



**Town of Whitingham
Office of the Selectboard**

MINUTES OF JANUARY 13, 2021

These Minutes are considered a DRAFT until accepted into the public record (with any corrections noted) at a future meeting of the Whitingham Selectboard.

The Whitingham Selectboard held a regular meeting at 6:30pm in the dining hall of the Whitingham Municipal Center on Wednesday, January 13, 2021.

Selectboard members present: Wayne Wood, Scott Reed, Craig Hammer, and Chris Walling. Phil Edelstein attended remotely.

Others present: Gig Zboray, Selectboard Office Administrator; and Almira Aekus, Treasurer.

Others attending remotely: Richard Lemaire and Marshall Dix, residents; Chris Lynch of Matrix Design; Paul Giuliani, bond counsel.

Call to Order. Additions or Changes to Agenda

Wayne Wood called the meeting to order at 6:30pm reading the remote meeting script. There were a few changes to the agenda since it was posted.

Sewer: review preliminary bond documents, discuss with bond council

The process for bonding comes right out of state statute. The reason for a separate warning is that it has different posting requirements from the warning required for Town Meeting. After the vote there is a 30-day rescission period in which 10% of the voters could petition to rescind the action taken. Informational hearing must be held within 10 days before the vote. Due to the pandemic bond counsel suggested encouraging early and absentee ballots to discourage congregating at the polling place on March 2nd.

We may need interim financing to temporarily borrow money from the town bank for bond anticipation. We'd borrow money to pay the construction invoices that would be repaid by the bond. Ms. Aekus says that should be no problem.

Declaration of Official Intent should be adopted by the Selectboard, if the need arises to make an advance to pay the sewer project and then reimburse the town for that advance. The Resolution should also be adopted, and the board must approve the Warning. Gig will change the documents to include Selectboard signatures.

By law, the sewer rates must pay debt service, operations and maintenance, and capital reserves of the sewer department. No one will buy sewer revenue bonds in Vermont. This is a general obligation bond; the security is full faith and credit of the town (but will be paid by the sewer users only). If individual sewer users don't pay their bill their property will be sold at tax sale.

The sewer system benefits every property in the town by insulating the town as a whole from liability of wastewater pollution.

The 100% wrap-up meeting with the engineers and State officials is scheduled for January 19th.

The engineers have provided bidding documents for our review before the project goes out for construction bid (after a positive bond vote at Town Meeting).

Hearing of visitors (for concerns not on the agenda)

Chris Lynch of Matrix Design has concerns that he wanted to make sure the Selectboard was aware of. Matrix put forth a proposal to the town about 1.5 years ago to design, build and operate a fiber to the home network mostly at their expense. The town could purchase the network after 3 years of operation. Matrix supports the efforts of the CUD but fear lack of action will mean that the Matrix offer cannot stay on the table indefinitely. Mr. Lynch is concerned that the offer will not be available when the CUD is ready to move forward. Matrix would like a vote by the residents at town meeting or a special town meeting on their proposal. The town would have to take a loan from VEDA; the repayment of the loan would come from the users. Mr. Lynch noted that the town would be paying for the “make ready process” (\$811,350) and a place to house the network electronics (\$100,000). Gig noted her opposition to including it on the warning for Town Meeting in March, it was then agreed that Mr. Lynch will send an updated proposal and we will likely host a special town meeting in the spring on the topic.

Highway

Paving for 2021

Mr. Janovsky was not available to meet tonight. He plans to shim and topcoat part of Gates Pond Road, Collins Road, Hebard Hill Road and Reed Hill Road.

He would also like to pave Parsons Road from the intersection of Gates Pond Road to Stonehouse Road which is approximately 4,000 feet. Parsons Road has caused the Highway Department and area residents many headaches over the years because of the above normal mud amounts. It eats a lot of gravel, puts excess wear and tear on the equipment and requires many man hours. Mr. Janovsky would like the Selectboard to notify the residents on Parsons and Stonehouse Roads of the intent to pave and have an agenda item at a Selectboard meeting in February to hear from the residents regarding their thoughts on the paving of Parsons Road.

The Selectboard members all agreed that they will include a public hearing of concerns regarding the proposed paving Parsons Road from Gates Pond to Stonehouse Roads in February.

