



**Town of Whitingham
Office of the Selectboard**

MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 18, 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, November 18, 2020.

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

Others present: Gig Zboray, Selectboard Office Administrator; Highway Crew: Peter Bernard, Tim Bernard, Mike Boyd, Dennis Pike, and Josh Lemaire.

Others attending remotely: Marshall Dix and Richie Lemaire, Highway Garage Committee; Jeff Moore, Margaret Hunt, Ruby Brown, and Carl Jillson, residents; Almira Aekus, Town Clerk. Jen Herzig, Transfer Station Attendant.

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: hearing of visitor(s)

Carl Jillson noted he ran sewer plants for 17 years, he is upset about the state of the plants at this time and is concerned about the cost of the upgrades required by the state. He recommends forming a new Sewer Commission, he asked the board to consider the town as a whole subsidizing some of the cost of the sewer upgrades, he understands there is a plan in place to accept septage from residents. The Selectboard noted that a prior Sewer Commission was in charge when the Jacksonville plant was shut down and they noted that there is no septage plan in place right now.

Ruby Brown is upset about the sewer rate increase, she thinks there will be a lot of people who can't afford it. Both Mr. Jillson and Ms. Brown think that Dave DiCantio, current plant operator, should do more to lower the costs. The Selectboard noted that Mr. DiCantio is not responsible for the rate increase nor the cost to make the required improvements. His job has nothing to do with the cost of the repairs; the plants are 20 years past their life span, of course major repairs are needed at this time. The rate increase is the result of not enough money being put into a Capital Improvements Fund over the last 40 years. The sewer users have enjoyed low rates for a long time. Ms. Brown complained again about not using water meters for the billing aspect. Mr. Hammer noted that new meters for all sewer accounts

would be a very large expense and add in that a professional plumber must install and maintain the meters the cost becomes exorbitant and would not benefit the sewer users at all.

Mr. Edelstein addressed that the town is following a process to get approximately \$2,000,000 in state funding (grants) to finish this project.

Ms. Hunt, resident of Whitingham for over 25 years, complained that she lives alone and must pay the same amount as a family of four. She also complained that the sewer bill arrived the day after property taxes were due.

Highway:

Employees request for raise:

The crew did a little research and found hourly rates from other nearby towns; they are requesting a \$1.50 per hour raise plus the cost of living increase for the fiscal year 2021/22, although they would take more if the board sees fit. **A motion was made by Scott Reed to increase each highway road crew employee's pay (including the Municipal Employee) by \$2.00 per hour before any cost of living increase for the fiscal year 21/22, seconded by all, all in favor.**

Jen Herzig asked if her pay was included in the above motion. She currently makes \$15.93; she has not received a merit raise since she started at the Transfer Station and now she is also the sewer plant assistant. She is eligible for health insurance, but she does not utilize it. **A motion was made by Craig Hammer to increase Jen Herzig's pay by \$2.00 per hour before any cost of living increase for the fiscal year 21/22, seconded by Phil Edelstein, all in favor.**

Murdock Lane – update on town takeover. Commitment from town to take over once upgraded to town specs

The Ryder Pond Association does not want to put the money into upgrading Murdock Lane to meet town specs unless they are sure that town will take over the road. The Association would eventually like the town to take over all their roads. Craig Hammer is against any steps toward taking over any roads until there is some documentation that the Association will always have the liability of the Ryder Pond Dam.

Richard Lemaire noted that originally the discussion was only around Murdock Lane. Kristine Sweeter, Ryder Pond Association treasurer, noted that in years to come they are now planning on upgrading their other roads to town specs in order for the town to take them over.

There was a question over common lands and the legal issues.

A motion was made by Scott Reed to table discussion until Attorney Fisher and Stanley Janovsky, Road Commissioner, can be here to protect the towns interest, seconded by Phil Edelstein, all in favor.

MRGP grant update

VTrans apparently lost our prior MRGP grant application and we were advised to submit a new one for 2021. Windham Regional reviewed the grant application and said it was good to

submit. Gig filed the grant application with VTrans and the Better Roads program copying lots of VTrans officials. We received confirmation that they received it.

