



**Town of Whitingham  
Office of the Selectboard**

**MINUTES OF DECEMBER 15, 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, December 15, 2021.

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

Others present: Gig Zboray, Selectboard Office Administrator; Almira Aekus, Clerk/Treasurer; Stanley Janovsky, Road Commissioner; Tyler Lederer of Deerfield Valley News.

**Call to Order. Additions or Changes to Agenda**

Scott Reed called the meeting to order at 6:31pm. There were a few changes to the agenda since it was posted.

**Hearing of visitors (for concerns not on the agenda)**

None

**State Troopers**

Lt. Anthony French, Station Commander of Westminster Barracks came to the table to address the letter that the board sent to the Governor. He requested that the line of communication be open with the state Police and not involve the Governor. The board had addressed the letter to the Governor looking for more support for the State Police. Lt. French indicated that response time to a recent crash was not accurate in the letter, it was not "over" two hours, it was just about two hours. They would never ask anyone to detain an impaired operator, they are not asking first responders to investigate accidents, they would like information, such as if accident involved an impaired operator, then they would like to send two troopers, not just one. Trooper response time seems to depend on if a trooper is on duty at the time. However, they will not always respond to every crash. The state police are hiring. Three new troopers are coming in the next few months

Mr. Brown questioned what their average response time is? The average time is 51 minutes.

Mr. Janovsky asked about what laws were changed recently, with respect to mental health/suicidal calls. The State Police do not want to endanger themselves or others, they are not the trained professionals to help these people in crisis, it often escalates the situation. Use of Force Law went into effect on October 1<sup>st</sup>, it calls for police departments to have a thoughtful response to mental health crises. The State Police do have an in-house mental health liaison, and there are one or two others in the Valley. Lt. French requested that first responders call the barracks or use their direct radio channel for open communication to know if troopers will respond and when. The first

responders will need to figure out what their response will be to mental health crises. Staging will likely be at the fire station where there is cell phone service. The dispatcher process has not been updated to skip the dispatching of first responders before the police have had their thoughtful response. It is a learning curve but comes back to communication.

### **Highway**

**Review and sign access permit** Mr. Janovsky presented an access permit for Michael Graves of lot 4, Maple Hill Lane (new 911 address to be 1155 Maple Hill Lane). Conditions set say no culvert needed, access must be wide enough for fire truck access (30' minimum). Drive must have reflective 911# sign at beginning. **A motion was made by Scott M. Reed to approve and sign the access permit for Michael Graves on Maple Hill Lane, seconded by Greg Brown, all in favor.**

**Review and approve MRGP Amendment Form** We are required to file with ANR Stormwater Department an MRGP Amended Form-Road Erosion Inventory (REI) Submittal. The fee of \$240 is included on the payables warrant. Discussion ensued around the MRGP program and the fact that the state does not follow their own rules with their own culverts. **A motion was made by Chris Walling to appoint Scott M. Reed to sign the document, seconded by James Weber, all in favor** (reluctantly).

### **Assessors: Annual Report of Errors and Omissions, Homestead Comparison report**

An annual report of Errors and Omissions is required. No errors or omissions were reported this year. The Listers Clerk provided a Homestead Comparison report to the board for informational purposes.

### **Cell Tower: discuss change – agree on time frame**

The attorney for SBA Communications contacted Gig about an issue they have with the edited version of the contract returned by our Town Attorney about the time frame to remove the tower if equipment is no longer on the pole. They had requested 10 years, the town attorney changed it to two years. SBA now suggests 5 years as a compromise. The board agreed five years seems to be a fair compromise. Gig will notify SBA.

### **Sewer: generators**

The board discussed whether they want to include generators in the funding package for the sewer project. After much discussion it was decided that the buildings would be wired for a generator with a manual switch and one portable generator would be purchased by the Sewer Department for use at both plants. This option will save money, rather than purchasing one generator for each plant and it should meet our permit requirements. The board agreed that a manual bypass for the generator is the way they want to go.

