

Starksboro Selectboard meeting
April 21, 2020 Minutes
Held via conference call
Unapproved

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

The meeting was opened by Chair Koran Cousino at 5:30 p.m. The meeting was conducted via audio conference call with information provided to the public for the ability to participate. She began by reading the following statement about why the meetings are being held this way:

As Chair of the Starksboro Selectboard, I find that, 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 to this meeting. However, in accordance with the temporary amendments to the Open Meeting Law, I confirm that we are:

- a) *Providing public access to the meeting by telephone conference call, with additional access offered through video conference means for future meetings. We are using GoToMeeting for this remote meeting with ability to access via phone or computer. All members of the Selectboard have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through this platform and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if desired, participate in this meeting by speaking up during the call and being recognized by the Chair;*
- b) *Providing public notice of instructions for accessing the meeting. We previously gave notice to the public of the necessary information for accessing this meeting, including how to access the meeting using telephone means in our posted meeting agenda. Instructions have also been provided on the town website at: www.starksborovt.org.*
- c) *Providing a mechanism for the public to alert the public body during the meeting if there are problems with access. If anybody has a problem, please contact Rebecca Elder via phone or text at (802) 917-4425; and*
- d) *Continuing the meeting if necessary. In the event the public is unable to access this meeting, it will be continued to a time and place certain.*

Please note that all votes taken during this meeting that are not unanimous will be done by roll call vote, in accordance with the law.

Let's start the meeting by taking a roll call attendance of all members participating in the meeting. All members of the board were present. Attendees are listed above.

Review of agenda for additions or adjustments: NONE

Road Foreman report

- Tony reports that the roads are coming along nicely from mud season issues.
- Tony has questions about money and allocating current resources. The emergency culvert budget took a big hit from the Halloween 2019 storm. These costs may need to be covered from the emergency reserve as they were unexpected repairs for which other funding sources don't exist and which must be done. Greg and John said this would likely be an appropriate use of those funds.
- The board will consider a motion at a future meeting when the amount needed for repairs is known. Celine asked if payroll expenses should be included. Tony said not for this project.

- The emergency reserve balance is \$141K. Celine noted that a bank loan would also be possible as an option while any grant payments were in process but not yet received.

Tony asked for clarification about cleaning culverts and work associated. Much of the work is from the effects from the Halloween storm. He is considering renting an excavator because he doesn't have the funds to hire out the work and doesn't see those funds becoming available soon.

ACCD guidance – Road crew should do as little as possible. Tony and Koran spoke last week and were going to pull the crew but then the Governor's instructions on Friday allowed the crew to continue. The crew can resume work as they were doing before. Everyone should have masks with them in public. No more than 2 people are allowed in a vehicle.

FEMA grant update – Rebecca has been doing the administrative work and communicating with the FEMA project manager. Tony gathered the first round of paperwork which has been submitted on the portal. Tony and Rebecca have participated in two calls thus far. FEMA is still not providing an answer on the Brown Hill East project. Otter Creek Engineering has completed the study on Ben Roberts Rd but Tony has not received it yet. FEMA recommended getting a similar study for the Brown Hill East project.

Damages to Cota field and the parking area may be eligible for FEMA funding. The board supported adding Cota field repairs to the list of work submitted. Celine asked if the Cota field footbridge would qualify for any repairs. It is a town asset that was damaged in the flood and therefore will be added to the list to discuss with FEMA.

NRCS grant – Per Tony's conversation with NRCS, equipment is allowed to help with the debris removal. There will not be a site specific determination from Jaron at the State until he is able to make a site visit. Eric said the grant funds won't allow for a lot of work. John asked if the town did not accept this grant, if there were other options to get in there and do the work needed. Koran said there is not another option because it isn't in the town's ROW. Though this grant won't cover everything needed, it will be better than nothing. Greg agreed that this will allow the Town to get as much done as possible at this time. FEMA funds will cover the work that is in the Town's ROW. The matching 25% could come out of the emergency reserve funds.

Motion: Nancy Boss made a motion to accept the USDA NRCS EWP-5038 grant and to authorize Eric Cota to sign on behalf of the Selectboard for the Town of Starksboro. John Painter second.

Discussion: The grant covers work in the Hillsboro to Ireland Road area and Stokes Hill Road.

Motion carried unanimously.

Auditors' Report

Auditors Robert Turner and Laurie Webber attended the meeting. Robert has been working on a format for the monthly budget vs. actual report in an easily-digestible view that can help the Selectboard with its work. He plans to do regular updates and for this to be a tool that someone else, either a board member or SB assistant, who update in the future as needed. It is a tool for the board and Robert is looking for feedback. The excel spreadsheet contains a pivot table which allows one to view information in summary or detailed view. Robert said he has had productive conversations with Celine, Rebecca, and the new auditors in the past couple of weeks re: financial systems, reporting, training, etc.

Koran said the new format is user friendly, the information is easy to see, and she would be grateful to have it monthly. Greg agreed and said the format helps the board focus on variances. John concurred. Robert said he would like to see this tool used. He suggested one or more board member(s) get to know how to use the spreadsheet. There are a number of items that need more interpretation. In general, board members will have the ability to see where the budget stands each month and be able to dig deeper. Some accounting issues remain such as the problem with NEMRC designation of Medicare expenses for both the employee and employer. Celine spoke with NEMRC about it in January but they haven't made any changes to it yet. She is hoping it will be straightened out for the next fiscal year.

