

Starksboro Selectboard Meeting
Minutes of July 7, 2020
Approved

Board members present: Koran Cousino, Greg Hahr, Nancy Boss, John Painter, Eric Cota
Others present: Rebecca Elder, Celine Coon, Tony Porter, Pete Antos-Ketcham, Katie Antos-Ketcham, Catherine Goldsmith, Dennis Casey

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 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 to the agenda:

1. Building maintenance: Library – floor replacement in kitchen
2. Dedication of recycling center in honor of Jennifer Turner

Road Foreman Report

- No update from FEMA at this time – Tony and Rebecca have a conf call tomorrow morning
- Conway Rd grant submitted to ACRPC – No questions have been asked so far. The requests must be submitted by the 15th. Reimbursement in late August.
 - Amount: \$14K allowed. Tony reports the project costs came in just over that. The town's share for repairs is 20%.
- Shaker Mountain Road repairs were completed today. Tony will send an aggregate bill to Rebecca for the FEMA project reimbursement.
- Ireland Road clean up will begin next week.
- Those 2 projects will close out the FEMA project work other than the Cota Field & bridge repairs.
- AOT stated there is no anticipated timeframe on the requested 3 hydraulic studies. AOT is running 2 months behind schedule prior to pandemic, and it could be up to a 6 to 8-month wait.
- Hydraulic study on Brown Hill East bridge is expected from Otter Creek Eng.
- A downed tree was reported and crew took care it. A complaint was received

Driveway accessibility permits

A landowner requested permission to upgrade an access to a small bridge to a woodlot. No new access is being created. A culvert will be installed with town permission.

Brad and Nancy Boss: Ben Roberts Road: Request to eliminate an 18' culvert on the town road (Class 4). Tony has reviewed and approved the work. Brad Boss will do the work himself. The Board approved and Eric Cota will sign the permit application on behalf of the board.

NRCS grant update (Hillsboro/Ireland roads): Tony is trying to get the requested stem count for NRCS. He requested assistance from ACRPC. The other half of the work is for Stokes Hill Rd. Tony waiting to hear from NRCS. Tony asked how much the board willing to spend on the project. It will likely be difficult to get bids on the work because it is a busy time of year and there are limited funds to do the work

needed. Anyone who bids will need to do a site visit. Tony hopes to have information for the next meeting.

DRB candidates: Brad Johnson and Alexsys Thompson

The Selectboard welcomed Starksboro residents Brad Johnson and Alexsys Thompson, who both expressed interest in serving for the 3-year term. Koran asked Rebecca to briefly describe the role of the DRB and their purview. The board then asked the candidates to talk about how they would approach making decisions that affect the people who live around us and in our community.

Brad Johnson lives in Starksboro and is an attorney. He said one of the big challenges he's seen in negotiations is transparency. The board's role is to make sure that we apply the set of regulations as impartially as possible with as much reasoning behind the decision. It is important to recognize that you can't please everyone every time. The main driver to try to be as clear and as open as possible.

Alexsys Thompson lives in South Starksboro. She stated she echoes Brad's comments. She read a lot about the recent DRB applications in South Starksboro. She sees the board's role as seeking clarity while doing so with empathy—see what the applicant is trying to do and de-escalate the conflict. As a professional mediator, she sees the opportunity for communities to have a bonding experience and less of a divisive experience.

[Town Appointments](#)

Energy Committee

Motion: Eric Cota made a motion to reappoint Megan Nedzinski, Jeff Dunham, and Phil Mosenthal, each for an additional term on the Energy Committee. Greg Hahr second.

Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

ACSWD

Motion: Greg Hahr made a motion to reappoint Susan Reit deSalas as the ACSWD representative and to appoint Erin Bent as alternate. John Painter second.

Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

ACRPC

Motion: Eric Cota made a motion to reappoint Richard Warren as ACRPC delegate. Greg Hahr second.

Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

DRB appointments

Motion: Greg Hahr made a motion to reappointment Jon Fenner and Robert Liotard for 3-year terms on the Development Review Board. Eric Cota second.

Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

Motion: Greg Hahr made a motion to appoint Alexsys Thompson to a 3-year term on the Development Review Board. John Painter second.

