



**Town of Whitingham
Office of the Selectboard**

MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 17, 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 Selectboard Office of the Whitingham Municipal Center on Wednesday, November 17, 2021.

Selectboard members present: Scott Reed, Chair; Chris Walling, and James Weber.

Others present: Gig Zboray, Selectboard Office Administrator; Almira Aekus, Clerk/Treasurer; Tyler Lederer of Deerfield Valley News; Wilmington Police Chief Matt Murano; Christy Betit, BDCC/SeVEDS

Call to Order. Additions or Changes to Agenda

Scott Reed called the meeting to order at 6:30pm. There were a few changes to the agenda since it was posted.

Hearing of visitors (for concerns not on the agenda)

None

Policing – meet with Chief Murano

The current contract for limited policing services provided by Wilmington PD has been working well. Discussion ensued about the cost of expanding the contract for the fiscal year 22-23. There has been concern expressed by our fire chief over slow response time by the state police at car accidents. Wilmington comes if they are available but that is not what they are contracted for.

Chief Murano would need a good overview of what we are looking for. On-call work is tricky for him to manage, but he would be happy to explore the idea of providing more coverage. We should consider federal grants for policing. Going it alone with 24 hour on-call response is difficult and expensive. There are grants out there and we should factor in a 5-year or 10-year plan. Chief Murano suggests a committee be appointed to work with him to explore different ideas. For the short term he can adjust hours. He wouldn't want to rush into big changes right now because changes in policing are coming from the state.

Policing grants usually come out in January. Later in the meeting Christy Betit of BDCC reminded us that they can help with grant writing.

Gig should contact Chief Murano when it comes time to schedule a tow truck to move vehicles that are in the town right of way on Faulkner Road.

BDCC – annual update of services provided to the town

Christy Betit came to the table, she provided a copy of the BDCC annual report and other printed information. They can support us with grant writing perhaps for the COPS grants.

Sewer – follow up from meeting with engineer

Mike Smith of Weston & Sampson Engineers came to the Jacksonville plant today to discuss what parts of the upgrade project should be included in the bid and what should be additive alternates. If generators are not required by the results of an upcoming power outage report they should be bid alternates. The flow metering manhole was deleted entirely from the project. Roof extensions will be a bid alternate. The mold must be remediated. Mr. Weber suggests putting it as an additive alternate, Mr. Reed suggested there might be grants to cover this particular expense. Roof and siding will be bid alternates. There will be no changes to the Jacksonville lab, the office will be painted as part of the main bid. The backwash pump will be part of the main bid.

The plan set does not need significant changes, but the bid documents will. Don Haddox of the state assured us during a meeting last week, that he could review those documents in 7 days maximum. Mr. Smith is shooting for bid publication by the end of January with 30-days until bid opening.

Budget – discuss COL increase

The Social Security cost of living increase for 2022 is 5.9%. In the past the board has often raised wages in accordance with the SS COL. Because the jump is so large, fair alternatives were reviewed. Research shows that this 5.9% increase plus the last 10 years averages out to 2.03%, if we estimate 5% increases for the next two additional years it averages out to 2.5%.

A motion was made by Chris Walling to approve the cost of living increase for the next 3 years as follows: 2022/23 2.5%, 2023/24 2.8% and 2024/25 3.0%, seconded by James Weber, all in favor. Gig will add an addendum to the Personnel Policy for the board to approve.

Board of Health – discuss THO’s decision on a local issue

A property owner has a pickup truck filled with garbage, phone calls have been made and a letter written asking owner to please dispose of the garbage properly. It was suggested that a Health Order be issued. Research was completed as to the validity of this complaint falling under a “public” health risk, which is all that can be addressed by the Health Officer. The board discussed the research and agreed that it doesn’t fall into a public health risk. We will continue to reach out to the property owner, it is rumored that he is quite ill. We will keep an eye on it.

Approval of Payables Warrant – November 18, 2021

Gig noted that a payment to Brook Field Service is on the warrant for the school generator, contract to be signed later on the agenda. **A motion was made by James Weber to approve Payables Warrant #W2222 dated November 18, 2021, seconded by Chris Walling, all in favor.**

Approval of Payroll Warrant – November 18, 2021

A motion was made by James Weber to approve Payroll Warrant #W2221 dated November 18, 2021, seconded by Scott Reed, all in favor.

Approve Minutes of November 3, 2021

A motion was made by James Weber to accept the Minutes of November 3, 2021, as written, seconded by Scott Reed, all in favor.

Approval of DV News Article dated November 4, 2021

There were several errors in the article dated November 4th. The article notes “the failure to obtain an affordable bid caused the project to spiral”. Delays have been caused by the state, engineers and pandemic. The article quotes Scott Reed but it was correctly James Weber who asked for a list of things to cut from the bid and he is the sewer user with a bill of \$1,800 not \$18,000. Scott Reed suggested extending the bid time.

Other Business

Review and sign Brookfield Service contract for generator the generator at the school falls under Civil Defense and is the responsibility of the town. We renew an annual contract for inspection and service on the generator. The board reviewed the contract. **A motion was made by Chris Walling to appoint Scott M. Reed to sign the contract, seconded by James Weber, all in favor.**

Review draft changes to Social Services Appropriation Policy At the last meeting Chris Walling questioned why a petition is required if an agency, that was funded the prior year, is asking for the same amount of funding? The board had suggested we look at Wilmington’s policy. Gig found their policy completely different from ours. She provided a draft update of our policy that would no longer require a petition each year if the agency is asking for level funding. Gig will add it to an agenda in early February for adoption.

Flood resiliency, review letter of support and sign WRC is doing a lot of work on our flood resiliency projects and seeking grants for scoping of them. They asked for a letter of support from the board to submit with their grant applications. **A motion was made by James Weber to appoint Scott M. Reed to sign the letter of support of flood resiliency projects, seconded by Chris Walling, all in favor.**

Appoint Selectboard member to sign special warrant needed before end of month The Peoples credit card bills did not arrive for Gig, Peter, Stan or Almira, payments are due December 1st. **A motion was made by James Weber to appoint Scott Reed to review and sign a special payables warrant to pay the credit card bills before November 30th, 2021, seconded by James Weber, all in favor.**

Adjourn

A motion was made by James Weber to adjourn, seconded by Chris Walling, all in favor.

Scott Reed adjourned the meeting at 7:38pm.

Respectfully submitted,

~Gig Zboray