

Starksboro Selectboard Meeting
Minutes of 7/6/21
Approved

Board members present: Nancy Boss, Eric Cota, Koran Cousino; remote participation: Carin McCarthy
Unable to attend: John Painter
Others present: Rebecca Elder, Mark Kinsley, Amy McCormick, E. Sayre, Nancy Cornell, Herb Olson, Steve Huffaker, Rich Warren

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m. by Koran Cousino.

Changes or Additions: none

Visitor's Business: none

Road Foreman's Report

1. David Allen was presented to discuss his revised proposal. Tony is okay with the new line placement as indicated on the map provided. The board discussed proximity to the gravel area, concerns related to any extraction activity. No storage will be allowed on the property. David stated the liens can be moved anytime. At the end of his use, all lines and materials used will be collected and removed. He will provide an insurance certificate. Tony will communicate with the VT Land Trust about the agreement.
2. FEMA and grant updates: The extension for Ben Roberts and Mason Hill South projects has been requested. Tony hopes the Ben Roberts project will go out to bid in September. Otter Creek Engineering will handle the bid posting and review.
3. End of year budget – Tony and Mark have reviewed the highway accounts together. Most items are closed out.
4. Tony asked the board for consideration about the 4.5 weeks of vacation he has remaining. Only 2 weeks are rolled over per policy. He was unable to take time off before end of fiscal year. The board will discuss a future meeting.

Motion: Eric Cota made a motion to approve the purchase of a landscape trailer up to \$4500 as previously discussed. Nancy Boss second. **Motion approved unanimously.**

Maple Broadband presentation – Steve Huffaker

Steve Huffaker and Nancy Cornell presented information about the Maple Broadband initiative and its request to towns across the state. There will be no taxing of town residents. Money will be raised in other ways. The group is comprised of an Executive committee and a volunteer board. Funding is needed for pre-construction costs and for making the entire project "pole ready".

They request \$50,000 from Starksboro from the ARPA funding that is being disbursed.

Carin asked about businesses and whether they would need to be subscribers. The board asked if the requests to towns are equitable and fair: the town will be paying to invest in service without knowing what residents will be charged in the future. Nancy said the board is aware that lower income residents would struggle to pay for services even at the lowest tier. The board wants to see affordable access for all. We need to lobby for shared goals and services.

Steve said the organization is a nonprofit and their goal is to be cost-effective. They are developing the detailed business plan and he will share that once it is completed.

Koran explained that the Selectboard is only at the beginning stage of exploring how the Town will seek to use the ARPA funds. This request will be considered in the context of the community conversations that will be happening with stakeholders and residents.

Steve thanked the board for its consideration. Nancy Cornell noted that with the potential of Robinson School closing or changing, one of the best ways to draw new residents to Starksboro is to have access to high speed broadband. They also welcomed Rich Warren who is the newly appointed alternate from Starksboro on the volunteer board.

Current Business

MAUSD reorganization and potential merger update:

The board has received letters from a few residents regarding this issue. The Selectboard would like to hear from more people about their thoughts and concerns about the potential closing or repurposing of Robinson. Lincoln is considering leaving the school district. The board and visitors discussed the concerns related to the timeline of the merger study committee and what would need to be warned for a vote on the ballot in November. There is a lack of clarity and more information is needed, possibility legal consultation. The board needs to discuss and determine when it is time to see legal guidance.

Koran said she believes there is concern in the community but the board has only heard from a handful of people. The board would prefer to gauge the whole town's interests as the board has an obligation to represent the interest of all. It is difficult to proceed without knowing more of the town residents' sentiment. There needs to be a town wide forum for engagement scheduled, perhaps a survey as well as an in-person/Zoom opportunity.

Town Green Pavilion Update

Carin asked the board to consider the idea of creating a fund that could be allocated for a variety of town projects, not restricted to just the town green pavilion project. Nancy expressed concern about funds being raised for one project and then used for something else, or a perception of such. Carin said that any donor can restrict a gift with a note in the memo line of a check or donation. She was looking for a broader solution that would be helpful for this and future projects, but the idea needs more research. Mark will help with information on this in the future. The board might consider ARPA funds for this project since it is directly related to bringing community together and providing safe spaces to support the town plan and vision.

Mail Review:

JCCC – Susan Klaiber inquired about FD reps for the Jerusalem schoolhouse project and committee.

Financial Report and Audit

Mark has worked on bank reconciliation. He is asking Telling for insights on where the deficiencies are. The transition from QuickBooks to NEMRC was the main source of the problems that we are seeing now. Mark and Robert will continue working on the clean up and organization of accounts so moving forward will be in compliance. They will proceed with the assumption the town will have an external audit done again this year. Telling can schedule us for October. Mark will revisit this topic with the board in one month.

Bill for staining work on Cota field pavilion:

Motion: Eric Cota moved to approve the bill for work done on the Cota field pavilion as presented. Nancy Boss second. **Motion approved unanimously.**

The board discussed whether this was a sports program expense or town expense. In other years, it might be split but given that no fees were charged this past year for sports during COVID, the town will pay the full bill.

Bills, Orders, and Payroll

Motion: Eric Cota made a motion to approve the warrants for bills, orders and payroll as presented with one requested clarification. Carin McCarthy second.

Motion approved unanimously.

ARPA Funding Acceptance

Carin spoke with the ARPA liaison at VLCT. She noted that significant funds are being directed to broadband so the town might wait to consider what is needed on that subject. Carin also contacted ACRPC and asked if there were a portal so towns could see how other municipalities were using their funds in Addison Co.

At this time, the town needs to formally accept the funds via three motions as follows:

Motion 1: Carin McCarthy moved that the Town of Starksboro accept its allocation of Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Funding (CLFRF) from the US Treasury, along with the Award Terms & Conditions and Assurances of Compliance with the Civil Rights Requirements that are requirements of accepting these funds; Eric Cota second. **Motion approved unanimously.**

Motion 2: Carin McCarthy moved that we appoint Koran Cousino to serve as the Town's "Authorized Representative" as required by the Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Funding (CLFRF) from the US Treasury, to sign the Award Terms & Conditions and Assurances of Compliance with the Civil Rights Requirements by July 15, 2021. Nancy Boss second. **Motion approved unanimously.**

Motion 3: Eric Cota moved that we name Rebecca Elder to be the "Contact Person" for the Town's CLFRF Award from U.S. Treasury. Nancy Boss second. **Motion approved unanimously**

Minutes of 6/15/21

Motion: Nancy Boss made a motion to approve the minutes of June 15, 2021 as presented. Eric Cota second. **Motion approved unanimously.**

Motion to adjourn:

Motion: Eric Cota moved to adjourn at 8:25 p.m. Carin McCarthy second.

Motion approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Elder
SB Assistant