

Starksboro Selectboard Meeting
Minutes of October 18, 2022
Unapproved

Board members present: Koran Cousino, Eric Cota, Nancy Boss, John Painter, Carin McCarthy
Others present: Rebecca Elder, Kevin Kennedy, Jon Fenner, Katie Antos-Ketcham, Susan Thompson

Chair Koran Cousino called to the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. at the town clerk's office and via Zoom.

Additions/Changes to the Agenda

Cota field feedback to Lewis Creek Assn. re: concept design for drainage improvements

Visitor's business

None

Request for Private Road Name

Kevin Kennedy of 205 Cemetery Road requested consideration for a private road name for his farm operations and associated businesses with a name of "Taryn's Way" in honor of his sister. The Town's current policy requires 3 or more residential homes to necessitate a new private road, unless created through a subdivision approved by the DRB (see zoning bylaws).

Kevin stated he has 3 businesses operating from his property: New Leaf (vegetables and sales), VTerra (hemp and CBD production), and Dalin (fruit/berry CSA and pick-your-own) with multiple farm outbuildings.

Carin said the board recognizes his request and the legacy of Kevin's sister but they cannot make exceptions in one off requests. The current policy states "Roads or private rights of way with three or more dwelling units shall be named. Private rights of way will be named Lane, Drive, or Circle." The board apologized that there was misinformation from the zoning office last year that led Kevin to think the road naming would be approved. The board needs to review the policy, last updated in 1997, but it will not happen until 2023.

Town Email security and access

Jon Fenner, DRB member, requested the board consider overriding a security setting to allow him to receive his town emails through a POP service. The town pays for Microsoft Government G1 licenses for Selectboard and DRB members. The town's IT company, VC3 manages the security and made its recommendation to maintain current settings. A variety of methods can be used to access the account emails in a secure way. Jon expressed frustration that the Selectboard will not consider an exception. He stated that he is an IT professional and "CEH" (certified ethical hacker) and he understands the risks involved. He is considering resigning from the DRB because this has become an obstacle for him.

Koran researched and the town consulted with its IT providers and will follow its recommendations. All other board members have found a way to work with system and it would be costly to change the license to the level that would allow the access John has requested. Carin stated the board has reached the limit of billable hours on this subject and will not make an exception. The board stated it will continue its current level of licenses and recommended security settings.

Library Discussion

There is a vacancy on the board and resident Connor Timmons has been participating in library board conversations regularly. The trustees recommended the Selectboard appoint Connor to complete the current term until the next election.

Motion: Carin McCarthy made a motion to appoint Connor Timmons as Library Trustee to fill the current vacancy until the election in March 2023. Nancy Boss second.

Vote: Motion approved unanimously.

Katie Antos-Ketcham and Susan Thompson, library trustees, attended to discuss various plans for the library and the work the library board has been engaged in over the past two years. During the pandemic the trustees met remotely and worked on revising the Library's vision statement and created a new mission statement. They described how community libraries are becoming community "living rooms" where there is the opportunity for connection. Connection is in person, through books, but now also with access to public WIFI, computers, and a space to work, read, or relax. The library is also offering programs and the new "teen room". They are continually looking for resources to provide to patrons and seek funding sources to support these initiatives. They have been successful with smaller grants from the Preservation Trust of VT, VT Arts Council, and others.

The library board wants to work collaboratively with the town and Selectboard to explore strategic visions for the future, including making the upstairs area accessible and improving the heating/cooling and air quality in the building. They have submitted an ARPA funding application to the town for the latter. There are also big dreams of being able to expand the book collection, but some structural engineering work would be required to increase the load capacity in the first floor.

The Selectboard expressed appreciation for the work the library board has been doing and supports seeking grant opportunities. Communication early in the process of identifying grants will be essential. The library board members can do the legwork and prep information for applications and then work with town administration and the Selectboard to submit formal proposals. Quarterly or other regular check-ins are encouraged to help with information sharing and staying aware of the goals and priorities.

