

Starksboro Selectboard meeting
Minutes of Jan. 19, 2021
Approved

Board members present: Koran Cousino, Nancy Boss, Eric Cota, Carin McCarthy, John Painter
Others present: Rebecca Elder, Robert Turner, Amy McCormick, Cheryl Estey, Susan Klaiber

The meeting was called to order at 5:32 p.m. by Chair Koran Cousino.

The introductory statement regarding open meeting law and how public meetings are being conducted in the Town of Starksboro due to the State of Emergency declared by Governor Scott as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and pursuant to Addendum 6 to Executive Order 01-20 and Act 92, this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

In accordance with Act 92, there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously, however the meeting was conducted with public access via internet or telephone with the ability to listen/interact contemporaneously.

Additions/changes to the agenda:

- Solar tracker issue update from Energy Committee
- Discuss coordination of town committees & grants during budget
- Road Foreman evaluation timeline

Budget final discussion

- The board prepared the budget and reviewed final proposals to approve the budget and warning to voters. Reserve funds are in good shape. Amounts to be included in warning: Fire Reserve = \$51,239; Road Reserve \$101,158; Paving Reserve \$40,000
- The auditors propose raising the Selectboard wage rate. In the previous fiscal year, the board chose to reduce their rate for cost savings. Board members commit time to serving in this capacity and should be compensated with at least minimum wage.
- Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer: Discussion of salary and pay rates with placeholders based on the current rates paid. The board members agreed to propose to the voters in the town warning to change to an appointed Treasurer position. The amount held in the budget would cover a reasonable rate of pay for an appointed position and a bookkeeping service, at least for the first year of transitioning roles.
- Highway budget is complete.
- IT budget will increase due to website redesign and licensing fees in addition to the increased fees for the NEMRC system and purchase of a new computer in FY21-22.
- The current emergency reserve balance is \$75K and the total amount can be up to \$122K.
- The board discussed the use of the reserve funds for the costs to design the new website and to transfer IT licenses and management for the remainder of the current fiscal year. All members agreed to transfer \$8498.98 for the total of these expenses for FY20-21 from the reserve fund to the general fund for these unexpected items. The proposed FY21-22 budget will include the total annual costs for website hosting and management and licenses going forward.
- Major maintenance will include needed repairs to the Jerusalem Schoolhouse roof and replace floor in the town clerk's office conference room and zoning office.
- Retirement fund: brief discussion about changing to VMERS plan. Some employees are not interested in the plan; full participation is required. The board decided to put this idea on hold for the future. John noted that employees must be held harmless and no changes should be made that could have a negative effect on an employee.
- There will be a carry-over surplus in the amount of \$41,276 that will be subtracted from the proposed budget in Article 4.

- Carin raised the topic of planning for coordination of various town committees, grant work, and future planning. She is thinking of the changes that Starksboro needs to anticipate and plan for including the possibility of changes to Robinson school. The board discussed ways to increase communication flow among the committees and boards and committed to thinking about what programming is needed and how this work can be assigned in the future. The Planning Commission has been looking at a few projects and potential grant opportunities, the Jerusalem Community Center Committee has been working on plans, the sports program is considering options for sports fields when Cota field is affected by wet weather and/or flooding. The group agreed there are efforts that need more coordination and to continue the discussion before the next budget season. The Town Plan and the vision for the community's future is central to guiding the discussions.

Town Meeting

The board and staff will prepare for the virtual town meeting and have a practice session prior to the official informational meeting on Saturday, February 27, 2021.

Australian Ballot temporary adoption for Town Meeting 2021

Motion: Eric Cota made a motion for the temporary adoption of Australian ballot voting under Act 162 for 2021 only.

Vote: Motion approved unanimously.

Town Meeting Warning

The board reviewed the draft warning and inserted the final budget amounts.

Motion: Nancy Boss made a motion to approve the town meeting warning with articles 1 through 14 as presented with updated budget amounts as follows. Eric Cota second.

