

**Town of Starksboro
Selectboard Meeting minutes
January 16, 2018
DRAFT**

PRESENT: Susan Jefferies, Peter Marsh, Tony Porter, Keegan Tierney, Koran Cousino
Rebecca Elder (SB assistant)

VISITORS: Tom Estey, Dana Smith, Heather Ragsdale, Dan Dubenetsky, Louis DuPont

The meeting was called to order at 5:40 p.m.

Road foreman report:

- Frozen culverts during latest storm – 6 places that needed attention throughout town
- Brown Hill W Rd. – some issues with water flow and flooding
- Paving reserve – \$40K to be budgeted again
- Utility truck request – higher GVW, Cost ±\$167,000
- New pick up request in separate Article – Cost ±\$45,000 truck for road crew use; to include plow and sander, gas engine.
- T. Porter: it would be useful to arrange for a line of credit at Jerusalem Store to allow for last minute gas fill ups when needed by road crew during storms, etc.
- Heat pump maintenance at town garage – New England Air serviced and said the set up was done incorrectly (hooked up for natural gas instead of LP; was wrong this whole time); bill has come in and requires more inquiry.
- Grant application – Jack stands needed; will consider if anything else is needed this year
- Bike races: two requests received. The SB asked for Tom's input on whether to allow.
 - Vermont Gran Fondo: Has been done in the past.
 - Outdoor Gear Exchange race: in the Fall

Motion: Peter Marsh moved and Keegan Tierney seconded the motion to approve use of town roads for the Grand Fondo and the OGE bike races in 2018. **Vote:** All in favor.

Animal Control

Dog issue #1

Animal Control Officer Heather Ragsdale attended as well as South Starksboro resident Dana Smith. Susan Jefferies recused herself from this portion of the meeting. Vice-chair Tony Porter assumed role of chair. H. Ragsdale asked to hear from the animal's owner, Dana Smith.

D. Smith would like to know who has been bitten by his dog. He asked if the person(s) were treated and where and if photos of injuries exist. H. Ragsdale noted that complaints were received including that the dog nipped a person in the back of the leg near Jerusalem Road. D. Smith stated that he wasn't aware of biting and wants proof. H. Ragsdale stated that regardless of the alleged bite, the Town of Starksboro has a leash law. The dog has been reported to be running at large. That's the central issue. The town and animal control officer do not want to see this situation escalate and result in injuries.

T. Porter has reviewed the dog ordinance. He asked for a review of steps that have been taken thus far:

- H. Ragsdale received complaints;
- Followed up by making contact with the dog owner, D. Smith, through phone calls and attempted visits to his home (11/24). During one attempt, the animal control officer left an official yellow hang tag with explanation of warning and complaints. A letter was then sent explaining next steps if violation continues.

Per animal control ordinance, a citation should have been issued after the initial complaints. Charged would have accrued. First offense = \$37 (\$50 if proceeding to court); Second offense = \$56; Third offense = \$75; Fourth offense = \$112

The dog is running at large in the neighborhood in violation of the leash law. The SB doesn't want to see anyone getting chased, bitten, or nipped; does not want a child getting hurt. T. Porter stated that the law is clear, and the owner must keep dog on his own property and follow the law. Dog is registered. A ticket (citation) was issued for the first offense.

P. Marsh said the SB hopes this complaint can be resolved peacefully and asked D. Smith to keep the dog at home. T. Porter emphasized that if circumstances lead to this point again, the animal control officer will send another letter and a hearing would be necessary. In such a hearing, the animal owner would have an allotted time to present a defense. The SB noted that if another letter is sent, the recipient will have to submit a written request for a hearing within 10 days. D. Smith received his ticket and departed.

The SB instructed that photo documentation should be taken of any incidents going forward. If a call or complaint comes in, document all details. According to the ordinance, a person(s) should make a complaint to the town in writing, with their own names, info, and description of the incident and the animal(s) involved. If the dog is found off the owner's property, it can be picked up and/or impounded. If there is another incident with a bite/attempted bit, the animal can be picked up immediately. There is a separate process for dogs "running at large."

Dog issue #2 – Recent dog fight on Jim Dwire Road. One dog was attacked by two other dogs which resulted in significant vet bills and recovery time for the animal. H. Ragsdale is setting up meeting with the owners of the dogs and mediating a reasonable way to move forward. The dogs will not be loose in the neighborhood. The attack started on their property and ended up on the road.

Minutes of 12/14/17

Motion: Tony Porter moved and Koran Cousino seconded the motion to approve the minutes of 12/14/17. **Vote:** All in favor.

Minutes of 1/2/18

Motion: Koran Cousino moved and Peter Marsh seconded the motion to approve the minutes of 1/2/18. **Vote:** All in favor.

Town Meeting planning

This year's town meeting with present new challenges as the school board portion has changed as a result of Act 46 and school district consolidation. Dan Dubenetsky is still willing to serve as moderator and could be elected from the floor should such a need arise. However, there is no vote needed on the school warning.

Land swap – The Robinson board made the decision to proceed with the swap. The district's attorney was consulted by the Superintendent's office and Jim Runcie is representing the Town's interest. No vote is needed for approval, however, the Selectboard wanted to have the discussion with townspeople now. The Town will have more control by retaining the land with the solar trackers and offering an easement to the school for the energy needed.

Even though the school board disbands on July 1, the voters still have to elect a director to fulfill duties.

Louis DuPont said he hopes to preserve the chance to hear from the administration and board members even if the voters do not have to cast a ballot. Principal Edorah Frazer will give a summary of the year at Robinson Elementary. Representatives from the current Robinson school board will be present to report on the past year and answer questions about the future.

