



**Town of Whitingham
Office of the Selectboard**

MINUTES OF JANUARY 27, 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 27, 2021.

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

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

Others attending remotely: Shane Mullens and Michael Smith of Weston & Sampson Engineers; Mike Eldred, Deerfield Valley News; and Dave DiCantio, Sewer Plant Chief Operator

Call to Order. Additions or Changes to Agenda

Scott Reed called the meeting to order at 6:30pm reading the remote meeting script.

Hearing of visitors (for concerns not on the agenda)

None

Sewer:

Engineer to present project information

Shane Mullens of Weston & Sampson Engineers provided a power point presentation on the sewer improvement project. He noted that all the voters must approve the bond, but the cost of the project will be borne by the sewer users.

The plants were built in the early 1980s, now they are nearly 20 years past their life expectancy. A major component failure happened at the Jacksonville plant in 2018, the state shut down the plant and emergency repairs ensued. ANR then required an engineering study and we hired Weston & Sampson to perform a 20-year Evaluation and prepare the Preliminary Engineering Report. Equipment replacement is needed at both plants and some repairs are needed on the collection system.

Sewer plant work will include process equipment replacement, updates to meet current design standards & codes, ensure permit compliance, building improvements, and energy efficiency measures. The collection system work will include repair of selected manholes.

Funding and State Assistance: 2% loan (bond) for 20-year period, \$135,000 subsidy from ANR to Town for planning costs, \$1,000,000 construction subsidy if we have favorable results to the MHI Survey, efficiency Vermont incentives (\$10,500) and future potential grants

(Pollution Control Grant possibly \$1 million). The ANR loan is more favorable to the town than USDA.

Total Project Cost is \$3,915,000. The bond payment will be \$232,000 per year if we don't get positive results from MHI Survey. With favorable survey result it would be \$154,000 (\$78,000 annual savings for 20 years!!) Right now we are billing \$550 per equivalent unit x2 per year. The future sewer rate as determined by funding options are listed below:

	No assistance	With Construction Subsidy	With Construction Subsidy & PC Grant
Project Construction Cost	\$ 3,170,000	\$ 3,170,000	\$ 3,170,000
Engineering	\$ 728,186	\$ 728,186	\$ 728,186
Legal, Admin & Short Term Interest	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000
Total Project Cost (SRF Loan)	\$ 3,913,186	\$ 3,913,186	\$ 3,913,186
Step I and II Subsidy	\$ 134,718	\$ 134,718	\$ 134,718
Step III Construction Subsidy	\$ -	\$ 1,268,000	\$ 1,268,000
PC Grant	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,056,560
Balance to be Financed	\$ 3,778,468	\$ 2,510,468	\$ 1,453,908
Annual Payment	\$ 231,242	\$ 153,641	\$ 88,979
Total Annual Sewer Budget:	\$ 440,242	\$ 362,641	\$ 297,979
Cost Per ERU/year	\$ 1,807	\$ 1,488	\$ 1,223
Cost Per ERU/bill (x2 per year)	\$ 903	\$ 744	\$ 611

Pollution Control (PC) Grant could be 27-30% of total cost of loan forgiveness! It doesn't hit immediately but it will come eventually if we qualify for it based on the MHI Survey.

The survey results are sent directly to RCAP Solutions, the town never has access to the individual information, just the bulk result. Much discussion ensued about how to get sewer users to respond to the survey.

Some folks might think we don't need to do anything right now, the plants are currently working. However, construction costs escalate over time, emergency repairs are very expensive, pumping alone cost over \$3,000 per day, if we don't move forward with the project the ANR can fine us for violation of permits, and we could possibly pollute the local waters which would result in more fines.

Scott Reed questioned if there might be hidden costs we are unaware of right now. Mr. Mullens replied that change orders are often financeable through the state. W&S has found that changes typically come in at about 2% of the total project.

Chris Walling questioned how confident the engineers are in their construction estimate? Answer: fuel costs definitely affect project costs. There is a 10% contingency included in the bond cost. The engineers are looking at cost control measures.