### **Budget – 2<sup>nd</sup> draft review**

The only major change in the budget from last review is the highway and fire department budgets are now included. A new line item was added called “firefighter nominal fee” of \$30,000 to get more participation and get volunteers to show up. No matter who participates, how often, the TOTAL is \$30,000. Years ago, they might have gotten 40 calls per year, last year it was 220 calls. They haven’t gotten many new volunteers in the last few years. This \$30,000 would provide a nominal stipend to prevent the town from going through minimum wage rules, etc. There would be a flat rate fee of \$15 to attend trainings, then a point system would be used. At the end of the

year everyone's points would be totaled and that figure would be divided by the balance of the fund after the training fee comes out. It would never go over the budgeted amount in that line item. The title of the line might change; it might not be "fee" it might change to "stipend".

The Highway budget increase over last year is mostly the cost of sand going up. By using the fund balance there will be about a \$13,000 increase in the total highway budget.

#### **Warning for Town Meeting – first review**

The board reviewed the first draft of the Warning for Town Meeting 2022. Mr. Brown suggested that The Fire Department Equipment Fund should be increased from \$20,000 to \$40,000 and the Highway Equipment Fund from \$85,000 to \$100,000 (started with \$75,000 in 2004), just to keep up with the cost increases of trucks. In 2012 we paid \$23,000 for a pickup and we just paid \$52,000 to replace it this year.

Discuss website fund/EDG We should start saving money for a website overhaul in the next few years, we were lucky with the last update and had lots of pro-bono help, it will likely not be like that for the next time. It could potentially cost in the area of \$25,000. There is currently \$23,000 in the Economic Development Fund. The board discussed changing the name, and or using those funds for the update. It was decided to keep the name and the amount the same. A town website falls under Economic Development.

Confirm meeting location for 2022 Gig filed the paperwork with the school and received approval to hold town meeting there, she wanted confirmation from the board that they were planning to host Town Meeting at the school in 2022 because it is again open to outside organizations. The board agreed Town Meeting would be there.

#### **Approval of Payables Warrant – December 16, 2021**

Gig informed the board that the library changed their financial process to say that at least one Trustee will sign their payables warrant prior to the disbursement of funds. **A motion was made by Craig Hammer to approve Payables Warrant #W2226 dated December 16, 2021, seconded by Chris Walling, all in favor.**

#### **Approval of Payroll Warrant – December 16, 2021**

**A motion was made by Greg Brown to approve Payroll Warrant #W2225 dated December 16, 2021, seconded by Scott M. Reed, all in favor.**

#### **Approve Minutes of December 1, 2021**

**A motion was made by Greg Brown to accept the Minutes of December 1, 2021, as written, seconded by James Weber, all in favor.**

#### **Review of DV News Article**

The December 9<sup>th</sup> Valley News article incorrectly reports that "the board may buy out" the cell tower lease. SBA Communications has a lease with the town for the cell tower at the Transfer Station, they would be buying out their lease with a lump sum payment now and discontinue the monthly lease payment. The article does not discuss the fact that we now have a regular agenda item to review the articles, nor does it mention the corrections we have made.

### **Transfer Station**

After last week's meeting Gig updated the Transfer Station fee schedule and gave copies to the attendant. Jennifer Herzig suggested increasing the price of upholstered furniture to \$25 rather than just mattresses to \$40. Currently upholstered furniture is \$12. The board agreed, **a motion was made by Greg Brown to change the price for upholstered furniture and mattresses on the Transfer Station fee schedule to \$25 per item effective immediately, seconded by Chris Walling, all in favor.**

### **Other Business**

Review and sign letter to VTrans re: ROW encroachments the residents at 7849 VT Route 100 are regularly parking in the state right-of-way. VTrans asked for a letter of support to address these issues. They will likely install no parking signs in the vicinity. **A motion was made by Craig Hammer to appoint Scott M. Reed to sign the letter of support, seconded by James Weber, all in favor.**

Review and sign memo to employees regarding change to Section 20, Holiday Leave, in the Personnel Policy At the last meeting the board traded Veterans Day with Martin Luther King Day as the optional holiday, this memo is official notice to the employees. **A motion was made by Greg Brown to approve and sign the memo to serve as a correction to the Personnel Policy adopted June 16, 2021, seconded by James Weber, all in favor.**

Correspondence: Today we received a note of "kudos" for not imposing the mask mandate. We also received a request to change the sewer allotment on 3582 VT Route 100, which is now billed as a two family – they say it has been a one family home since 1981. Research needs to be done before responding to this request.

### **Adjourn**

**A motion was made by Greg Brown to adjourn, seconded by James Walling, all in favor.**

Scott Reed adjourned the meeting at 7:45pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
~Gig Zboray