Review and approve annual Certificate of Highway Mileage usually we have no changes on this form but in 2020 we discontinued Sprague Brook Road, reclassified Head of Pond Road from a Class 4 to Class 3 and laid out a new highway at the entrance to the Municipal Center. The board reviewed and signed the Certificate of Highway Mileage for the year ending February 10, 2021 as well as the Certification of Completion and Opening of a Highway for

Public Travel which is required for the new “road” at the Municipal Center. **A motion was made by Scott Reed to sign the Certificate of Highway Mileage and the Certificate of Completion and Opening of a Highway for Public Travel, seconded by Chris Walling, all in favor.**

Backhoe status: On Monday Mr. Janovsky was informed that the trucking of the backhoe got “all messed up” due to the holidays and year end. It will be “showing up” in Richmond. We were expecting it to be shipped to Albany. There has been no payment made on the backhoe yet. The big concern is the lifespan of the old backhoe this new one is replacing.

Fire Department: “new” fire truck status, discuss bid request to sell old truck

After some discussion of other discussion in August the Selectboard agreed that Mr. Janovsky should put the old fire truck out to bid seeking a minimum of \$2,000, using a sealed bid process, the winning bidder can claim the truck after the new truck is put in service.

Transfer Station:

Final public discussion of the pre-approved Solid Waste Implementation Plan (SWIP) and adoption

No public comments. **A motion was made by Chris Walling to adopt the updated Solid Waste Implementation Plan for the five-year period January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2026, seconded by Scott Reed, all in favor.**

Budget work for 21/22

Retirement increased from 6% to 6.25%, the Parks budget was increased by \$1,500 for flowers. Highway revenues (state aid) was increased. The tax rate will likely be between .75 and .76 cents.

A motion was made by Scott Reed to accept the proposed budget for fiscal year July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022 of \$651,889.00 of which \$385,745.00 to be raised in taxes, the balance to be offset by \$200,044.00 in anticipated revenues and \$66,100.00 appropriated from prior year’s fund balance, seconded by Craig Hammer, all in favor.

A motion was made by Chris Walling to accept the proposed Highway budget for fiscal year July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022 of \$1,401,207.00 of which \$1,182,611.00 to be raised in taxes, the balance to be offset in \$129,144.00 in anticipated revenues and \$89,452.00 appropriated from prior year’s fund balance, seconded by Wayne W. Wood, all in favor.

Town Report: discuss various reports to be included

The pandemic will be well covered in Town Report, we will add a new page at the very beginning of the report to note changes to Town Meeting and a new report called “Corona Virus / COVID-19 Worldwide Pandemic which is a bit of history of how we handled the virus throughout the year and the changes/adjustments we were forced to make.

Gig added the clock to the “Inventory of Land and Buildings” (see payables discussion below).

The board looked at the very first draft of the report with town department reports only.

Warning for Town Meeting: discuss various aspects

We usually have an Article 1 which states "To accept the reports of the Town Officers". Since 2021 Town Meeting will be by Australian ballot, we can change that to say, "Shall the voters accept the reports of the Town Officers?" but there is no legal requirement that a town report be "accepted" or "acted upon" by the voters. The board decided to scratch that article.

The board decided to include all agency appropriations as one article rather than listing each as its own article.

Legally we must hold at least one informational meeting within 10 days before town meeting, usually we don't have many people attending. The board decided we would have agenda items during the regular meetings on February 10th and 24th to hear questions/concerns from the public regarding the budget, reports and the sewer bond.

The board will think about how to get the ballots to the voters and make a decision at the next meeting.

Corona/COVID-19

Nothing specific tonight.

Approval of Payables Warrant – January 14, 2021

Gig noted that there is a payment to Steven Andrews of \$578.97 for parts to repair the clock in the Jacksonville Community Church steeple. Almira Aekus confirmed that the clock is owned by the town, she remembers it being repaired by Norm Hadley in the late 90's or early 2000's. Mr. Andrews says he replaced the motor 12 years ago, it was paid for by the town. Mr. Andrews did not charge labor, only for the parts he purchased. **A motion was made by Craig Hammer to approve Payables Warrant #W2130 dated January 14, 2021, seconded by Chris Hammer, all in favor.**

Approval of Payroll Warrant – January 14, 2021

A motion was made by Craig Hammer to approve Payroll Warrant #W2129 dated January 14, 2021, seconded by Scott Reed, all in favor.

Review and approve Minutes of December 30, 2020

A motion was made by Wayne Wood to accept the Minutes of December 30, 2020 as written, seconded by Craig Hammer, all in favor.

Other business / Office Administrator – as needed

Mr. Wood will not be at the January 27th meeting. Mr. Walling may not be available on the 27th either. Mr. Edelstein will reschedule Matrix to the February 10th meeting.

Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by Craig Hammer, seconded by Chris Walling, all in favor.

Wayne Wood adjourned the meeting at 8:10pm.

Respectfully submitted, ~Gig Zboray