Documents for bond vote: final review and approval of Declaration of Official Intent, Resolution, Warning, and Ballot

The board reviewed the final bond documents. **A motion was made by Chris Walling to approve and sign the Resolution Certificate, The Warning, and the Declaration of Official Intent, seconded by Phil Edelstein, all in favor.**

A motion was made by Scott Reed to approve the Official Ballot for the bond vote as written, seconded by Phil Edelstein, all in favor.

Highway: backhoe status

Mr. Janovsky was not available to meet tonight. The backhoe has not arrived in town yet. Mr. Hammer is upset that we have spent over \$200,000 on equipment and we have nothing to show for it. Mr. Hammer would like the town (Road Commissioner) to push Cat to get some free service or some sort of consideration for the delay in delivery.

Access Permit:

After review, **a motion was made by Craig Hammer to approve the access permit for Charlene Lambert & Aaron Perras on Lone Pine Road, seconded by Chris Walling, all in favor**

Fire Department: “new” fire truck status, discuss auctioning old truck

Chief Janovsky was advised by a fire department member that the town would likely get more money for the old fire truck if it was auctioned off rather than putting it out for bid. Mr. Janovsky was waiting for more information on the procedure.

Transfer Station: dates for HHW

Jen Herzig is now trained and certified to run Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) events at the Transfer Station, no longer needing the supervision of Wayne W. Wood. She will run events on the third Saturdays of May and of October (May 15th and October 16th).

Budget work for 21/22

A minor change of adding the Ambulance expense to the General Fund budget and removing it from Appropriations was made to the budget for 21/22 after the Selectboard accepted it at the last meeting, therefore a new motion to accept was required.

A motion was made by Phil Edelstein to accept the amended budget for fiscal year July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022 of \$666,889.00 of which \$400,745.00 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 Scott Reed, all in favor.

Warning for Town Meeting: final review and sign

The Warning for Town Meeting 2021 was reviewed by the Selectboard. **A motion to sign the Warning as written was made by Chris Walling, seconded by Craig Hammer, all in favor.**

The board approved of the ballots being mailed to all active registered voters.

Town Report:

On the inside cover of town report we list holidays. When the Personnel Policy was updated in 2017 the Martin Luther King holiday was removed from our list, to some that may seem racist. Gig asked the board if they wanted to address that now or wait until we update the Personnel Policy again (likely this year). **A motion was made by Chris Walling to reinstate Martin Luther King day as a holiday for town employees, seconded by Phil Edelstein, all in favor.**

Newsletter:

The January 2021 Newsletter was reviewed and approved by the board. Gig will get it in the mail as soon as possible. She asked if anyone was interested in helping to fold them. A change needs to be made to delete the Cemetery Commission position. Change the date from January to February Newsletter. **Scott made a motion to approve the Newsletter as corrected, seconded by Craig Hammer, all in favor.**

Corona/COVID-19

Nothing specific tonight.

Approval of Payables Warrant – January 28, 2021

A motion was made by Craig Hammer to approve Payables Warrant #W2132 dated January 28, 2021, seconded by Scott Reed, all in favor.

Approval of Payroll Warrant – January 28, 2021

A motion was made by Chris Walling to approve Payroll Warrant #W2131 dated January 28, 2021, seconded by Craig Hammer, all in favor.

Review and approve Minutes of January 13, 2020

A motion was made by Scott Reed to accept the Minutes of January 13, 2021 as written, seconded by Craig Hammer, all in favor.

Other business / Office Administrator – as needed

Complaints about vulgar flag As of right now we don't feel the Selectboard has any authority to have the flag removed. Sherry Adams is contacting the State Police and the Attorney General.

Murdock Lane site visit is scheduled for February 10th. We meet at **4pm** at the Municipal Center and proceed to Murdock Lane. The hearing is at 6:30pm during Selectboard meeting.

Adjourn

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

Scott Reed adjourned the meeting at 7:55pm.

Respectfully submitted,
~Gig Zboray