- proposed general fund budget with expenses of \$1,008,311 less receipts of \$259,267 less the FY19-20 carry-over surplus of \$41,276 for an amount of \$707,768.
- Fire Equipment Reserve \$51,239
- Road Equipment Reserve \$101,158
- Paving Reserve \$40,000
- Public Library budget \$35,375
- Appropriation for Richmond Rescue \$4400
- Appropriation for Turning Point Center \$1000
- Appropriation for VT Family Network \$200
- In town (\$47,000) and out of town requests (\$28,536) as presented by the town clerk to be included

Vote: Motion approved unanimously.

Cheryl and Amy will prepare a postal mailing with information about town meeting, the virtual informational session, and the voting process to mail to all Starksboro residents.

Amy McCormick stated she will submit her name to run for the Treasurer position to assist in the transition and continuity from elected to appointed position and until a bookkeeper is hired.

Informational Meeting Warning

The virtual town meeting will be on Saturday, 2/27, and allows for the moderator to read the articles and allow for questions. There will also be time for local representatives and school principal to report briefly to the voters. The warning for the informational meeting is identical to the warning described and approved above, with time allowed for public comment on each article after it is presented. Time will be allowed for local legislators and Robinson principal to provide brief updates and take questions.

Town Health Officer appointment

Luke McCarthy has expressed interest and agreed to fill the role of Town Health Officer. He reviewed the requirements. He expressed some concern about the urgency of responding to certain issues and the lack of a deputy health officer. The Selectboard will actively seek a deputy for backup coverage. There is a formal process for appointment with the State of Vermont. Cheryl will complete the necessary forms with the VT Dept. of Health.

Motion: John Painter made a motion to appoint Luke McCarthy as the Town Health Officer. Eric Cota second.

Vote: Motion approved unanimously.

Bills/orders

Motion: John Painter made a motion to approve the warrants for bills and orders as presented by the Treasurer. Eric Cota second.

Vote: Motion approved unanimously.

Minutes of 1/5/21

Motion: Eric Cota moved to approve the minutes of 1/5/21 as presented. Nancy Boss second.

Vote: Motion approved unanimously.

Green Lantern Solar documents

The Green Lantern Solar project required some updates to recorded documents including a conformed MOL and amendment to lease. The town attorney reviewed and approved the documents.

Motion: Eric Cota moved to approve the conformed MOL and Amendment to Lease as presented and authorizing Nancy Boss to sign on behalf of board.

Vote: Motion approved unanimously.

IT and website contract approval

The Selectboard reviewed three possible options and proposals for the website redesign and Microsoft 365 licenses and IT management for the municipal staff. One of these options presented by the town's current IT vendor, VC3, is a proposal for combined IT services and web package that provides desktop computer support, cyber-security, data retention and back up, software licenses, as well as redesign and hosting of the town website. Other proposals were considered that would involve multiple vendors. The board decided to proceed with the integrated proposal from VC3. The town will pay a monthly fee that includes all the services as outlined in the work order agreement. Some costs that the town is already paying for will now be included in the package. Modifications to the plan can be made over time as licensing needs and staff roles change.

Motion: Nancy Boss made a motion to approve the VC3 proposed work order and enter the agreement as presented. John Painter second.

Vote: Motion approved unanimously.

Mail and correspondence:

The board was alerted that the solar trackers behind Robinson were not working properly. There is an issue with transmission of information via WIFI. The Energy Committee is working with All Earth Renewables and the MAUSD staff to ensure connectivity for the trackers. They will provide updates as needed and will monitor the situation.

Nancy Cornell asked about sharing the Selectboard's letter to the MAUSD. It is part of public record and will be provided upon request from members of the public. The board will also be available to discuss and answer questions during the informational town meeting.

Pottery studio lease

Motion: John Painter made a motion to approve sending a letter of lease non-renewal notice to Judith Bryant. Carin McCarthy second.

Vote: Motion approved unanimously.

The board will schedule a discussion at a future meeting regarding what will happen in that space after the lease ends on February 28, 2021.

Selectboard concerns:

Road Foreman review: Nancy has compiled a form to use for formal employee review. John has reviewed it. Nancy will get input from Eric and then circulate a draft to the group.

MAUSD update:

None. School board extended date for decision making process.

Motion adjourn: At 8:16 p.m. Eric Cota moved, Carin McCarthy second.

Vote: Motion approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Elder
Selectboard Assistant

Next meeting: February 2, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.