Palmer Grievance update

Currently the case is in discovery. Attorney Jim Carroll is representing the Town and communicating with the Palmers' attorney. Documentation is due 2/6, most from the listers but some other correspondence needed. Rebecca Elder to work with Amy McCormick to provide what is needed for discovery. First, present all the Town's documentation (February); next round of discovery in April; if case proceeds to court, would take place in the fall of 2018. First step is to gather information on other land-locked properties and establish how the valuations were derived. Next an appraisal will be needed by the town. This information will inform the next stage of communication with Mr. Palmer.

Motion: Tony Porter moved and Susan Jefferies seconded the motion to authorize Peter Marsh as the authorized signer for any/all responses and documents related to the Palmer grievance.

Vote: All in favor (4/0). Peter Marsh abstained.

Personnel Policy Review

The policy review was prompted by the need to discuss information on page 8 regarding medical insurance coverage for town employees. The first issue is whether to adjust the waiting period length, which is currently 60 days. The second issue is clarification of policy covered for town employees.

Motion: Tony Porter moved and Keegan Tierney seconded the motion to change the policy from 60-day to 30-day waiting period for the start of employee benefits.

Vote: All in favor.

Motion: Koran Cousino moved and Peter Marsh seconded the motion to approve the Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Vermont Standard Gold plan for full-time employees at 100% of cost (prorated for part-time).

Vote: All in favor (4/0). Tony Porter abstained.

For budget purposes, the SB will increase the insurance expense line given annual cost increases as well as changes in staff coverage that are expected (i.e. Medicare, supplemental plans, family member coverage, anticipated retirements and new hires).

- Future action: Personnel policy – cue up for full review in late March.

Budget Review

***A special meeting is needed to finalize the budget.

Meeting to be warned for: Tues, 1/23/18 – 4:45 pm at Town office. ***

S. Jefferies will distribute another budget draft for review for 1/23 meeting. She has continued to find issues that required research and corrections. The auditors will attend the meeting next week to discuss their findings. Plenty of problems with the outside audit were found. In addition, the town garage fund reconciliation was complex and needs to be completed. Susan condensed the garage fund financials to a one sheet summary. Due to an error in the reporting of last year's Emergency Fund, a lot of numbers were incorrect in the last report and that caused a chain reaction. With Susan's departure from the Selectboard in March, there will be a gap in financial accounting skills. The board is considering what steps might be taken to ensure appropriate oversight including the possibility of training a bookkeeper. If the town were to change to a fund accounting system and use NEMRC software, there would be one-time software acquisition costs of \$2000/each for modules.

At least 5 modules would be needed including: payables, purchase orders, receivables, payroll, tax administration. Town would need to budget \$10K for the system + \$1200/yr for maintenance software upgrades. Other costs and possible computer upgrades to be determined.

Could incremental steps be taken such as using a payroll service? Yes, however most services are not equipped to handle employees with more than 2-3 pay rates/multiple responsibilities.

Town report narrative summary: Susan will start the narrative from the Selectboard, Rebecca to edit

Cleaning service will be needed as of March 1 – current cleaner has given notice. Rebecca to follow up with various leads and bring information back to the SB for decision.

DRB compensation

Tony talked to a few board members regarding the recent extra work in the absence of a zoning administrator. \$75 for findings was reasonable and will be added to the next quarterly pay = \$150 total

Motion: Tony Porter moved and Peter Marsh seconded the motion to approve payment of \$150 to Marjorie Dickstein for preparation of findings for a DRB hearing. **Vote:** All in favor

Appointment of Zoning Administrator

Motion: Tony Porter moved and Koran Cousino seconded the motion to approve the appointment of Rebecca Elder as the Zoning Administrator of the Town of Starksboro per §4448.

Vote: All in favor

Current Business

- Thacher Hurd – Caitlin Cusack is taking over for Adam Piper as the Vermont Land Trust (VLT) contact for the Town going forward. GMP has put out stakes where poles will go. S. Jefferies still has concerns about the GMP standard easement: 24 ft of clearance issue and access to easement area. Town may not want to give up rights to access a working gravel pit. VLT is fine with the easement as is. It is up to the Town to approve the location and then to approve the agreement – fight with GMP.
- Administrative updates – Rebecca has continued to collect information about current computer systems used at the office. She plans to visit the New Haven office to learn about how their system is set up. Tech assessment in February.

Bills/Orders

Motion: Peter Marsh moved and Tony Porter seconded the motion to approve the Bills and Orders as presented. **Vote:** All in favor.

Mail – certified letter from ACRPC received.

Town Report: ADD Food Shelf Article for the warning – request for \$2000 (peter said perhaps we can include that food shelf is now accessible)

Maintenance Updates

- Lights not yet fixed in the Post Office – Peter to contact Don McCormick
- Painting in town office: Lanny Smith– will put us on his schedule for summer
- Smoke detector in basement – battery replaced; Peter to check all as well as radon detectors
- Replaced door handle in library
- Generator – Reviewed email from Andy Young (Robinson Elem.); new battery was purchased; requested an electrician to train a few people on how to use the operational switch. Tom Adams

will come in the near future. Andy reported complaints from the school that staff members could smell fumes in the school. The town should maintain and oversee service on the generator. Tony to coordinate what is needed.

Other news: Tom Estey and Norm Cota are to be inducted as lifetime members of the Addison Co Firefighters at the meeting on January 17, 2018. As a past president, Tom had already received this honor previously.

Motion: Tony Porter moved and Keegan Tierney seconded the motion to adjourn at 8:15 p.m.

Vote. All in favor

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca T. Elder
Selectboard Assistant

Approved X/X/18