

Starksboro Selectboard
Minutes of 1/21/20
Unapproved

Board members present: Koran Cousino, Eric Cota, Greg Hahr, Nancy Boss

Unable to attend: Keegan Tierney

Others present: Tom Estey, Rebecca Elder, Dan Nugent, Dennis Casey, Amy McCormick, Robert Turner, Dan Dubenetsky

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

Changes/additions to the agenda: None

Visitor's Business

Dan Nugent requested that the Selectboard put a mechanism/policy in place to make sure that all SB items that may pertain to planning, building, zoning, land purchases/sales, etc. be reviewed by the Planning Commission and/or DRB for the purpose of providing the SB with their opinion prior to any decisions being made. Dennis Casey stated that he is hopeful that we can find a way to better communicate about current events between boards, so we can work together on things before the opportunity has passed. The PC wants to be helpful to the SB and can assist with research and fact-finding related to land use and planning projects. In town projects such as the Jerusalem Community Center proposal, the PC and DRB can provide preliminary guidance so that local bylaw requirements are known from the outset before taxpayer dollars are spent.

K.Cousino stated that SB has been working on the communication since the change to 5 members and the goal is to share information. The selectboard is juggling many projects on a regular basis.

Road Foreman's Report

- 79 plows to date; crew has used a lot of sand and salt; T. Porter is concerned about the salt budget at this point in the winter.
- New crew member E. Huestis has been on staff for 6 months. T. Porter and E. Cota will conduct a 6-month review conversation and report back to the selectboard.
- Parking Ban discussion – T. Porter proposed a draft in December. The board has not had time to consider it but will do so in February. T. Porter said there are several issues in town and would like to be able to issue warnings.
- One of the tandem trucks has been down for a few days, illustrating how important it was to keep the spare truck this time and not trade it in when the new tandem was purchased.
- T. Porter asked the selectboard to consider the future lease or purchase of an excavator and provided some research about the costs of the municipal lease to purchase option (7 year terms with buyout). The added requirements of Act 64 regarding digging and stone lining ditches have significantly increased the hours needed for an excavator each year.

Tax Sales – Amy McCormick

Delinquent Tax Collector Amy McCormick shared a list of 7 potential properties for tax sale this year. This was only a snapshot of those properties that owed back taxes over multiple years. Of those on the list, 5 are mobile homes in ACCT-owned mobile home parks. A. McCormick indicated that there were close to 25 more mobile homeowners in mobile home parks with back taxes. In the past, these have not sold when put up for tax sales because of the age and condition of the mobile homes. The town is left with a large bill in legal fees, etc. for the tax sale and no recourse to recoup the taxes. In the past, some of these taxes have been abated by the Board of Abatement and the cycle often begins again. A. McCormick suggests putting a few up for sale each year and the town consider buying them and removing the mobile homes. The SB needs further research at the State level and with legal guidance to know if this is a potential solution or if there are other solutions being used by other towns that we might

try. Dennis Casey offered that this may be an area that the Planning Commission can help with, by brainstorming some ideas as well as doing some of the research. The SB will revisit this in a month or so.

A. McCormick provided a list of penalties/interest and lawyer fees thru 12/31/19. She believes the Town needs to set precedent. The interest continues accruing every month.

Town Meeting Preparation with Dan Dubenetsky

K. Cousino presented a draft town meeting warning for review by the group. Dan Dubenetsky will invite the legislators to speak for 3 minutes each. K. Cousino will invite Edorah Frazer and the school board representatives.

Reserve Funds Review

Robert Turner has continued to work with the Board on improvements to the reserve fund schedules. They are designed to show the tax impact over time with a standard 4% increase. In fiscal year 25-26, there will be an issue with the reserve fund as multiple clustered purchases will cause the fund to run out of money. The SB with Robert's help worked to find a solution that will keep the fund stable for the next 10 years, when it will again need to be re-evaluated. The group reviewed the list of equipment, added the loader, and made some adjustments to the projected replacement schedule.

The SB continued to plug away at building and tweaking the budget so it can be added to the warning no later than Monday, 1/27/20. There were a couple questions that needed further research, including, payments for paving in FY18-19 and 19-20, as well as whether or not there was a carry-over surplus from last year that could be applied. R. Turner estimated \$10,0000 and will confirm with the Treasurer.

- The selectboard decided to have a Special Budget meeting on Friday, 1/24/20 at 5:30pm to finalize the budget and warning.

Jerusalem Community Center request

Due to the limits on time after the budget discussion, the selectboard decided to delay this conversation until the special meeting on Friday, 1/24/19.

Glebe land request

Motion: Eric Cota moved to authorize Koran Cousino to sign the Quit Claim Deed requested for 881 Russell Young Road. Nancy Boss 2nd.

Discussion: none

Motion carried.

Bills/Orders

Motion to approve the orders as presented by the Treasurer: Nancy Boss moved, Greg Hahr 2nd

Motion carried.

Motion to adjourn at 8:28 p.m.: Greg, Eric 2nd

Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Rebecca Elder
Selectboard Assistant