

Unapproved Minutes of Selectboard Meeting
Tuesday October 3, 2023

Attending for the board: Nick Kramer, Carl Demrow, and Holly Groschner. Anne Rosten Selectboard Clerk. Lee Porter, Road Commissioner; Norm Collette, Town Hall Facilities Manager; Ryan Downey, Gill family agent and surveyor, Andrew Gill, Mike Tagliavia, Glyn Pellegrino, Lindie Lawton-Sutton, and Steven DeVoto. Attending via Zoom: Town Moderator Gary Apfel and Town Treasurer Dick Kelley. Board chair Nick Kramer called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

Approval of minutes of regular meeting of September 5, 2023 and financial meeting of September 11, 2023

Carl Demrow made a motion to approve the minutes of the regular selectboard meeting of September 5, 2023 and the financial meeting of September 11, 2023. Holly Groschner seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Public concerns

None

Road Commissioner's report / Hwy. concerns

Commissioner Porter said Joe Blodgett is home recovering from back surgery and doing well. The board wishes him a speedy recovery.

He then reported that two culverts will be delivered for the bridge on Joe Lord road in three weeks. The repair will be completed before winter. The permanent repair will take place next year. Demrow shared with Porter a recent conversation he had with staff at VT Emergency Mgmt who strongly advised being certain all FEMA generated paperwork is correct before signing.

The new Western Star dump truck will be delivered to the town in January 2024. Porter shared the quote from Viking Clives of VT for the new Ford F600 dump body; \$62,000. The board asked Porter to look into getting at least one other quote, according to the Town's purchasing policy. There are no right of way issues at this time.

Porter and the board looked over the latest plans for the town garage addition. The latest proposed cost is \$264,000 plus a \$2,000 state application fee. It is mandatory for the state to approve the plans. The board originally budgeted for \$150,000 using ARPA funds with the extra to come from the highway equipment fund. The new project cost would necessitate \$200,000 from the ARPA fund and approximately \$50,000 from the highway equipment fund. The discussion turned to looking into other sources of funding i.e. MERP (Municipal Energy Resilience Plan) which may grant up to \$500,000 to the town. Demrow thought the doors, insulation, and windows may qualify for MERP.

Public Hearing - Proposed Discontinuance of Town Trail # 13

Kramer reviewed the process of the discontinuance request; the site inspection of August 4th, and a description of steps taken so far. Town Trail # 13 is $\frac{3}{4}$ mile long from the terminus on Tenney Road. Ryan Downey made the discontinuance request on behalf of the Gill family, whose property abuts the trail and is accessible from the town trail. Mr. Downey listed reason for the discontinuance request: in the opinion of the Gill family, the trail leads nowhere and is of no recreational value,, there have been incidents of property damage and trash left on site, the family members hunt there and are concerned that this activity could endanger hikers on the town trail, elderly members of the Gill family use the camp and occasionally need motorized egress for medical emergencies which they are concerned is obstructed by vehicles parked at the trail's intersection with Heath Rd. Mr. Downey also suggested that precedent for the discontinuance had been set by the action of a previous board, which discontinued a higher portion of the trail years ago.

Property abutter Steven DeVoto read his reasons for keeping it open: He and his wife live there year round, can notice activity nearby, and have a landline telephone to use for emergencies. He feels there is a great benefit to the public for keeping the trail open: birdwatching, hiking, biking, snowshoeing, etc.

Visitors Glyn Pellagrino and Lindle Sutton voiced their opposition to discontinuance: there is less and less access to conserved and other public land in town. Mike Tagliavia is concerned about trespassing issues. Porter stated that too many of the town trails were given up fifteen years ago and should not give up any more of them. Norm Collette expressed concerns about what the discontinuance could mean for public access in the event of an emergency.

Kramer summarized public input the board received by email on the proposed discontinuance. The board received ten communications total on the issue, including Mr. Downey's original request for the discontinuance, eight of which expressed opposition to the discontinuance, and two of which were in favor. Mr. Downey clarified that Frank Easton, another abutting landowner, was also in favor of the proposed discontinuance, and Kramer thanked him for the clarification.

