

Selectboard Meeting minutes
October 1, 2019
Unapproved

Board members present: Nancy Boss, Koran Cousino, Eric Cota, Keegan Tierney
Others present: Tom Estey, Rebecca Elder, Ryan Senna, Linda Gionti, Raymond Leggett, Alison Gergley, Jeff Dunham, Nick Bissonnette, Greg Hahr

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

Additions/changes to the agenda per 1 V.S.A. §312(d)(3)(A)

1. Consider approval of invoice to Lucky Star Catering from the Sport Program

Road Foreman's Report

- Tom reported that the repairs and improvements on Mason Hill are complete.
- The road crew has put up most of the sand for the winter.
- The town has a signed contract for salt for year as well. The price is down \$.40 per ton.
- The logging situation on Mason Hill North that resulted in trees and debris left in the road has continued. Tom had spoken with the logger in the past. He will find out who the owner is and alert them to the issues left that need clean up. Tom will let them know that it needs to be fixed or the town will hire someone to fix the problems and bill the landowner for costs.
- Varney Hill Road – There may be an issue with the small culvert that was installed for irrigation for one of the farms. Tom will check it and follow up if changes are needed.
- Tom has only 23 days left before retirement.

[There was some time available before the 6pm guests arrived so the board considered some regular business items while waiting.]

Minutes of 9/17/19

Motion: Keegan Tierney made a motion to approve the minutes of 9/17/19. Eric Cota 2nd
Motion carried.

Review of mail

- VLCT memo re: Insurance rate increases - Note for budget season. Price increases for both BC/BS and MVP plans.
- VLCT Cybersecurity webinar 10/15

Motion: Nancy Boss made a motion to approve the addition of Amy McCormick as a signatory on the Starksboro bank account as requested by the Treasurer. Keegan Tierney 2nd.

Discussion: The Treasurer requested this addition to ensure a check signer is available during open office hours. The Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer's hours are not full-time and therefore the additional signer will provide adequate coverage.

Motion carried.

Invoice for Lucky Star Catering

This invoice for food services at the Starksboro Sports Program's Jamfest was not included in the set of orders to be considered tonight.

Motion: Nancy Boss made a motion and Keegan Tierney seconded the motion to pay Lucky Star Catering in the amount of \$650.

Motion carried.

Candidates for the Selectboard Vacancy

Koran Cousino provided a brief introduction to the candidates who were present. The Board will make an appointment to fill the vacancy for the duration of the term. That seat will then be up for election at the town meeting in March. Three slots are up for election this year: 2 two-year terms and 1 three-year term. The board is seeking someone who will be present for meetings, will check town emails regularly and communicate with Rebecca about ongoing business items. The board is preparing for budget season and development of the 20-21 budget. K. Tierney noted that help with financials and town finances, projecting revenues and expenses in our accounts for the next 30 years is a primary goal. The board had the benefit of having Susan Jefferies as a member for 12 years and she brought her skills as a CPA. There is a steep learning curve to understand the town's budget and financial needs. K. Cousino said there is much about town governance that the general public thinks the board has power over but often does not. It can be frustrating for both the board and the public. The Selectboard has responsibilities in all 3 branches of local governments: quasi-judicial in cases such as vicious dog hearings; legislative in the writing and enactment of policies and ordinances; and executive oversight of the budget development and financial forecasting for the town.

The board then invited the candidates to speak for a few minutes about their interest in the position:

