

Starksboro Selectboard meeting  
Minutes of March 24, 2020 (held via conf call)  
Unapproved

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**Board members present:** Koran Cousino, Nancy Boss, Eric Cota, Greg Hahr, John Painter  
**Others present:** Chuck Webber, Charlene Phelps, Tony Porter, Rebecca Elder

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

#### Changes/additions to the agenda:

1. Move emergency updates to first item.
2. Jerusalem Country Store liquor license review

#### Emergency Management Update

Charlene Phelps stated there will another COVID-19 (coronavirus) emergency response meeting tomorrow. Gov. Scott and President Trump will speak to the public tonight.

#### Suggestions for continued precautions at the office:

For now, Cheryl will continue to staff the office on an alternating schedule with Assistant Clerk Amy McCormick. Keeping the staff limited with only 1-2 people in office at a time is wise. Continue to use disinfecting wipes regularly, especially when anyone enters/leaves the office. Koran stated that she stopped at office to check in. Cheryl would prefer to discontinue allowing researcher appointments. Greg said these are important services to continue if there is a way it can be done safely. Many people will look to refinance their mortgages and research will be needed. A few ideas were discussed as possibilities including very limited hours, perhaps at the beginning and end of the day so allow for proper cleaning and limiting staff exposure. If anyone from the outside is coming in, staff should be wearing a mask, especially anyone in a higher risk category. Researchers who come for an appointment should be wearing masks and wash hands upon entry and before going to the research area (vault and copier). If an appointment is made and missed, then it must be rescheduled. No walk-in activity at this time. Appointment time(s) and length to be limited per the Town Clerk's instructions.

Emergency responders received a delivery today; no gowns were supplied. All available items are going to the hospitals first. Charlene will continue to acquire supplies for first responders as she can.

The Selectboard wants to ensure employees know that it is up to them if they are working or not. Charlene and Koran will follow up with Cheryl.

#### Road Foreman Update

1. **NRCS grant opportunity** – This USDA/NRCS grant offers assistance with removal of woody debris, but the work necessary is out of the town's right of way. It is logistically difficult to implement with the town's current staff and admin management capacity. This grant and the work would involve paperwork and coordination with landowners/neighbors, work crew, contractors/equipment, etc. Removing the woody debris will help, but it won't solve the problem of the recurring flooding in that area.
  - a. Eric suggested the town could consider hiring a general contractor to oversee the entire project. Is there someone locally who would do this project and what might it cost? The GC would need to be fully insured and the town would provide a scope of work.
  - b. Board members conducted a straw vote on the two locations:

*Hillsboro Rd to Ireland Rd project* (removing woody debris) – 3 members were in favor exploring the idea of hiring a contractor. Concerns include the very limited time to find a contractor and, given the current stay-at-home order, reduced staff capacity, and posting requirements for the open bidding process. Rebecca will ask NRCS if an extension is possible. Acceptance of grant must be completed by May 1 and work must be completed by Oct. 1.

*Stokes Hill project* (armoring the bank and culvert with Big Hollow Road) – All board members were in favor of accepting grant funds for this segment and its limited project scope.

2. MRPG grant report – Due on Apr. 1. Tony will look for last year's report as a guide. The report is one page.

**Motion:** Nancy Boss made a motion to authorize Koran Cousino to sign the MRPG grant report when it is completed for submission. Greg Hahr 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Motion carried.**

Koran asked Tony Porter about the status of any public works mutual aid agreements for the town. If any of our 3 crew members got sick, do we have a back-up system? Tony explained this is already in place through all of Addison County. The same is true in Chittenden County. If the need arises the road crews from neighboring town will step up and do what they need to do to support each other. The road foremen and commissioners meet regularly and are in touch throughout this current situation.

Tony asked for clarification about road crew staff, essential worker status, and the Governor's stay at home order. Koran and Rebecca are getting more information from the VT Dept of Labor and VLCT and that will be shared with town staff as it becomes available. For now, only essential road work should be done. It is mud season and roads will continue to need maintenance to keep them functional for all emergency management and public services. Any projects that can be delayed should be.

The board discussed cleaning services for the town buildings and requested that no additional people come into the garage or town office at this time. Cleaning will be suspended for all locations until further notice. Rebecca will notify the cleaning staff of this change.

### Animal Control Update

ACO Chuck Webber gave an update on the current situation with the dogs running at large from the Trombley property. Follow up has moved slowly since complaint was filed. The sheriff and State police assisted with the complaint on March 16. The dogs were removed from Starksboro by the owner at that time. Since then, the ACO has issued a warrant based on three separate incident reports from neighbors.

Since the dogs are not currently in town, further action is not likely by the Sheriff. If another complaint is received, then the ACO will follow up with the Sheriff. John Painter asked if there was an obligation for the town to notify another town about the dogs' whereabouts. At this time, the exact location of the dogs is not known and there is no vicious dog complaint. Nancy Boss will follow up with the complainants after tonight's meeting regarding the process going forward and what steps will be taken. All calls and complaints should be directed to ACO Chuck Webber.

