



**Town of Whitingham
Office of the Selectboard**

MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 23, 2020

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, September 23, 2020.

Selectboard members present: Wayne Wood, and Scott Reed. Phil Edelstein attended remotely.

Others present: Gig Zboray, Selectboard Office Administrator, Stanley Janovsky, Road Commissioner; Almira Aekus, Town Clerk; Richard Lemaire, Keith Bronson, and Seth Boyd residents. Chris Walling, resident, and Dave DiCantio, Sewer Plant Operator attended remotely.

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.

Hearing of visitors (for concerns not on the agenda)

None.

Sewer:

Review and sign letter to USDA for survey Notification of our Household Median Income Survey of sewer users is necessary if we try to get funding from the USDA. The Selectboard reviewed the required letter. **A motion was made by Phil Edelstein to appoint Wayne Wood to sign the letter to the USDA about the MHI Survey, seconded by Scott Reed, all in favor.** Gig noted that she asked if a question could be added to the survey to address the additional \$600 per week unemployment income many of the sewer users might have received during the pandemic. That additional income could severely affect the survey results! The survey will be changed to ask for income for "the most recent tax year" so the MHI won't be skewed by the pandemic unemployment benefit.

Review and approve letter to sewer users about survey importance a letter to sewer users about the survey was reviewed and approved.

Discuss septage dumping for residents An idea that might promote buy in from non-sewer users to support the future bond vote has floated around for a while to allow Whitingham residents who are not on the sewer system to dump the septage here in town saving them on transportation costs and possibly the processing fees. Dave DiCantio discussed the idea with the engineers and found that it is not feasible at this time. The preliminary engineering report for our current project did not cover the idea, therefore there would be no funding available for the required engineering and construction costs associated with the idea.

Highway

Petition to request the town take over Murdock Lane

A signed petition was received that requests that the town take over the care and maintenance of Murdock Lane. The residents of Murdock Lane would have to get the road up to par according to state specs and the layout of the road would need to be surveyed. Attorney Fisher will provide the timeline for town responsibility in the process.

Personnel:

Review and adopt Clothing Allowance Policy A Clothing Allowance Policy was reviewed by the board. **A motion to adopt the Clothing Allowance Policy as an addendum to the Personnel Policy was made by Phil Edelstein, seconded by Scott Reed, all in favor.** Gig still needs to set up a town account at Runnings.

Review and adopt new Vacation Sell Back Policy A Vacation Sell Back Policy was reviewed by the board. Phil Edelstein suggested that we table this until we have five board members.

Zoning Board of Adjustment: consider change of members from 7 to 5

The Zoning Board of Adjustment had two resignations in the last year or so. The vacancies have been posted for quite a while and there has been no interest to fill the positions. Gig had put the topic on the agenda because she was expecting a zoning application that would need ZBA review. That application has not come in yet, she suggested the board think about the idea and/or who to invite to join the ZBA. There is no need make a decision tonight

Library: Halloween event Kristine Sweeter, Librarian asked the board for permission to hold Halloween events. The public will be invited to carve pumpkins on their own and display them around the Municipal Center. On Halloween Night the library would like to host a family trick or treating event outdoors. No games will be played, and attendees will be encouraged to keep moving and not congregate. **A motion was made by Wayne Wood to allow the library to hold their Halloween event, seconded by Scott Reed, all in favor.**

Ryder Pond Association request to rent dining hall for one meeting:

The Ryder Pond Association would like to hold their 2020 annual meeting in the dining hall of the Municipal Center. Ms. Sweeter indicated that she feels there might be a total of 10 attendees. The library is not large enough for a meeting of that size following social distancing protocols. **A motion was made by Scott Reed to allow the Ryder Pond Association to use the Municipal Center, as long as they follow Almira's rules and clean up, seconded by Phil Edelstein, all in favor.** Ms. Sweeter indicated she will attend that meeting and is aware of the cleaning requirements.

Broadband review:

Phil Edelstein updated the board that First Light Capital will now be the majority owner of Consolidated Communications investing \$435 million into fiber optic internet services. Mr. Edelstein thinks this may be the best opportunity for the town to get town wide fiber without the town or another entity taking on large debt.

Approval of Payables Warrant – September 24, 2020

A motion was made by Phil Edelstein to approve Payables Warrant #W2114 dated September 24, 2020, seconded by Scott Reed, all in favor.

Approval of Payroll Warrant – September 24, 2020

A motion was made by Phil Edelstein to approve Payroll Warrant #W2113 dated September 24, 2020, seconded by Scott Reed, all in favor.

Ratify signing of Warning for Special Town Meeting

The Warning for the Special Town Meeting on October 13, 2020 had to be legally posted on Monday, September 14, 2020. Selectboard members reviewed and signed the Warning on that date. **A motion was made by Scott Reed to ratify the signing of the Warning for Special Town Meeting scheduled for October 13, 2020, seconded by Phil Edelstein, all in favor.**

Approval of Minutes of September 9, 2020

A motion was made by Phil Edelstein to accept the Minutes of September 9, 2020 as written, seconded by Scott Reed, all in favor.

Corona/COVID-19: Land Records Management-decide on provider and accept grant

The Town Clerk applied for and won grant funding for digitization of land records. \$19,349 grant was awarded to the town. Ms. Aekus received two quotes. The Cott System is more common in the state of Vermont, local attorneys advised Ms. Aekus that the Cott System is their preference. It must be up and running by November 1st to meet the grant requirements. Our digitized land records go back almost 60 years and they would be online and available to the public. **A motion was made by Scott Reed to accept the Cott System proposal for digitization of the land records, seconded by Phil Edelstein, all in favor.**

Gig asked the board for approval to purchase an Epson VS355 projector (approximately \$430-500) for use during Selectboard meetings to share the computer screen with the people attending the meetings in person. The board approved the purchase. Gig noted that the Meeting Owl device had been shipped and will likely be in use at the next Selectboard meeting.

Ms. Aekus noted that the school supervisory union asked the town for money earlier than usual; she responded to them that the town does not have extra funds available.

Other business / Office Administrator – as needed

Appoint Gig as voting delegate for VLCT annual meeting

A motion was made by Wayne Wood to appoint Gig Zboray as the voting delegate for the Town of Whitingham for the VLCT/PACIF 2020 annual meeting, seconded by Phil Edelstein, all in favor.

Review and approve Meet the Candidates newsletter

The board reviewed and approved the newsletter.

Executive Session with Education Funding Attorneys

A motion was made by Wayne Wood to find that premature general public knowledge regarding the town's education funding litigation would clearly place the town at a substantial disadvantage if its legal strategy was made public, seconded by Scott Reed, all in favor.

A motion was made by Wayne Wood to enter into executive session to discuss education funding litigation under the provisions of Title 1, Section 313(a)(1)(A) of the Vermont Statutes to include Gig Zboray, Adam Waite, James Valente, Keith Bronson and Seth Boyd, seconded by Scott Reed, all in favor.

With no decisions made Executive Session was exited at 8:14pm.

Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by Phil Edelstein, seconded by Scott Reed, all in favor.

Wayne Wood adjourned the meeting at 8:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,
~Gig Zboray