion:** Koran Cousino moved and Tony Porter seconded the motion to approve the bills and orders.

**Vote:** All in favor

### **CURRENT BUSINESS**

#### **Land Transfer with school**

Not final – Jim Runcie sent a draft P&S to begin the conversation. Susan sent to Louis DuPont (Robinson Elementary School Board Chair). The school board was meeting on 12/19. The selectboard would like to consider putting the land transfer on the town meeting agenda. Susan will follow up with Louis to inquire if the RES board concurs. The proposal is straightforward and may require some standard permits but nothing extensive or requiring DRB approval.

#### **Zoning Administrator hiring**

Jeff Keeney and Dennis Casey attended to review next steps. While the Selectboard is ultimately responsible for hiring, the Planning Commission should and will lead the interviews and make recommendation(s).

A few members of the PC will conduct interviews, with a SB member participating as well. The PC will discuss at its 12/21 meeting and will decide which applicants to call for interviews. After the recommendation from the PC, the SB will meet the final candidate(s) before an offer is extended.

#### **Energy Committee**

Digger Faesy, Megan Nedzinski, Jeff Dunham, Marjorie Dickstein, and Pete Antos-Ketcham attended to discuss the potential formation of an energy committee for the Town of Starksboro. D. Faesy sent a letter to Susan for background. The proposal and desire to form a committee came about for several reasons: the Town's energy coordinator—Caleb Elder—resigned from the position several months ago; Robinson Elementary school's boilers were slated for replacement without a discussion/involvement from the town; and the Town's future energy related planning discussions need more attention and coordination. Jeff and Digger have been working with the school and have been talking with the school district officials about town involvement in energy issues. The group asked what the process is for forming a new committee.

- The list of topics that the energy committee might address include: PC on Act 74; Solar project siting; Robinson School energy improvements; Energy use in Town buildings; and other community-based activities including education.
- Recommended committee size: 5-7 members. Need to establish the process, obligations, mission, and structure.
- S. Jefferies noted that some things on the list aren't under the SB's purview. Need to ensure the energy committee would be involved where it needed to be and could offer valuable input.
- As an example, Jeff Keeney noted that had an energy committee existed during writing of the town plan, then the process might have been easier. It would have been good to have a pool of experts to tap into.

- K. Tierney pointed to the Vermont Natural Resources Council (VNRC) website for resources and examples of what other Vermont towns have done. They have an “[Energy Planning and Implementation Guidebook](#)” that can be accessed online. Three models in use now for committee structure: ad hoc group, a sub-group under direction of the PC or CC, or an independent committee appointed and tasked by the SB.
- K. Tierney noted some concern about the long-term sustainability of the committee. The Town already has a difficult time filling positions on boards and committees. Perhaps there could be an option for joint working roles with the Conservation Comm.
- Several people expressed that the energy needs of the community residents and necessity for planning will drive people to participate.
- Megan Nedzinski - Served on the Richmond energy committee and said it is a valid concern regarding the charge and purview; committees tend to lose momentum when they have layers of advising to work through. Some separation from other groups might be helpful.
- Communication among the town boards and committees could use improvement to facilitate more efficient work for everyone. Formation of an energy committee will ensure there is a place to go with energy related concerns. Improve overall cohesiveness with the various work being done.
- K. Cousino: This is important work and would like to see a mission statement, steps for public outreach, how committee would interact with the SB, PC, and others. Would like to see more of a proposal about how this could work.

Next steps:

- The Selectboard fully supports the idea and would like to put something forward for Town Meeting. The group is not sure they can have a full proposal ready for the Town Report but would like to introduce the idea.
- Digger Faesy will coordinate with people interested in serving on the committee and they will follow up with a more formal proposal to the SB including mission and proposed structure, etc.

**Animal Control Report – Heather Ragsdale**

**Case 1**

Has received repeated calls regarding two ponies on Jerusalem Road. Concerns from neighbors that the animals are confined to a small space. H. Ragsdale has inquired and spoken with owner and confirmed that shelter, food, and water are provided. No further action is required at this time.

**Case 2**

Dog issue on Jim Dwire Road has continued. Neighbors have continued to contact the animal control officer with complaints about aggression, nipping/biting, nuisance behaviors that are not being addressed by the dog’s owner.

H. Ragsdale has attempted to discuss issue with dog owner. A citation was issued. Another bite occurred. Phone calls have been ignored. An in-person visit was attempted with no result. Based on the repeated complaints from neighbors and the public safety concerns, especially with children living on the road and waiting at school bus stop, the Selectboard agrees that this situation warrants further action from the Animal Control Officer with support from a law enforcement official (e.g. State Trooper).

Next steps:

- Notice to be sent via certified letter on next incident. The letter should state that the animal’s owner has been warned numerous times and has been provided a copy of the animal control ordinance. Correspondence to include a record of visits and calls pertaining to complaints and action will be taken to protect the residential area from a nuisance animal. Inform clearly that this is the final warning: if dog is seen off the owner’s property again, it will be impounded and/or destroyed.

Other note: Bonars’ dog that was missing has been returned home. A police report was filed. A copy was to be sent to the town for animal control records.

### **BUDGET discussion**

- S. Jefferies distributed a revised draft budget for discussion. The Road and Garage costs were not included but will be incorporated in the next draft for Jan. 2, 2018 meeting.
- Celine Coon is working on the actual numbers, which will determine if there is a surplus. Any surplus funds would be applied to the reserve fund.
- Included 2.5% cost of living increase for employees
- Current Use expenses increase

**Conservation project** – The SB was notified of a farmland conservation project by the Vermont Land Trust. No action required.

### **DRB admin compensation**

T. Porter discussed with members of the DRB. Appropriate compensation or appreciation gift to be determined upon recommendation from DRB. M. Dickstein completed research and findings for two projects, essentially completing work that would have been done by the Zoning Administrator.

### **Jerusalem Schoolhouse proposal**

The J School committee drafted language for an Article for Town Meeting. The request seeks approval for funding to pay for a survey and preliminary architectural work. Survey needed to determine setback requirements.

### **Building & Maintenance updates**

- Exterior Light – ladder needed; needs 2+ people to complete the task; consider hiring someone if this cannot be addressed with volunteers.
- J school – heat didn't come on again; inform Peter Marsh.

### **Administrative Updates**

- Decision needed on Office 365 licenses. Additional email addresses and licenses can be purchased in the future.

**Motion:** Tony Porter moved and Keegan Tierney seconded the motion to purchase email addresses for five selectboard members and the selectboard assistant. **Vote:** All in favor.

No update on Palmer grievance.

No update on the Thatcher Hurd easement.

Other notes:

- In next FPF/Gazette update, notify town residents that Susan Jefferies is not running again. Her term is up and after 12 years of service, she will not seek re-election.
- K. Cousino is unable to attend Jan. 16 meeting.

Motion to adjourn at 8:30 p.m. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Elder  
Selectboard Assistant

Next meeting: Tuesday, January 2, 2018 at 5:30 p.m.

*Approved: 1/2/18*