

Starksboro Selectboard meeting
February 20, 2024
Unapproved

Board members present: Koran Cousino, Eric Cota, Carin McCarthy, John Painter
Others present: Rebecca Elder, Amy McCormick, Josh Martell, Katie Antos-Ketcham, Christa Finnern, Leah Hamilton, Laura Doyle, and via Zoom: Linda Paskiewicz, Lynn Stewart-Parker, Robert Turner

Koran Cousino called the meeting to order at 5:08 p.m.

Changes to agenda: none

Public comment: none

Road Foreman's Report

Bucket loader motor stopped working. It was evaluated and at least the lower half of the engine needs to be replaced at an estimated cost of \$30,000. The rest of the engine needs to be checked at the same time. Discussion included the replacement schedule (planned for FY26-27) and whether repairs will add value, possibly for trade in. The town is currently renting a loader until the repair is completed. Estimated cost to replace is \$300K. Josh will get more information for the next board meeting.

Motion: Eric Cota moved to fix the existing town loader motor with repairs not to exceed \$30,000 and to pay for these repairs from the emergency reserve fund. Carin McCarthy seconded. **Vote:** Motion approved unanimously.

Warrants

Motion Eric Cota made a motion to approve the warrants for A/P and payroll as presented. Carin McCarthy seconded. **Vote:** Motion approved unanimously.

Library Discussion

Library trustees present: Laura Doyle, Christa Finnern, Leah Hamilton, Katie Antos-Ketcham (Jake Mendell was unable to attend)

Koran opened the discussion and welcomed the library board members. Introductions were made. The conversation tonight is held in the spirit of wanting to work together. The goal is to bring the library operations more in line with other municipal depts and so that regular interaction with the municipal office is smooth with clear expectations.

The finance management and treasurer positions have had turn over in the last few years. The office is working to nail down procedures that are the same for everyone.

The town serves as the "bank" for the library as well as the HR dept. The town owns the building and is responsible for capital planning. These areas require policies and procedures and accurate reporting is a must. It is not happening in a way that is easy for town office staff or so that the Town is protected from liability.

Katie stated it would be helpful to identify the "grey areas" and establish clarity and predictability from the library point of view so the board can effectively create standards for staff.

The library board has lost a lot of institutional knowledge as long-time board members retired and new members were elected. They recognize there are changes that need to be made.

Carin explained the Selectboard has been focused on process improvements, reaching out to groups and committees to have better understanding of what is needed. There is new information from the external audit to consider. This is an opportunity with the new board membership to bring everyone together and make sure we are protecting both interests – the library and town.

What is unclear from the library's point of view? How can we align our policies?

- **Finances** – The town maintains the accounts. Some treasurers have split costs for regular expenses (electric, heating oil, cleaning, insurance, etc) and others have not. Clarity needs for what the library budget should cover annually.
 - **Financial reports** - what is possible? Who is communicating? Where is the info coming from?
 - **Reimbursements** – Policy is 30 days; purchases should be on their own receipts not mixed with personal purchases.
 - What is the role of the library board treasurer? That role was shared in the past year. Clear communication from the library treasurer with the Town Administrator and Treasurer is needed.
- **MOU:** Katie mentioned that in 2009 the library asked the Selectboard for a MOU or formal agreement. This was not established and since then there has been an informal “hand shake” agreement between former boards/board chairs. Is a formal agreement needed now?
- **Building** - who pays for what? Who is responsible for maintenance?
 - Koran said the selectboard wants to have the same policies for all buildings - that's the goal.
 - **Insurance and safety audits** are the responsibility of the Town – We don't want to hear the same things every year. Follow through is needs to be the responsibility of the occupants of the building.
- **HR** - Files are being moved to town office. Katie brought files for all except the library director.
- **Open Meeting Law** – The library board is working to be in compliance and has been posting agendas/minutes more regularly. Katie and Rebecca have worked together to post the agendas and minutes on the town website along with other boards and committees.
- Starksboro has a small office and changing roles with a lack of clarity about ownership of tasks.
- Some issues from the past are still lingering – There are changes that haven't been followed through on and need attention to support smooth working relationships.

Budget and yearly process

- The library has a finance committee mtg in Dec. to plan the budget. They were down to the wire this year, which added to stress. It is the library board's responsibility to produce the materials needed for the town report and to provide the request to the Selectboard for the warning.
- Reminders and timelines should be sent to the board chair(s) and they are responsible for communication to library staff.
- Action step: The Selectboard will invite the library board in during Nov/Dec budgeting for a quick check in to give an opportunity to discuss budget questions. More communication earlier is better.

Personnel policy alignment

- The selectboard needs to make sure policies are the same for all town employees.
- The town policy is in line with those of neighboring towns and is based on the VLCT model policy.
- The selectboard prefers that library employees sign onto the town policy with HR files maintained by the TA and regular updating of required documents.

- Katie stated that municipalities are split on sharing a personnel policy with the library – the library trustees agree the town policy is appropriate and can consider if an addendum might be needed.
- Library board members will work with Town Admin on questions about the policy to move forward. Eric spoke about the addendum the Bristol FD has with the Bristol town policy and that it is a model that could be compared to.
- Koran noted that the selectboard's goal is to stay consistent across all departments. It is easier for our payroll processing and ensuring fringe benefits are accrued and tracked clearly and consistently.

Carin said the same applies to the HR process. All new employees, substitutes, and volunteers should come to the town office to do paperwork, receive a tour of relevant buildings, review personnel policy with the TA, and generally create consistency across all depts.

- An on-boarding policy is needed. The Town Administrator will draft and review with the board.
- Identify grey areas on policy and procedures – check-ins to be held after the fact to ensure we are still on the same page with shared goals.
- Schedule quarterly 10-minute check-ins with the selectboard/library board: what's working, what's not, what needs attention.

Current Business

Town Meeting prep – The agenda is straightforward. Questions may be asked about the renaming of the paving reserve fund. There is an article proposing to reduce the number of planning commissioners from 7 to 5. Invitations to be sent to Principal Edorah Frazer, local representatives, and senators.

Mail received

Audit Management Letter – The summary did not surface anything surprising or new. The processes needing improvement have been identified. The town still needs to receive the list of adjusting entries from RHR. Once those are completed, we will be ready for the FY23 audit. We want to see this audit done by August 2024.

Library reimbursement request

Motion: Eric Cota made a motion to approve reimbursement for library expenses that were dated within the 30-day period as stated in the reimbursement policy. John Painter seconded.

Motion approved unanimously.

March meeting dates: Tuesday, March 12 and Wednesday, March 20

Town appointments: The list of various town positions and regional positions was reviewed. Rebecca will send notes to those individuals who currently serve in positions and to committee chairs regarding terms that are up for appointment. Openings will be posted to FPF. Appointments will be made at the meetings on 3/20 and 4/2 after responses and notes of interest have been received.

Selectboard roundtable

- BCA meeting to prep for elections
- Eclipse planning is underway – VLCT has a regular planning call to connect towns around the State. The Volunteer FD Auxiliary is producing t-shirts and organizing for the April 8 event.
- Chili Cook off and Sugar on Snow event – 3/16 – Details on website and FB

Motion to adjourn at 7 p.m. – Eric Cota moved, John Painter seconded.

Motion approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Elder, Town Administrator

Next regular meeting: Tuesday, Mar. 12, 2024 at 5:30 pm