Highway Garage Committee: next steps, engage Fisher to draw up purchase agreement, engage engineer to do feasibility study of Twitchell Farm site

Marshall Dix, Chair of the Garage Committee would like the purchase of the Twitchell land set up so that the town can purchase the land after approval by the voters. The Committee recommends that the Selectboard authorize Attorney Fisher to draw up a purchase agreement because the sellers cannot get along and keep changing the conditions of the sale.

A motion was made by Craig Hammer to engage Attorney Fisher to draw up a purchase agreement for the purchase of the Twitchell farm land contingent on voter approval, no subdivision of the land, purchase price of \$20,000, include a right-of-way to the rear of the property to a sugar lot, the field should be left untouched if possible, seconded by Chris Walling, all in favor.

We have not received a proposal from the engineer, so this portion was not addressed at this time.

Corona/COVID-19:

The library plans to stay open as long as possible; they now have patrons sign-in in case contact tracing is necessary and have some new health requirements in place. If the school closes the library will close to the public and only offer curbside service.

Municipal Center employees have already put so many safety measures in place they plan to stay at work.

Library: review air conditioning quotes

The Library requested air conditioning units (heat pumps) and air circulators (to provide proper air circulation especially needed now in the pandemic). Two quotes were solicited and reviewed by the Selectboard:

Kingsley Plumbing and Heating - \$7,200 labor and materials

W2D Heating and Plumbing - \$5,394.50

There is currently \$40,000 in the capital improvements fund.

Ms. Sweeter had questions answered by Mr. Kingsley. He had FW Webb do a heat loss test on the library, that testing proved that two units would be required. W2D did not do a heat loss test and their estimate only provides for one unit. The Kingsley proposal states an electrician would be required, the W2D proposal does not mention much.

A motion was made by Chris Walling to accept the proposal from Kingsley Plumbing and Heating in the amount of \$7,200 plus the necessary electrical work, seconded by Scott Reed, all in favor.

Junk: review letters

Letters were written to all property owners on the junk list – individualized letters were written to those who need to work on improvements; a generic thank you letter was written to those who cleaned up some since the letter sent in June 2020. Discussion ensued around a few of the properties that Gig has questioned about.

Transfer Station: update

Gig renewed our Electronics Collection registration which is required every 5 years.

Gig noted that Household Hazardous Waste collection fee was \$2,940.21 for 2020. We budgeted \$9,000 and we should get \$3,000 for HHW grant. HHW collection in 2019 cost \$12,755.40 so we saved a significant amount of money. Jen Herzig recently received training on hazardous waste collection.

Approval of Payables Warrant – November 19, 2020

A motion was made by Scott Reed to approve Payables Warrant #W2122 dated November 19, 2020, seconded by Phil Edelstein, all in favor.

Special Motion

Several of the credit card bills did not arrive in time for today’s payables warrant. In order to avoid late fees and interest a special payables warrant will make payment on those before the next meeting. **A motion was made by Wayne W. Wood to allow any one Selectboard member to review and sign a special payables warrant to pay any missing bills that are due before the next meeting, seconded by Scott Reed, all in favor.**

Approval of Payroll Warrant – November 19, 2020

A motion was made by Craig Hammer to approve Payroll Warrant #W2121 dated November 19, 2020, seconded by Chris Walling, all in favor.

Review and approve Minutes of November 4, 2020

A motion was made by Phil Edelstein to accept the Minutes of November 4, 2020 as written, seconded by Wayne Wood, all in favor.

Other business / Office Administrator – as needed

Review and approve letter to Brochu

The board reviewed a letter written to Kevin Brochu to address his request that was discussed at the November 4, 2020 Selectboard member. **A motion was made by Craig Hammer to appoint Wayne Wood to sign the letter to Mr. Brochu, seconded by Chris Walling, all in favor.**

Sewer discussion around changing the sewer billing to quarterly. Gig will put it on the next agenda.

Vtel we will continue to get free wi-fi signal at Town Hill at least until April, probably until June.

Adjourn

A motion to adjourn was made by Scott Reed, seconded by Chris Walling, all in favor.

Wayne Wood adjourned the meeting at 8:05pm.

Respectfully submitted,
~Gig Zboray