

Town of Starksboro
Selectboard meeting minutes
August 7, 2018
Unapproved

Board members present: Koran Cousino, Eric Cota, Peter Marsh, Keegan Tierney

Unable to attend: Tony Porter

Others present: Peg Casey, Norman Cota, Seth Clifford, Joanne Siminitus, Tom Estey, Rebecca Elder

The meeting was called to order by Koran Cousino at 5:34 p.m.

The Road Foreman cannot attend or will arrive later so adjustments were made to the schedule.

Tax Rate

Celine Coon joined the discussion to assist in setting the tax rate. She provided background information for the board members and walked through how the rate is set. The reports presented showed information from the grand list. The town report included an estimated tax rate of .609 on page 32, which was created by the Auditors, and based on the previous year's budget vs. actual amounts and other data available at that time. To determine a recommendation for the Selectboard, the Treasurer takes the State budget information, the auditors' predicted rate, and then works with the Listers to enter the estimated rate into the NEMRC system for a financial check to ensure the proposed tax rate will cover the annual budget.

[Note for the record: A minor error was found on line 3 of General Fund in the Town Report. It reflected \$705,535 and should be \$705,735 (\$200 difference). The bottom line figures are to be adjusted accordingly.]

Koran asked about the Veteran's exemption and how it is part of the rate that needs to be set. Celine explained the State has approved an amount for Veterans with a certain level of disability. The Town now has 1\$50K that must be raised in addition to our budgeted amount of money to cover the Veteran's portion. The Town has no control over the education tax rates—those are handed down by the State.

Motion: Peter Marsh made a motion to set the annual tax rate at 0.6028, with the Veteran rate at 0.0012, for a total rate of 0.6040. Keegan Tierney seconded.

Vote: All in favor

NEMRC accounting system set-up is proceeding slowly but steadily. It is up and working in a first stage for a multi-phase set up. Several major batches of data still need to be imported pertaining to the budget. Peter Ryersbach and Celine Coon have been working with the data from QuickBooks to reconcile everything before inputting additional data in the new system. Celine noted that the reports from

Report with orders – Celine noted that the report she provides can be customized with more, less, or different information than what is provided now. Let her know if any changes are wanted.

Mail Review

- Proposal for the lights at Post Office came in at \$485. The work will be scheduled. Peter will call them and figure out logistics with the Post office staff.
- Liquor/Tobacco violation noted.
- Municipal budgeting workshop on 9/11. Keegan will attend.
- Lewis Creek invitation for boat excursion: Peter will attend. Rebecca to inquire if any members of the PC or DRB wish to attend.

The board discussed how the Emergency Reserve Fund can be used. The town resolution (in the town report) states that the fund can be used for unanticipated expenses (i.e. unexpected expenditures not included in the budget). There is \$159,000 in the fund now.

Motion: Peter Marsh made a motion to instruct the Treasurer to pay for the Town's portion of the recycling container replacement unit from the Emergency Reserve Fund. Eric Cota seconded.

Vote: All in favor

Bills/Orders

Motion: Keegan Tierney made a motion to instruct the Treasurer to pay the bills and orders as presented. Peter Marsh seconded.

Vote: All in favor

Minutes of 7/24/18

Motion: Eric Cota made a motion to approve the minutes of 7/24/18. Keegan Tierney seconded.

Vote: All in favor

Building/Maintenance Updates

- Porch work starts week after next.
- Keegan launched the Jerusalem Schoolhouse Committee. They will be posting agendas and sending minutes to Rebecca to post on the website.
- Eric asked Randy to look at the 2nd roll-off recycling container. Only the backdoor needs to be repaired. He will provide a quote (Eric to request). Koran asked if we know exactly what Casella wants repaired and if Jennifer could get this information from them. Eric noted it may be worthwhile to have the bottoms of the containers sprayed with oil to prevent rust.

Green Mount Cemetery Discussion

Norm Cota presented a summary of the cemetery's expenses from 2013-2018. They have a declining fund balance (currently \$12K in the account) and anticipate roughly 3-4 years left in the fund for annual maintenance expenses. The group came to talk with the Selectboard about ideas for the future of the cemetery. They are wondering about potential support from the Town.

- The annual expenses are roughly \$3000. The only source of revenue is the sale of lots. Two sold this year. There are another 4 that may be sold.
- How many lots remain? 100-150. From the vault headed north, there are some trees that need to be removed. The Cemetery owns land right down to 116.
- Making room for more lots: If more trees are cut to make room for lots, more mowing will be needed. Norm said there are volunteers who will take down the trees and haul the wood away. The group will need to pay for stumpage and landscaping.
- Current price of lot is: 2 lots = \$1000 and 4 lots is \$1600.