- Greg Hahr – He is responding to the call for community service. He serves on other boards, both professionally and personally. He has been on the Starksboro Zoning Board and the school board. His career is in Chittenden Co. There he serves as the President of the Mortgage Banker's board. He wants to serve the community; he has a set of skills around finance; he is currently the chief lending officer at New England Federal. He asked about schedule and what the group is looking for in a board member.
- Nick Bissonnette – He is interested in having a part in the town. He has lived here his whole life and doesn't see a lot of younger people getting involved. He works a lot in the community, has built a business working in town, and knows a lot of local folks. He is not sure if the selectboard is the right fit but he wants to step up and into a town role. K. Cousino said one of the things she wish she had known when how many things the board hears about that they also cannot do anything about; people think there are more powers with the board than there are. Next few months are about budget development.
- Jeff Dunham – He was born in Brattleboro, attended Middlebury College, majored in math/fine arts, attended Syracuse University for degree in architecture. He liked the area on Ireland Road and bought land in 1977 and has been there for 40 years. He is employed as an architect in Waitsfield and has had his own firm for 5 years. He and his family do sugaring, logging, homesteading and he is committed to the town. He has strong mechanical skills and a mathematics background. He understands there are challenging issues the board deals with like vicious dogs and budgeting. He would be happy to be of service in this capacity. He would like to continue serving on the Energy Committee, if he were selected.
- Ryan Senna – He moved to town about a year ago. He is not sure if the Selectboard is the best fit but he wants to serve the town and interested in local government. He is going through fire training now and has been serving on the Fire Department for about 6 months. Professionally he does full range property maintenance in Williston. He wants to give back to his community.

The board thanked all the candidates who expressed interest and for taking the time to speak with the board. They will decide either later at this meeting or at the next regularly scheduled meeting and will be in touch with the candidates.

EV charging station rate

The board asked Jeff Dunham about the rate for the new station in the commuter lot. Jeff stated that \$1/hr is what the town committed to for the first year in the grant. There is a 5-yr maintenance contract. E. Cota said he is concerned about the maintenance costs in the future. He asked if we are only charging enough to charge the energy for the cars. Jeff said the costs would come into consideration after the five years are over (2024). Rebecca will check the settings on the meter and ensure the \$1/hr is set. K. Cousino said that in a year we will have a better sense of what the costs are and then can re-evaluate the fee as needed. N. Boss asked if the board can see a periodic usage report. Rebecca can provide these and will do quarterly. The board will revisit the question of fees in one year.

Current Business

Administrative updates

- The board discussed changing the next meeting due to the conflict with MAUSD meeting in Starksboro. The selectboard will move its meeting to 10/16 at 5:30 to avoid the conflict.

Budget planning should be a standing item on the next few agendas. The board requests an exported spreadsheet from NEMRC using all the current categories. Planning and projecting will be done in Excel spreadsheet.

Library floor repair

Chris Runcie and Catherine Goldsmith attended to discuss floor repairs needed in the kitchen area. It was tested in the past for asbestos and lead paint and it needs to be addressed. The group discussed various options to contain the asbestos and keep costs affordable. K. Tierney said one solution offered was vinyl over the entire area. Chris said a quote they received was to put down plywood and then vinyl over it. The Selectboard needs an estimate of costs. Catherine has an estimate from Countryside at \$1.50-3/SF and then installation. Total is \$2000 without the plywood or labor. There is also a problem transition into the kitchen, which would make a difference in the thickness. There are two doorways: one has a thick sill and then slopes into the kitchen. The doorways do not meet accessibility standards as they are too narrow, but this is not an area for the public. Chris asked if there is a process they should be following. The board said the bid process is not needed because the cost is under the threshold.

- Chris and staff will collect a couple of estimates and bring them back to the board.
- K. Tierney will check to ensure lead paint testing isn't necessary.

Beane/Rounds Rd issues re: gun fire and noise

Residents attending: Alison Gergley, Raymond Nirmeagh Leggett, Linda Gioti, Dennis Casey

This group came to speak with the Selectboard about complaints about safety and noise coming from a property in their neighborhood. It is a camp owned by Alan Palmer of Shelburne. L. Gionti last spoke with Mr. Palmer in 2013 and had asked him to move the shooting to a gun range. The camp and land is visited by family and relatives.

This group has concerns about safety – stray bullets, ricocheted bullets, etc. and the potential for neighbors to get hurt. They are also concerned about the stress of being subjected to semi-automatic gun fire for hours at a time. They stated that the ongoing shooting will occur over several weekends before hunting season and 5-6 weekends throughout the summer.