Vote: 3 yes (E. Cota, G. Hahr, J. Painter), 1 nay (N. Boss), K.Cousino did not vote.

[Community project requests](#)

Pete Antos-Ketcham requested permission for a few small projects in town:

1. Sign for the community garden – The sign was created during the Art & Soul project more than 10 years ago. It was made out of untreated material and is starting to break down. He proposes to replace with treated posts and use the existing artwork. Sign will have the same look, same size.
2. Bus shelter mural – There is a blank back wall divider between the commuter waiting area and shed storage. There is an art student who is offering to paint a scenic mural inside on this blank space.

3. Little free pantry – This is a proposed project in partnership among the New Community Project, the First Baptist Church, and the Starksboro Food Shelf. They have heard that there are people who need food assistance but do not want to be seen for privacy reasons. The proposed spirit of the free pantry is a self-service donation shelf where people can come on their own time and access for their own needs. The community can donate and put items in the pantry. There is one in Hinesburg that has been a lifeline. Pete has secured a small grant to construct a 3ft by 2.5ft shed structure with no permanent foundation on the corner behind the church. It will be out of the snow plowing path and out of visibility of the road.

The board supports all three ideas. On the mural, the board asked to review a sketch of the design prior to painting for due diligence since this is a visible structure on town land.

Greg asked about the Hinesburg pantry and if there had been problems with people taking too much. Pete heard it is getting cleaned out daily due to need. The NCP, Food Shelf, and community will be restocking and monitoring use and need.

Motion: Eric Cota made a motion to approve the 3 projects as described and presented with a sketch of the mural to be approved before painting. Greg Hahr second.

Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

COVID19 municipal plan

Motion: Nancy Boss made a motion to approve the Starksboro COVID-19 Municipal plan as drafted and edited during the meeting with insertion of Town Clerk/Asst. Town Clerk as responsible for implementation of the plan. Greg Hahr second.

Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

The board has the authority to revise, replace, or revoke this plan as the pandemic response recommendations and the Governor's Emergency Orders change over time. The approved plan is effective July 8, 2020.

Library Floor replacement

The library staff approached the Selectboard last year with the need to replace the flooring in the library kitchen. The board had discussions about long-term repairs, replacing the entire floor beneath the cabinet and making some improvements to the whole kitchen area. An overhaul of the space is needed.

Prior to the planning retreat on June 23, the Selectboard did a site visit of the library kitchen. The board expressed that there are limited capital maintenance funds for the year. Catherine Goldsmith stated she received a quote for purchase and installation of "marmoleum" flooring for the open space in the kitchen, not beneath the cabinets. She feels it is the best material for the space. The board discussed the quote, the other work needed, and the broader picture for future repairs. Since the floor installation had already been scheduled for next week, the board agreed to proceed on this specific project. The board asked for plans for future purchases and renovations to be brought to the Selectboard for consideration as part of the overall planning for maintenance needed on town-owned buildings.

Motion: Greg Hahr made a motion to approve the expenses for library floor not to exceed \$3000 pending confirmation that the floor can be readjusted in the future as needed. John Painter second.

Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion re: Community block grant proposal from ACCT

The board discussed the memo from Addison County Community Trust regarding the request for town support of a community block grant application to support an infrastructure assessment for the three mobile home parks in Starksboro.

John: He is looking at this as an opportunity to collaborate, to set expectations for zoning and planning, to assess the floodplain issues. He stated there needs to be systems and policies in place and he is looking at this proposal as an opportunity to help bring the MHPs into compliance.

Koran noted that the Planning Commission will be looking at this differently from the SB. The PC takes the long-term planning and zoning questions and looks at what the future might be and what infrastructure would be used and/or needed. The Selectboard is looking at policies required, administrative time, technical support, and finances.

Dennis Casey (PC Chair) stated the PC has not met since early March. They will meet on July 16 to review the memo from ACCT. He stated it is unlikely there is enough space available for a community septic and water system. From a planning perspective, he is concerned about “best fix” plans for individual wastewater systems. That approach would eliminate any opportunity to rearrange the living space or to consider redevelopment options in the future. The mobile homes are not a long term solution for affordable housing. Community planning could assess the viability of gradually constructing permanent, multi-family dwellings that are energy efficient and allow for open space and recreation.

