

Starksboro Selectboard meeting
Minutes of 8/18/20
Approved

Board members present: Eric Cota, Koran Cousino, John Painter, Greg Hahr

Unable to attend: Nancy Boss

Others present: Rebecca Elder, Tony Porter, Celine Coon, Robert Turner

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: none

1. Grant opportunity regarding digitizing land records
2. Library reopening plan

Road Foreman's Report

- All work from the Halloween 2019 storm is now complete except for the bridge replacement on Brown Hill and the culvert replacement on Ben Roberts.
- Tony is expecting an estimate on the proposal from Otter Creek regarding the hydraulic study.
- Koran asked the status of the hydraulic study request on 3 locations in town. Tony said the State is backed up on all site visits due to the pandemic and reduced field work.
- Lease on the excavator is being prepared. The rep. is contacting Celine directly for the signing of lease. If not complete before Celine's leave, Tony will be authorized to sign for the Town.
- Cota field and bridge repairs: The board agreed to request removal of the Cota field and bridge repairs from the FEMA grant reimbursement.
- Unifirst contract: Tony will explore cost for similar services from other providers. Service has declined.

Motion: Eric Cota made a motion to authorize Tony Porter to sign the lease with Nortrax as needed. John Painter second.

Motion carried. K. Cousino, J. Painter, and E. Cota present for vote.

Warrants for approval

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

Motion carried. K. Cousino, J. Painter, and E. Cota present for vote.

[Board member Greg Hahr joined the meeting.]

Addison County Regional Planning – Formation of Communications District

The board considered a request to support the formation of the Addison County Communications Union District and to appoint a representative. The full text of the resolution is attached to these minutes.

Motion: Greg Hahr made a motion to approve the Resolution Approving the Formation of the Addison County Communications Union District and to appoint Nancy Cornell as the Starksboro representative to the governing body. John Painter second.

Motion carried unanimously.

Mail/correspondence:

The Energy Committee contact Rebecca and Koran to inquire about the possibility of incorporating some energy efficiency goals in the VCDP community grant for the ACCT mobile home parks. Rebecca conveyed that this application is focused on the assessment of infrastructure related to wastewater, potable water, and roads. There may be better opportunities in the future for community block grant applications.

Input from town committees is always welcome when grant opportunities arise. The selectboard encourages engagement to help inform priorities so they can be considered whenever funding prospects arise.

Job Descriptions

The board had an extended discussion about elected vs. appointed/hired positions and the types of job descriptions that are needed. There are current versions for several town positions, but most are out of date (last reviewed c.2009). The Town Clerk and Town Treasurer positions are outlined by State statute. Other duties and responsibilities can be negotiated. In Starksboro's case, both positions have been filled by the same person for a long time, thus the roles have evolved over the years. The selectboard is looking to define the jobs more clearly in preparation for various employee retirements and new elected officials. Both the Clerk and Treasurer also hire their own assistants.

For the next discussion, each board member will take their assignments and discuss the job and responsibilities with the current staff member/elected official. They will bring that information back to the group to incorporate and consider for the revised descriptions.

Purchasing Policy Review

The town's current policy was written in 2010. The board decided to draft a new policy based on the template from VLCT and starting on page 7 of that template for the actual policy to review:

- What if there are not women/minority owned businesses available locally to include in a bidding process? Need clarification on the Affirmative Action and Local preference language: consult VLCT to ensure understanding of what is a federal requirement. The town should not risk any receipt of funds. Do we have a choice in this wording? If it is a federal requirement, do we need it in our policy.
- Code of Conduct: Language in draft is good; ensure disclosure statement is included.
- Documentation: John asked what the current practice is and how it is documented. Clear process and procedures are needed.
- Discussion of current purchasing: what is incidental, what requires review and approval, how different staff members handle purchasing, who has authorization for different types of purchases, etc.

- The current policy allows for purchases under \$2500 to be expended from budget line items without board approval (“incidental”). Each department has a budget that is approved at town meeting.
- What is the board comfortable with for spending without approval?
- Greg noted that spending limits are a protection mechanism for both the employee and the employer. It prevents a situation such as “you didn’t have authorization for X purchase.”
- Emergency situations are different with different criteria. In Bristol, Eric must get a PO for anything over \$1500; the system is more to inform the board of something he has purchased that is within budget but over the single limit.
- Emergency Purchases – p.11 of template – name the positions that can make purchases. Selectboard, Town Clerk, Treasurer, Health Officer, Road Foreman
- John asked if staff have ever bumped up against the policy and felt constrained. Koran stated the policy hasn’t been followed explicitly so it is hard to know.
- Question: If a project is put out to bid, is the Town obligated to select the lowest bidder? A statement that the town has the right to deny a bid should be included to allow flexibility. Bid solicitation should not be solely based on amount/cost. The selectboard has the responsibility to evaluate bids and there are other factors.

Policy discuss shall continue at the next regularly scheduled meeting on September 1, 2020.

Building & maintenance

Town Clerk’s office: The ramp at the front of the office has rotten boards that need replacing. Rebecca will contact Quinn McElwain to see if he is interested and able to do the repairs with either pressure treated wood or a trex-like material.

Pottery studio lease: Selectboard will follow up with the tenant directly in writing about current status and next steps.

Post office lease: Needs legal review. Contact Jim Runcie to see if he is available to review this fall.

Selectboard concerns: none

Minutes of 7/21

Motion: John Painter made a motion to approve the minutes of 7/21/20. Eric Cota second

Motion carried unanimously. (EC, JP, KC – G. Hahr was disconnected from call momentarily.)

Minutes of 8/4 – Delay review until next meeting

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Elder
Selectboard Assistant