



**Town of Whitingham
Office of the Selectboard**

MINUTES OF AUGUST 25, 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, August 25, 2021.

Selectboard members present: Scott Reed, Chair; Craig Hammer, Vice Chair; and Chris Walling. James Weber attended remotely.

Others present: Gig Zboray, Selectboard Office Administrator; Almira Aekus, Clerk/Treasurer; Stan Janovsky, Jr., Road Commissioner; John Bennett, WRC; Andrew Rodriguez of MSK Engineers; Joe Bartlett of Fitzgerald Environmental; Lyman Tefft, resident; Cheryl Rusin and Elizabeth McEwen of Voices of Hope; Tyler Lederer from Valley News.

Call to Order. Additions or Changes to Agenda

Scott Reed called the meeting to order at 6:33pm. There were minor changes to the agenda since it was posted. Selectboard vacancy was moved to after the sewer rates.

Hearing of visitors (for concerns not on the agenda)

None

Engineers to explain project and hear public concerns regarding hazard mitigation project

Gig introduced John Bennett of the Windham Regional Commission, our Municipal Project Manager for this flood resiliency project. MSK Engineers have been working on a scoping study of the proposed hazard mitigation projects in Jacksonville. Part of the process is to hold a hearing of local concerns. Various questions were asked by those in attendance and answered by the engineers.

Voices of Hope: Elizabeth McEwen to discuss their program

Voices of Hope is a volunteer organization that provides resources to people regarding substance misuse disorders. Their main goal is to make people aware that help is available and to work towards removing the stigma of addiction. Gig will post information about the group and a website link on the town website when their site becomes live.

Highway: review and sign access permit

Mr. Janovsky presented an access permit for Richard Peters with the recommendation that the board approve it. **A motion was made by Chris Walling to approve and sign the access permit for Richard Peters at 625 Merrifield Road, seconded by Craig Hammer, all in favor.**

Sewer: set the rate for the current fiscal year

Based on the budget prepared by the Town Treasurer it was recommended that the board set the sewer rate at \$1,208 per EU (Equivalent Unit). This represents a less than 10% increase over last year's rate of \$1,100 per EU. The new rate continues to increase the capital improvements balance for future bond payments. The board members are reluctant to raise the rates but feel they have no choice. It is not an easy decision, but unfortunately it needs to be made. **A motion was made by Scott Reed to set the 2021/22 sewer rate at \$1,208 per Equivalent Unit as recommended by the Town Treasurer, seconded by Chris Walling, Craig Hammer in favor, James Weber voted no. Motion passed.**

Gig noted that Michael Smith of Weston & Sampson engineers met with her and Dave DiCantio and state officials and then came down to inspect the Jacksonville media. After his inspection he wrote a letter to the state officials verifying that the condition of the media at the Jacksonville Plant is in working order sufficient to meet our permit requirements until the refurbishment project can be completed.

Mr. Janovsky questioned if the board is considering extending the sewer lines at any time. Much discussion ensued. It is such a huge undertaking. He recommended that if the sewer is eventually extended beyond village limits that zoning be changed to allow one-acre parcels in the new sewer area.

Selectboard Vacancy

A vacancy on the Selectboard was created with the resignation of Phil Edelstein in July.

Mr. Lyman Tefft submitted an email of interest. He told the board he has tried many years to get on the board, he would like to do what he can to help make the town more affordable.

Approval of Payables Warrant – August 26, 2021

A motion was made by Craig Hammer to approve Payables Warrant #W2210 dated August 26, 2021, seconded by Chris Walling, all in favor.

Approval of Payroll Warrant – August 26, 2021

A motion was made by Craig Hammer to approve Payroll Warrant #W2209 dated August 26, 2021, seconded by Chris Walling, all in favor.

Approve Minutes of August 11 and 16, 2021

A motion was made by Scott Reed to accept the Minutes of August 11 and 16, 2021, as written, seconded by Chris Walling, all in favor.

Other Business

Gig noted that with the county portion (\$208,043.99) of ARPA funds we are expecting a total of \$320,164.57. To date we have received \$56,060.29 of the town allocation, another payment in the same amount is expected in August 2022. The county payment is expected in 2 equal payments in August/September of 2021 and 2022. We are still not quite clear on all the mandates regarding how this money can be spent.

Brook trout: The Native Fish Coalition would like to post a sign along the brook in front of the Municipal Center and possibly in the parking lot by the Jacksonville Church (and perhaps other locations in town) stating that there are native brook trout in the waters. Sample signage was reviewed. The board approved of the coalition posting the signage in various locations.

Executive Session

A motion was made by Chris Walling to enter Executive Session to evaluate potential public officials under the provisions of Title 1, Section 313(a)(3) of the Vermont Statutes, seconded by Craig Hammer, all in favor.

Executive session was exited at 7:43pm.

Mr. Greg Brown sent a text to Gig just before the meeting started stating his interest in being appointed to the Selectboard. He served on the board for over 15 years and has kept himself informed on the issues. Gig had a digital copy of his prior letter of interest that Mr. Brown asked her to submit to the board.

A motion was made by Chris Walling to appoint Greg Brown to fill the vacancy on the Selectboard until Town Meeting 2022, seconded by Craig Hammer, all in favor. Besides his years of prior experience on the board Selectboard members thought Mr. Brown would offer great help on the sewer project.

Adjourn

A motion was made by Scott Reed to adjourn, seconded by Craig Hammer, all in favor.

Scott Reed adjourned the meeting at 7:44 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

~Gig Zboray