Alison Gergley and her husband live directly opposite the Palmer property. They have heard these sounds for 12 years. They feel the ongoing sounds of shooting are invasive emotionally and physically. She stated the elevation contribute to stray bullets having range to endanger neighbors. Bullets and sound don't adhere to property boundaries.

K. Cousino asked the distance from the Palmer property. Estimates 400' for Gergley, 300' for Gionti. N. Boss asked when the last conversation was with the Palmers. L. Gionti spoke to Alan Palmer in 2013. He stated that he shoots skeet and his sons come down and do target practice. K. Cousino asked if the police have been contacted. Yes, L. Gionti has called the State police with no follow up.

The board was presented with a written letter from N. Robinson, another neighbor who was unable to attend. (Letters were also submitted by L. Gionti and R. Leggett.)

R. Leggett read his letter to the board, referencing a weekend of activity on 8/2/19 including shooting for a couple of hours, semi-automatic weapon fire; use of a "cherry bomb" that produced a large, loud sound. He said there was rarely silence that weekend. There is an ongoing sound of bullets hitting metal targets and he described the effects of hearing repeated sounds. He stated he is a hunter himself and uses guns. This type of shooting is different, is for entertainment, and is a noise issue. He also said the steep hillside

makes the sound carry differently. The group has concerns about excessive noise, constant noise, and a fear for safety.

K. Cousino stated that the board hears and understands the concerns. They do not discount the experience they are having but there are limits on what the board can do. The board wants to focus on what they can help with. The town does not have the ability to enforce noise limits well, but there's a possibility of a zoning issue. The safety issues are a conversation with the police: they need to hear from people in order to assess the level of safety concern.

The board discussed at length the idea of a noise ordinance, which ultimately is difficult to enforce. The AC Sheriff doesn't have the capacity to serve on call. They cannot measure or take evidence for these types of complaints. The State police will not come out for the calls on noise unless there is a safety concern and even then there are capacity issues affecting how quickly a trooper may reach the area.

L. Gionti said Huntington has implemented a noise ordinance. Dennis Casey suggested having a personal conversation directly the landowners. A civil conversation and request may be the best path forward. N. Boss said the board wishes they had more methods for enforcement too.

R. Leggett would like a letter to be sent from the town. E. Cota suggested talking to the landowners and seeking a compromise. The group could make some reasonable requests that could mitigate noise trespass and address safety concerns. Shooting into sand bags or constructing a berm could help. The group will follow up as neighbors and keep in touch with the selectboard.

Selectboard Concerns:

- The board discussed the schedule for the fiscal audit. They will talk with the town auditors as part of the budget meetings and preparations for town meeting.
- The board discussed the need to find a new provider for snow removal for the town clerk's office and path to library since Peter Marsh has retired. The board will follow up with a few local folks and will put an inquiry on Front Porch Forum. The need is for snowblowing/shoveling of the paths to the doors of the town offices and to the library on the mornings when it snows and possibly 2nd visit during the day if a severe storm.

Motion: Nancy Boss made a motion to approve the warrants for bills and orders as presented by the Treasurer. Keegan Tierney 2nd.

Motion carried.

Back-up power for Town Office

Rebecca will post a request for bids in the Addison Independent for quotes for a 10-12kw backup generator, installed, with auto disconnect switch. The board has received two quotes so far and wants to move forward with a final decision soon.

Motion: Nancy Boss made a motion to offer the vacant Selectboard seat to Greg Hahr. Keegan Tierney 2nd.

Motion carried. (K. Cousino recused.)

Action steps:

- Board to notify interested candidates of decision on vacancy.
- Next meeting rescheduled for Wednesday, 10/16/19 at 5:30 p.m. at the Town Clerk's office

Motion to adjourn at 9 p.m.: Keegan Tierney made a motion and Nancy Boss 2nd.

Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Elder, SB Assistant