The Selectboard suggested the group consider making an appropriation request at Town Meeting. They would need to have a petition signed in order to make their first request. Cheryl can guide them through the steps needed.

If the group was able to get consistent support from the Town that would cover the annual costs, then the cemetery board could focus on some fundraising and creative investing to try to get a better return to support perpetual care. Joanne and Seth agreed that if they could get annual support, then working on a long-term plan makes sense. This is the last cemetery in town that is still active and has lots available.

Road Foreman's Report

- Driveway permit application (Caron - Varney Hill Rd) – for a temporary drive to remove a mobile home. Tom is okay with it as long as the cut is removed when they are done. No check came with

the application. The Selectboard signed the permit application with the understanding that the fee will be refunded if the drive is removed within 60 days.

- Peter asked Tom if the driveway across from Eikenberg was left in acceptable condition. Tom said yes.
- States Prison Hollow paving will likely take place in September.
- Koran noted that a citizen inquired about the height of the trees along the solar field behind the school and possible interference with the solar production and/or potential damage that could happen to the trackers. Tom will check to see if any trimming is needed.
- Peter mentioned the tree by the post office needs to be removed as it has rotten branches that are ready to fall and the tree isn't in good condition. Tom approved removal as needed.
- Tom has been trying to reach Josh D. re: speed study for States Prison Hollow but they have not connected thus far.
- The crew finished up for the dry hydrant installation.
- Peter asked Tom about the firewood stored by the New Community Project/Pete Antos-Ketcham. They are requesting a place to keep wood where they can access freely. Tom said he can find a spot but it is not going to be under cover. The wood in the old shed has been sitting there for 3 years and isn't in the best condition. Pete will come to the next meeting to discuss.

Green Lantern Solar Project lease

Motion to enter executive session: Keegan Tierney made a motion to enter executive session at 7:27 pm for the discussion of the Green Lantern Solar lease agreement per 1 VSA §313a, f . Eric Cota seconded. The board included Rebecca Elder in the discussion.

Vote: All in favor

Motion: Peter Marsh made a motion to conclude the executive session at 7:40 p.m. Keegan Tierney seconded.

Vote: All in favor

Action taken:

Motion: Keegan Tierney made a motion to permit Jim Carroll to negotiate the solar lease agreement details with Green Lantern Solar on our behalf with the best interests of the Town in mind. Peter Marsh seconded.

Vote: all in favor

Palmer Tax Grievance

Motion to enter executive session: Keegan Tierney made a motion to enter executive session at 7:42 pm to discuss the Palmer tax grievance per 1 VSA §313 Peter Marsh seconded.

The board included Rebecca Elder in the discussion.

Vote: All in favor

Motion: Keegan Tierney made a motion to conclude the executive session at 7:59 p.m. Eric Cota seconded.

Vote: All in favor

Action taken:

Motion: Peter Marsh made a motion to for the Selectboard to move forward to participate in mediation regarding the Palmer tax grievance with Jim Carroll representing the Town's interests. Eric Cota seconded.

Vote: All in favor

Personnel policy review

The group discussed the most efficient way to review edits to the document. Rebecca will send the Word document to everyone for changes. Each board member can send their edits/comments/suggestions to Rebecca to merge into one document for a group review at a future meeting in September.

Town Plan review

The public hearing is tentatively set for 9/11/18 at 6:00 p.m. in the Robinson School multi-purpose room. The Selectboard is not making any changes to the document submitted by the Planning Commission. The board will hear public comment and determine if any final changes are needed prior to final approval.

Building/Maintenance Updates continued

Listers' office

- Quote received from Tom Perry for scope of work focused on insulation removal
- Keegan would prefer to see a more holistic approach that addresses all the issues contributing to the odors and poor ventilation and heat.
- The discussion was tabled until the proposal/quote from Denny Casey is reviewed.
- The board needs to determine the best way to deal with the situation that addresses the problems.
- Peter will let Tom know we are still considering it.

Commuter shed

- Pete Antos-Ketcham wants to put a solar panel for a solar powered light in the bus shelter. He will attend the next meeting to discuss.

Selectboard concerns

- Question received about primitive camping on Town Forest land. The group discussed and no action taken at this time.

Zoning update

- South Starksboro logging operation: an unpermitted logging operation on Jerusalem Road and unapproved curb cut was noted. A letter has been sent to the landowner with information on how to bring the operation into compliance.

Motion: Keegan Tierney made a motion to adjourn at 9:10 p.m. Peter Marsh seconded.

Vote: All in favor

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Elder
Selectboard Assistant