

Starksboro Selectboard meeting
Minutes of February 16, 2021
Approved

Board members present: Koran Cousino, Nancy Boss, Carin McCarthy, Eric Cota

Unable to attend: John Painter

Others present: Rebecca Elder, Amy McCormick, Cheryl Estey, Tony Porter, Dan Dubenetsky

The meeting was called to order at 5:31 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:

Cota field discussions

Road Report

- Mileage certification report due: Tony reported that AOT suggested the town could do some traffic studies on Class 3 roads. If the usage indicated an upgrade to Class 2, additional funding would be available for road maintenance. The board asked if there are any downsides to pursuing these studies.
- PO Parking lot – The contractor did a temporary patch. The blacktop is very bad. Crew will keep on their radar for repair when time and budget allows.
- Garage laptop – IT help needed; cannot access some State sites for reporting. Rebecca will follow up with VC3 in the next few weeks.

Town Meeting final preparation

Koran and Cheryl noted that the Lewis Creek Association did make a request for an appropriation this year but it was inadvertently left off the town report list and warning. The request is for \$550. Due to the low amount, the Selectboard will approve and process this year. LCA will submit their normal request again for next town meeting. Rebecca will include a reminder on the calendar for these funds to be sent in the next fiscal year.

Koran will present the budget summary at the virtual town meeting. The board reviewed the list of retiring and departing staff, elected officials, and board members. The dedication to the recycling center in Jennifer Turner's memory will be read.

Dan and Rebecca will confirm all virtual meeting information and timing with the legislators.

Cota Field discussion:

There have been recent discussions with the Vermont Land Trust and the Lewis Creek Association regarding the footbridge crossing the stream and needing improvements to the recreational fields and parking area. There are conflicting communications and the town is seeking clarity about the conservation easement restrictions and the protective oversight mechanisms from LCA as the oversight body. The plan

was written in 2004 and was supposed to be updated regularly. Louis duPont has asked VLT and LCA to update the plan.

Koran wants to ensure the town interests are represented in the conversations with VLT and LCA. The town owns the property. Koran asked Chris Runcie to copy all Selectboard members on the email conversations taking place.

The board discussed some of the history of the Cota field property and context of the easement, what has worked, what has been challenging, and what conversations are needed. The board must approve the final permit for repairing the footbridge this spring.

Carin asked about other recreational uses for Cota, beyond sports, that are related to naturalist programs and the environment. There is a trail and Jan McCleery and other conservation commission members have worked over the years to ensure there is space for multiple uses on the land. Koran explained the town has discussed the idea of relocating sports rec fields to the land behind the school (especially for baseball/softball due to spring wetness of fields), but the needed infrastructure is not there (i.e. parking, field configurations and backstops, etc.) Ditching and drainage is not expensive to address the problems at Cota field but there needs to be consideration of the stream banks and protection of the natural resources there as well.

Rebecca will send Carin and Nancy information on Cota field, suggestions from Jason Barnard for improvements, and some history of the conversations. Nancy and Carin will participate in future meetings related to Cota field and report back to the full board.

Selectboard concerns

Carin raised the topic of whether a town resident can run for local office even if not a US citizen. For example, someone with a green card and Canadian citizenship but living full-time in Vermont. Carin will explore the legal options for participation in local government.

Action items:

Bills/orders

Motion: Nancy Boss made a motion to approve the warrants for bills, orders, and payroll as presented by the Treasurer. Eric Cota second.

Vote: Motion approved unanimously.

Minutes 1/19

Motion: Nancy Boss made a motion to approve the minutes of 1/19/21 as presented. Carin McCarthy second.

Vote: Motion approved unanimously.

Minutes of 2/2

Motion: Nancy Boss made a motion to approve the minutes of 2/2/21 as presented. Carin McCarthy second.

Vote: Motion approved KC, NB, CM. E. Cota abstained.

Mail Review:

- Email received from Erin Buckwalter, S. Starksboro resident, regarding board communication and announcements while the town website is being redesigned. She appreciated the letter sent by the selectboard to the MAUSD board regarding the future of Robinson elementary and wasn't aware of it until she read it in the MAUSD minutes. She asked for more sharing of information on FPF, etc.

The board acknowledged the difficulties of having the website down over the last couple of months. The site is under construction and should be available to the public again this spring. The new site will provide many more features for getting information, access to forms, online payments, and a community calendar. In the interim, please contact the town clerk's office or the Selectboard assistant for copies of minutes via mail or email.

Motion: Eric Cota moved that premature general public knowledge regarding the town's lease with the Pottery Studio would clearly place the town at a substantial disadvantage by discussing the contract terms in public. Nancy Boss second.

Vote: Motion approved unanimously.

Motion: Carin McCarthy moved to enter into executive session to receive confidential attorney-client communications made for the purpose of providing professional legal services to the body to discuss the town's lease with the Pottery Studio under the provisions of Title 1, Section 313(a)(1)(F). Nancy Boss second.

Vote: Motion approved unanimously.

The board invited Rebecca Elder into the executive session.

Motion: Nancy Boss made a motion to exit executive session. Carin McCarthy second.

Vote: Motion approved unanimously.

Action taken: The board will follow up with legal counsel regarding the pottery studio lease and next actions.

Employee evaluation:

The board discussed an employee evaluation for the Road Foreman and the next steps. Nancy to follow up.

Motion to adjourn: Eric Cota made a motion to adjourn at 7:43 p.m. Nancy Boss second.

Vote: Motion approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Elder

SB Assistant