Personnel policy

The board continued review of the language in specific sections:

Sec. 10: update per current state law allowing cannabis use; does not affect DOT tested employees

Sec. 32: Remove the first paragraph. Second paragraph refers to reduction and downsizing, not termination. Keep paragraphs 3,4, and 5. Is the supervisor termination and hearing required or recommended?

Vermont is an "at will" State. The town policy trumps the "at will" status so your policy needs to reflect the process the board wants to put in place. To what extent does the current language lead to challenging termination situations and make it difficult for the board to understand what it should do? John noted that it is important for employees to feel protected by the policy regardless of who is sitting at the table (i.e. Selectboard members). There should be an assurance of fair and equitable treatment through the process. Is there any reason not to simply the language and refer to the State policy? Ensure clear language. Koran will follow up with the town attorneys for their guidance.

IT section and benefits language at next meeting.

Warrants

Motion: Nancy Boss made a motion to approve the warrants for bills, orders, and payroll as presented. Eric Cota seconded. **Vote:** Motion approved unanimously.

Planning Commissioner Appointment

One application was received from Lexy Thompson who currently serves on the DRB. She has been attending PC meetings and is willing to serve until March.

Motion: Nancy Boss made a motion to appoint Alexsys Thompson as Planning Commissioner to fill the vacancy until the town election in 2023. Carin McCarthy second. **Vote:** Motion approved unanimously.

Town Clerk and Administrative Updates

Cannabis and local zoning:

Rebecca gave an update on the discussion she had with Dan Nugent about handling DRB applications. Nancy said she will continue her research in a couple of weeks. Rebecca has not heard further from applicant on Ireland Road. Applications will be considered as small business or cottage industry applications and the level of review will be determined based on zoning district and access to road, etc. It will also depend on the classification tier for the registered business. Thus far the town has received notification of at least 4 tier one licenses and 1 tier two. No applications have been approved or processed by the zoning office to date. The Planning Commission will be considering language to add to the bylaws to help guide local zoning decisions in the future.

Application review:

No zoning administrator applications have been received. The ad will be run for an additional week and then discussion about next steps to fill the position.

One town administrator application was received which John will share with board members. Ad is running for two weeks and check in at next meeting.

Treasurer/Finance position: run ad in the next edition of Addison Independent and post online.

Selectboard Roundtable

- Merger vote: Questions and discussion on Front Porch Forum about funding of flyer that was sent by the MAUSD. Carin noted that if voters want to vote that ballot will not be mailed with the regular State election ballot. The local ballot must be requested. Amy will continue to post information to ensure town residents know how to cast a local ballot. Note will be put on website.
- Firewood disposal behind preschool area: Nick Bissonnette said he can no longer help the town due to the current appeal situation. Carin will get a quote for removal.
- Furnace is needed at the fire station. Three quotes are needed and the replacement should be done before the heating season.
- Discussion of info received from engineering assessment of Cota field area and parking re: drainage improvement. Maps from recent site meeting were review and responses to questions from Kate Kelley were drafted. Eric will follow up by end of week. Rebecca to send Eric notes.

Review of Minutes

Motion: Nancy Boss made a motion to approve the minutes of 10/4/22 as presented. John Painter seconded. **Vote:** Motion approved unanimously.

Mail Review

Resignation of Jon Fenner from the DRB was received during the meeting. An appointment for the vacancy will be made at the next meeting.

Executive Session

Motion: Eric Cota made a motion to go into executive session at 8:20 p.m. per 1 VSA S.313(a)1 regarding confidential attorney-client communication made for the purpose of providing professional legal services to the body. John Painter second. Rebecca Elder was invited into the session.

Vote: Motion approved unanimously.

Motion: Eric Cota made a motion to exit executive session at 8:30 p.m. Carin McCarthy second.

Vote: Motion approved unanimously.

No action was taken as a result of the executive session.

Motion to adjourn: made a motion to adjourn at 8:35 p.m. seconded.

Vote: Motion approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Rebecca Elder, Selectboard Assistant