Laurie Webber and Tom Payeur are newly elected auditors. They had an informal meeting about training and the big picture of the auditing role and the accounting system.

Capital budgeting and equipment funds – These are trailing downward and the board needs to address the 2028 timeframe in this year’s budget. The capital budgeting worksheets from town report are a good place to start. Robert suggests talking with Tony Porter about timelines for equipment replacement, what are the reasonable rates to be for loans, and where can timing be adjusted.

In reading the auditor’s manual, Robert was reminded that the Town needs a Treasurer’s manual. Celine had composed on prior to NEMRC transition. Updating it will be good to focus on for the Treasurer and the new auditors. They will start with the existing manual and what needs to be updated, who will do what, and document procedures.

Account Reconciliation – Robert is looking at automating some of the scanning that Rebecca is doing for the warrants for Board review. They would like to create a searchable database or system for viewing past approved orders.

Koran said the board should schedule the conversation with Tony soon so that they are well prepared before November budgeting. The Board will decide which member(s) will take the lead on this project.

Emergency Management Updates

Most of the updates have been given in conversations above. Charlene continues to participate in 3-5 emergency preparedness related calls each week and is sending information to the town office on a regular basis. She emphasized it is important to document everything related to this emergency in case the Town needs to get reimbursement for disaster related expenses. Per the Governor’s revised order, she wants to make sure PPEs are available for staff and road crew.

Koran asked if the fire dept has enough PPE—Charlene will check with Tom. Charlene has ordered 300 PPE and there are people making them across the state. Rebecca participated in the FEMA emergency declaration informational call. The board asked Rebecca to sign up for the FEMA declaration for COVID-19 related funding for the Town. These funds are last resort, if other funding streams do not cover expenses.

Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)

The board did a preliminary review of the COOP draft. Rebecca will review the current local Hazard Mitigation Plan and see if there are any other items to add from that document. Charlene will find out what the next formal step is for the COOP and/or whether it requires adoption and filing with VT Emergency Management (VEM). Rebecca will ask Tom Estey to review and add any needed information for the Fire Department.

Administrative Updates

1. **Electronic meetings:** The Selectboard will now use GoToMeeting for this and future teleconference and video conference meetings that require two methods of access (phone and video). Rebecca set up a town account. Access can be as simple as a phone call; users can log in on a computer or smart phone and participate with audio and video.
2. **Town email address:** Rebecca suggested that the board consider creating town email addresses for the auditors and possibly for the Development Review Board members. The auditors need a shared space for some auditing materials and resources. They are also should be using an email address that is dedicated to town business and separate from personal email inboxes. The DRB functions in a quasi-judicial capacity and receives information on applications via email. Especially in light of the current social distancing needs, meetings and application review may need to be conducted electronically and having town-sponsored email addresses is advised. Rebecca will bring information about costs and options to the next meeting.

Building & maintenance

- **Town Clerk’s office back-up generator:** Eric spoke with Tim Bouvier at Jackman’s about the purchase and installation. The vendor no longer makes the 11kW and instead offers either 10 or 13 kW. It was advised to increase capacity, which is \$400 more than original quoted price. Overall cost is still within the

amount approved by the board previously. Eric proceeded with the order and equipment should arrive in roughly 10 days. Jackmans will contact us for installation date.

- **Lister's office floor:** Nancy will communicate with Mark Whitcomb to coordinate timing for the Lister floor work including moving of the furniture and having the space available for work (to be done Friday-Sunday in May).
- **Post office roof replacement:** Rebecca requested quotes for asphalt shingle roof replacement from two local contractors. One was received from McElwain Contracting. The board asked to see at least 2 other quotes to compare and to inquire if Murphy's Metals would be able to do the work in 2020.
- **Cota field footbridge:** Eric boarded up the bridge entrance and put up signs to prevent people from crossing.
- Celine noted there is \$10K available in the major maintenance category for the current fiscal year. This will likely be used up on the Lister's office floor and the PO roof.
- Nancy requested that the board take a tour of the town buildings in the future so all board members can be familiar with the needs and see buildings in person. To be toured: Old town office (food shelf/pottery studio), post office, Library, Jerusalem Schoolhouse, town garage.

Selectboard concerns:

Wade Acker Waste Management inquired about the town's arrangements for waste and recycling removal. He would like to bid in the future. Koran forwarded the request to Jennifer Turner for her input. Acker will be added to the next agenda and Jennifer will participate in the discussion.

Celine will provide the board with a summary of the current agreements with Moose Rubbish and Casella, prices for removal and container rental, and other associated questions and information (insurance coverage). Celine noted that town no longer breaks even on the costs because there is no market for recyclables at this time. The town did purchase the recycling roll-off. Rebecca will invite Wade Acker to the next meeting.

Action Items:

Warrants for Bills and orders

The warrants were scanned and sent to the board electronically for review.

Motion: Nancy Boss made a motion to approve the warrants to pay the bills and orders as presented by the Treasurer. Eric Cota second. **Motion carried unanimously.**

Minutes of 4/7/20

Motion: Eric Cota made a motion to approve the minutes of 4/7/20. Greg Hahr second.

Motion carried unanimously.

Motion to adjourn at 7:35 p.m.: Greg Hahr moved, Eric Cota second.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Elder
SB Assistant

Next meeting: Tuesday, May 5, 2020 at 5:30 – to be held via phone/video conference on GoToMeeting