

Starksboro Selectboard Meeting
Minutes of 12/21/21
Approved

Board members present: Nancy Boss, Eric Cota, Koran Cousino, John Painter, Carin McCarthy
Others present: Rebecca Elder, Amy McCormick, Robert Turner, Mark Kingsley
Guests: More than 50 attendees in person; 12+ people attended via Zoom (sign in sheet maintained)

The meeting was called to order at 6:12 p.m. by Koran Cousino.

Changes or Additions - none

Visitor's Business – none

Request from Mt. Abe Snow Sports club re: snowmobile access

- The board heard opening statements read by a representative from the VAST snowmobile local chapter requesting use of portions of Ireland, Conway, and Sam Stokes roads for connecting existing trails used by snowmobiles and a statement on behalf of a group of residents on Ireland and Conway roads who are opposed to granting access for snowmobile use. After opening statements, the Selectboard opened the floor for comments from those in attendance (both in person and via Zoom). A recording is available on the town website.
- A summary of points heard is attached; list of those who were in attendance was logged.
- No decisions were made. The board will continue discussion and consideration at its next meeting on 1/4/22.

Budget discussion

- The budget planning discussion continued with updates provided by Mark Kinsley and Robert Turner. Mark and Tony have reviewed the highway dept. expenses and anticipated budget needs for FY22-23. Amounts were increased slightly for tires, cutting/plow blades, and a few items. A new truck is needed and wait times are longer than generally anticipated. Total cost will be +/- \$220,000.
- Koran proposed an increased pay rate for the auditors and listers to \$15/hr. Board concurred.
- Town Report theme proposed: Cota field, Cota farm conservation, trails. Robert will discuss with Elsa Gilbertson.
- The board will also consider use of the budget surplus to potentially reduce debt, increase the emergency fund, and possible salary increases. To be discussed further at next meeting.
- Mark will prepare a full budget with all notes and suggestions incorporated. Special budget meeting to be held on Wed., January 12, 2022 to review in detail and finalize.

Minutes

Motion: John Painter made a motion to approve the minutes of 12/7/21 as presented. Carin McCarthy second. **Motion approved unanimously.**

Warrants

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

Mail Review

- Notice from the Starksboro Rescue Squad that they are increasing their requested appropriation for FY22-23 to replace much needed equipment. Petition with signatures from 5% of the voters is needed. Amy will notify Cheryl and Charlene.

Next meeting agenda:

- Continue discussion and consideration of request from snowmobile club.
- Continue budget final preparations and discussion.

Motion: Eric Cota moved to adjourn at 8:40 p.m. John Painter second.

Motion approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Rebecca Elder, SB Assistant

TOWN MEETING – FEBRUARY 26, 2022

Summary of Discussion, Snowmobile Use of Conway & Ireland Roads

December 21, 2021

Thoughts from those opposed

- Use of road is not legal unless granted by selectboard
- Signs put up before permission was granted; no communication initiated with neighborhood regarding use of road and impact on neighborhood
- Concerns expressed regarding pedestrian safety, vehicle safety, and road crew safety
- Concerns expressed regarding town liability should a snowmobile accident occur on town roads
- Sound of snowmobiles exceeds the Starksboro Zoning Bylaws
- Proximity of trail to homes doesn't meet VT Snowmobile Regulations
- Quality of life will be diminished; peace and quiet will be disturbed
- Concerns expressed regarding the potential impact on property value
- Trail was shut down in 2003 (precedent)
- Concerns expressed regarding environmental impact on Lewis Creek WMA
- Concerns expressed regarding use of unopened private land when road conditions are unfavorable
- Concerns expressed regarding the lack of funds to support VT law enforcement policing of trails

Thoughts from those in favor

- The trail was never shut down by the town; a new landowner denied access to the property with a pre-existing trail
- Many snowmobiles are quieter than they used to be (when the trail was open 20 years ago); VT state dB limit on snowmobiles is 73 dB
- Economic benefits for the J Store
- VAST members are respectful of land and landowners
- Snowmobiles must be registered, VASTed(?), and insured
- VT law enforcement police the trails
- Road will be posted at 15 mph for snowmobiles (68-73 dB)
- Addison County realtor of 22 years reports never witnessed a VAST trail negatively impact property value or hinder resale
- Snowmobiling is good for mental health
- Snowmobiling is a family activity for many
- Road is public, not private