

Starksboro Selectboard
Minutes of 3/10/21
Approved

Board members: Koran Cousino, Eric Cota, Carin McCarthy, John Painter
Unable to attend: Nancy Boss
Others present: Robert Turner, Amy McCormick, Rebecca Elder

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Chair Koran Cousino.

Changes or Additions: None

Board elections & annual decisions:

Motion: Eric Cota nominated Koran Cousino for the position of chair. John Painter second.
Motion passed – EC, JP, CM

Motion: Eric Cota nominated John Painter for the position of vice chair. Carin McCarthy second.
Motion passed – EC, KC, CM

Regular meeting day/time:

Meetings will continue on the first and third Tuesdays of the month unless otherwise noted. Carin asked others would consider a 6pm start time. All agreed to shift meetings to begin at 6pm through the summer and will re-evaluate in the fall.

Newspaper of record: Addison Independent

Physical posting locations: Town Office, Post Office, Jerusalem Store

Road Foreman's Report

- FEMA updates
 - Rebecca distributed the final reports. Funds are expected shortly.
 - Tony had a site visit with Otter Creek Engineering for the Ben Roberts Road repairs. It is not progressing as quickly as he hoped and expects a structure proposal by mid-May.
 - Brown Hill is the priority project because the small temporary bridge prevents access for any road work above it. It cannot accommodate a grader or loads of gravel.
- Tony will be out on medical leave for shoulder surgery starting 4/2. He will be unable to drive 3-4 weeks. He will keep the board informed of his return date.

Board Planning Retreat

Tentative date of May 11. The board would prefer to meet in person for some site visits to town owned land and properties and for planning discussions. Venue and date to be determined in late April. Site visits may include: parcel behind the school, solar panels, land behind the clerk's office, Food Shelf/old Town office, and others.

Town Appointments

The board reviewed the list of appointed positions and interested candidates thus far. Rebecca will contact those who are currently serving to gauge interest.

Warrants

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

Motion approved unanimously.

Approval of minutes postponed to next meeting.

Treasurer Transition planning

The board discussed plans for advertising for the treasurer position. Amy Mansfield, Amy McCormick and Koran have been in communication about access to the various town accounts and getting the appropriate permissions in place. A letter from Amy will be mailed informing accounts of the transition and new contact. Celine sent Koran a short list of items that needed attention. Celine and Cheryl are signers on the town bank account. A motion is required to remove check signers from the account. Celine is continuing to support Amy with the bank accounts. Celine will continue to have access to the accounts and be able to log in to assist.

Motion: John Painter made a motion to remove Cheryl Estey and Celine Coon as signers on the Community Bank accounts for the town of Starksboro. Eric Cota second.

Motion passed unanimously.

The draft audit is complete. There are a few outstanding items from Celine before the draft is finalized. The bill for the auditing services was included in the warrant at this meeting. Koran told them that Amy is the Town Treasurer now and will be their point of contact. They will make a presentation to the board at some point. Amy and Robert are resources for them.

The board is in favor of beginning the hiring process. John asked about the plan for posting and interviewing. Koran suggested placing on the next agenda to finalize a job description and ad, and then advertise immediately after. Amy will research on the Muni-net for ideas about hours. The board is seeking someone with finance experience at est. 10-15 hrs a week; or untrained 15-20 hrs a week.

Koran mentioned a problem with staff W2 form and concerns about reporting. Two employees expressed concern about the information they were provided.

Robert Turner said he received a document from Celine that itemizes different tasks that the Treasurer does throughout the year. Robert will add some info so Amy can know and anticipate various reports and other financial activities required. Robert also requested a list from Celine of any outstanding tasks, errors that need GL entry changes, or other unfinished tasks.

The board also discussed email account ownership, social media accounts, and the necessary transitions. A social media and web policy is needed and will be drafted later this year. Some guidelines are included in the personnel policy.

Robert Turner provided a brief budget report and overview of accounts.

Community Garden requests – Pete Antos-Ketcham

1. Covered pavilion – The garden community could use a structure for space to prep and wash produce for the food share, to hold food-related workshops, and perhaps bring back outdoor meals in the future.
2. Greenhouse – One green house was completed last year and the space filled up quickly. There is now not enough space for NCP plants and capacity for the community garden. He requests permission to build another greenhouse of the same size adjacent to it.
3. Expansion of community garden – NCP needs more space to grow food. As seen during the pandemic, our food supply can be easily disrupted, and local demand has increased. The long term vision of NCP is to cultivate Starksboro's ability to feed itself. Pete hopes to expand further and create space for new folks. NCP has 5 plots throughout the garden and would like to have all their spaces adjacent. He is proposing to expand to the West instead of going south.
4. Little Pantry – There is strong interest in the little pantry at the church in the Village. It would be helpful to have one in South Starksboro and potentially something owned by the town. NCP has volunteers in that area and could oversee it.

Discussion: Eric expressed concern about parking capacity in the area behind the town clerk's office. The area is walkable to the school parking lot and the Baptist church lot, when weather allows. Eric doesn't want to see field area grow up into brush if it is no longer hayed by a farmer. The board expressed general support for the expansion of the garden.

Motion: Eric Cota made a motion to approve the creation of a second "Little Pantry," the garden expansion, and construction of a second greenhouse on the land behind the town clerk's office. Carin McCarthy second.

Motion approved unanimously.

Administrative Updates

Rebecca provided an update on the website and IT migration projects. The email transition is underway and will be managed by a remote engineer.

Mail Review

1. Formal response to R. Barr regarding assistance with the school consolidation proposal and working to keep Robinson School open. The board expressed its appreciation for the outreach and was happy to hear from him. Since the MAUSD board has paused to consider other options and gather input, the Selectboard is monitoring the conversations. As things progress the Selectboard may wish to invite Mr. Barr to a future meeting as needed. Rebecca will draft and send the board's response.
2. Letter from Lincoln Selectboard re: MAUSD consolidation: Board members discussed the request from Lincoln to sign a letter being circulated to all five towns regarding the potential school consolidation(s) and/or repurposing proposals. The Starksboro Selectboard has communicated its position to the school board members and officials. Rebecca will send acknowledgement and response the Lincoln board.

Selectboard Concerns:

Salt usage on town walkways: Eric to speak with Pete Antos-Ketcham about the quantity of salt used in future.

Motion to adjourn:

Eric Cota moved to adjourn at 7:40 p.m. Carin McCarthy second.

Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Elder
SB Assistant