The board agreed that affordable housing is needed in Starksboro and that planning is needed to determine what the community and bylaws can support.

Dennis also noted that ACCT admitted the parks are not paying for themselves and are far in debt. Extensive funds will be needed. The town wants to see improvements to the quality of life in the parks, with more opportunities. The Brookside park has a lot of potential given the soil quality on the land and the park’s proximity to the village and placement in the High Density zoning district.

Eric Cota agrees. He would support a feasibility study for a redevelopment plan. He does not support the proposal as presented.

Nancy Boss agreed and does not support the current proposal.

John noted that it is important to have long-range, big picture planning discussions. How much low/moderate income housing is needed? What affordable models are out there? What can we learn from other communities (like South Burlington)? What would provide a higher standard of living if redevelopment were possible?

Dennis said this is a big undertaking but an important one for the town. From a planning perspective, if permanent, affordable, energy efficient units were put in, they would be less likely to be abandoned and more likely to remained rented.

The board asked if this grant could be used to do other feasibility planning, instead of individual septic plans and/or best fixes?

- Rebecca has a conference call scheduled with Elise Shanbacker and Amy Wright to discuss the proposal further.
- PC will meet 7/16 and offer suggestions for consideration to the SB.
- Selectboard will meet with ACCT again on 7/21 for a decision on the proposal.

Financial Updates – Celine Coon

- Education tax rate – Information was just received and the rate will be lower by a couple of cents. The tax rate can be set at the next meeting.
- Online credit card payments – the Town will be able to be receive credit card payment for town fees and taxes soon. Celine has signed a contract and will work with Rebecca to add the features to the town website for public use.

- Celine is preparing for scheduled time off beginning in 7-8 weeks. She is working with Amy Mansfield and other staff on systems for coverage while she is unavailable. She will update the board on plans and return date.

Maintenance Updates

- Town clerk's office: Back-up generator will be installed on Friday; to be operational next week.
- PO roof replacement is complete.
- Pottery studio lease: Nancy has called numerous times but has been unable to reach Judith Bryant. She conveyed that insurance needs to be reinstated and the lease needs to be signed. Nancy will continue to follow up and report at the next meeting.

Recycling Center Dedication to Jennifer Turner

An idea was presented to the Selectboard by Tom Estey to recognize Jennifer Turner's contributions to the Town of Starksboro and the creation of the recycling program in town. The Selectboard will name the recycling center and the dedication will be in honor of Jennifer's 30 years of service to town. Koran shared a letter that was sent to Jennifer from the Selectboard.

Motion: John Painter made a motion to name the Jennifer Turner Town Recycling Center. Eric Cota second.

Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

*"To show our appreciation and gratitude, the Town of Starksboro is honored to dedicate the Town Recycling Center to you, and name it **The Jennifer Turner Town Recycling Center**, in recognition of your 31 years of service to the Town of Starksboro."*

Animal Control update

Koran did a compliance site visit with Sheriff Peter Newton. They met with Marge Trombley and Kenneth Bell and his girlfriend. The dogs are being kept in their own pens. Ken has paid the fines owed. The dogs are registered. One dog's rabies vaccination is just out of date, due to cancellation of the Rabies clinic, but the owner will vaccinate. The vet records confirm the dog is healthy.

They expressed kindly that K. Bell must keep the dogs home; any confirmed reports will start the process again. Trombley/Bell is in compliance with the selectboard's order as of the date of site visit.

Action Items:

Motion: Greg Hahr made a motion to authorize the annual staff wages increases as approved by the voters in the FY20-21 budget at the rate of 3%. Eric Cota second.

Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

Warrants

Motion: John, Greg 2nd to approve bills

Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

Authorization of orders/liabilities outside of warrants

Motion: John Painter made a motion to authorize the Treasurer to pay orders and liabilities outside of warrants. Eric Cota second.

Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

Minutes of 6/16/20

Motion: Nancy Boss made a motion to approve the minutes of 6/16/20 as amended. John Painter second.

Vote: Motion passed unanimously.

Next meeting: Tuesday July 21, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. via ZOOM

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Elder
SB Assistant