The board then began their discussion of the proposed discontinuance. Demrow stated that he could understand the Gills' issues but was against discontinuing the trail as it is a valuable town asset.

Groschner expressed her sympathy to the Gills and the sad fact that there are a few people who do not respect the law but also felt that keeping the trail open is in the public's interest. She expressed some doubt that discontinuing the trail would fix many of the Gill family's concerns. She said she's been talking with OCSD (Orange County Sheriff Dept) and is hopeful there will be more of a law enforcement presence in town. Kramer was also sympathetic to the landowners perspective but agreed with the points raised by the other two board members and felt that the concerns raised by the Gill family did not outweigh the public interest in keeping it open.

Groschner made a motion to deny the request for discontinuance of Town Trail #13. Demrow seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Town Hall updates / rental policy

Collette heard from the town clerk that the town hall rental policy is confusing, especially the insurance coverage. He said that the cleaning deposit for rentals is not high enough. He will contact VLCT about it and make a recommendation to the board at the November meeting.

Collette and the board went over the updated plan for the town hall renovation. Architect Mark Nielsen revised the plan to bring the cost down. They discussed the many details for the renovation and decisions as to siding, etc. Some of the repairs will come out of the ARPA fund and others may come from MERP, and the Town Hall Maintenance Fund. Demrow reminded the board that Rinehimer Construction Company was the only bidder to respond to the Town's RFP. Demrow made a motion to set aside \$150,000 from the ARPA fund for the town hall renovation. Groschner seconded and motion passed unanimously. Demrow then made a motion to request a final contract from Rinehimer Construction Company. Groschner seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

School tax payment

The first half of the school property tax payment is due. Treasurer Kelley was not sure if he needed authorization from the board to remit the \$1,100,000 payment. After consulting 16 VSA section 426(a), it was determined that the Treasurer did not need the board's formal authorization.

It was the consensus of the board that Kelley should make the payment to the school.

Budget Committee Appointments

At the last town meeting in March Lee Porter, Amy Peberdy, Mike Pittman, Ray Moulton, and Liz Davis were nominated to the Budget Committee. Kramer made a motion to appoint Lee Porter, Amy Peberdy, Mike Pittman, Ray Moulton, and Liz Davis to the Budget Committee. Demrow seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Town Report Printing Contracts

The board decided to table this item until the Financial meeting on 10/9/23.

Orange County Sheriff's Dept. Contract

Groschner shared the results of negotiations with the Orange County Sheriff's Department (OCSD) citing the following as important related issues:

1. Accurately budgeting for and appointing a town constable
2. Public education about the services that local law enforcement have the capacity to provide—when to call either the sheriff, the state police, the game warden, or 911.
3. Improved terms within the authorized budget to sign a contract with OCSD.

Groschner recommended to the board signing the improved contract with OCSD through June 30, 2024 that will not exceed the budgeted amount for the fiscal year. They will not work nights or weekends. She suggested working with OCSD to gain a better working relationship and for the board to make a plan for 2025.

Correspondence

Washington Electric Pole Approval: WEC needs approval from the board to put up a new pole on Vance Place which is off of Brook Road and for permission to cut and prune trees. Porter mentioned that typically the Road Foreman and Commissioner conduct site inspections prior to the approval of new utility poles, and the board decided to postpone action until Porter is able to do a site inspection.

The board reviewed several pieces of informational correspondence from VLCT, and several invoices which were left for the Treasurer for inclusion in the October warrant.

Other business that comes before the board

Demrow received a request from George DeNaggy to see if the electric company will put an EV charging station by his log landing. The board discussed the possibilities about EV chargers in town. South of Rte 25 is covered by Washington Electric and the north side is covered by Green Mountain Power. Demrow made a motion for Groschner to follow up with Philip Picotte from the Dept of Public Service about the next steps to find funding for EV chargers. Groschner seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Groschner made a motion to adjourn. Demrow seconded and motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 9:21 PM.