Rebecca relayed information from her with attorney Kevin Kite about the warrant language, potential notice of violation, and the new town ordinance. It would be advisable to get additional suggestions from Jim Carroll and K. Kite about how to improve the ordinance to ensure clarity about process. Rebecca will follow up on a process for revision. The board would like to see some recently updated town ordinances that the town attorneys see as effective and enforceable.

The town continues to have the problem that the dogs cannot be housed in Starksboro and therefore boarding and kennel fees will accumulate for any dogs that must be impounded.

### **Review of mowing bids**

Koran reviewed the mowing bid process and requirements. For the past several years, Scenic Valley has done the work at the town clerk's office, Post Office and food shelf buildings, and town garage. There are separate contracts for Cota field and for the cemeteries throughout town. The Cota field mowing has been on contract for the past 3 years at \$2995. A new contract is needed and a few bids were received.

It is important that everyone who works for the town have liability insurance or an accepted waiver of liability in place. Koran asked Rebecca will talk with VLCT further about insurance requirements and waivers for subcontractors. Is there any additional insurance that PACIF offers that would cover subcontractors for smaller, limited jobs? The board will table consideration of mowing contracts until the next meeting pending new information.

### **Maintenance updates:**

1. Town Clerk's office – none
2. Post Office – Roof replacement: Rebecca requested a quote for standing seam roof from Murphy's Metals. They asked if union wages would need to be paid. The post office lease needs to be reviewed to see if there are requirements for work done on the town-owned, federally-leased building. Ask town clerk to review lease. Koran asked if the roof work can wait for Murphy's to fit into their schedule (potentially Fall 2020) or should other options be explored. Eric said the contract should include a finish date with a penalty for exceeded the due date. Rebecca will get quotes for a shingle roof replacement to compare and if that could be done earlier in the year. Given the expected life of the building, is standing seam needed? Shingle roof life is 20 years. Discuss further at the next meeting.
3. Sign in PO office lot – the electric has been disconnected from the old sign. It can now be removed safely. A replacement would be a nice addition for the town to expand the area for posting information. This may be a project the Eagle Scouts would be interested in along with the town entryway signs on Route 116. Rebecca will contact Scott DeBaise to see if the troop would be interested.
4. Need to do a tour of the town buildings – Before the selectboard retreat, the board would like to take a tour of town buildings and talk with the people who know best what work is needed. It would be helpful to know for planning and budgeting.

Treasurer Celine Coon asked the board via email about the financial picture for the rest of the current budget year and spending priorities and/or areas to cut back given the current pandemic and financial circumstances. Board members agreed there are a lot of unknowable pieces to the financial picture. Koran will follow up with Celine and ask if she has suggestions for a modified spending plan. Will cash flow be an issue and/or will borrowing need to be considered? Will tax revenue to be affected? The town may need to anticipate a higher delinquent tax list if the pandemic continues. Greg said the country is likely facing significant challenges and possibly a recession. If people are unable to make rent and mortgage payments, they will be looking for payment relief. This can create a longer term issue that could eventually affect property tax payments. It may take a while for people to get back on their feet. Are there budget items the treasurer would recommend to put on hold? The board has made the budget but the staff implements the plans. All departments should examine current spending and look for places to save.

### **Open Meeting Law and future meetings during the stay-at-home order:**

This meeting is being conducted via conference call through the local phone company. The legislature is considering passing temporary authorization for municipalities to conduct meetings via phone/video conference without the requirement for a physical location.

Rebecca asked if the board would prefer to use a video conference service. The group agreed to continue using telephone conference call for now with the option to switch to a video platform such as ZOOM or Skype for Business in the future if desired.

#### Jerusalem Country Store Liquor license review

**Motion:** Nancy Boss made a motion to approve the liquor license application/renewal for the Jerusalem Country Store and authorize Koran Cousino to sign the application. Greg Hahr second.

**Motion carried.**

#### Homeward Bound contract

The contract for housing animals at Homeward Bound is limited to strays only. The town has entered a contract every year but has never used the service due to lack of need. Homeward Bound focuses its effort to reunite strays with owners. The board members agreed that this service is not needed and the contract would not be signed for the coming year.

Appointment of AC Solid Waste district representative: Rebecca will contact Susan Reit de Salas to ask if she is interested in continuing in the role. If not, position will be advertised to the public on FPF and the website.

#### Warrants/Bills/Orders

**Motion:** Eric Cota made a motion to approve the warrants for bills, orders, and payroll as presented by the Treasurer. Greg Hahr second.

**Motion carried.**

**Motion:** Greg Hahr made a motion to authorize Koran Cousino and Nancy Boss to sign the warrants. Eric Cota second.

**Motion carried.**

#### Review of Minutes

**Motion:** Nancy Boss made a motion to approve the minutes of March 10, 2020 as presented. Eric Cota second.

**Motion carried.** John Painter and Greg Hahr abstained.

**Motion:** Nancy Boss made a motion to approve the minutes of March 16, 2020 as presented. John Painter second.

**Motion carried.** Greg Hahr abstained.

**Motion:** Greg Hahr made a motion to adjourn at 7:40 p.m. Eric Cota second.

**Motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Elder  
SB Assistant

**Next meeting:** Tuesday, April 7, 2020 at 5:30 via conference call