

Waterford Selectboard Regular Meeting Minutes

Monday, January 8, 2024 @ 6:00 PM

Davies Library

In Attendance: Gary Allard, Rob Begin, Sue Hayes, Warner Hodgdon. Attendance list attached.

Rob Begin called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Modifications to Agenda

- Add a discussion/action item for the Proposed Fire Truck Article
- Add an action item for a letter from the Historical Society
- Add a discussion/action item for the Fire Department to request fire hydrant snow removal
- Add a discussion/action item for the letter from the Kirby Selectboard

Approval of Meeting Minutes

- Gary Allard made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of the December 18, 2023 meeting. Warner Hodgdon seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Calex Michael Wright (Discussion)

- Michael Wright was given the floor to discuss the new contract proposal presented by Calex to Waterford. He explained that EMS (Emergency Medical Services) are in crisis, both statewide and nationally. Calex had to make the difficult decision to raise their rates after experiencing unprecedented changes in the system and rising costs. He went on to give details about Calex's situation. They have a \$3 million budget, and half of it goes to contractual discounts. Reimbursement structures from the federal government are historically how EMS were compensated for the loss, but the current reimbursement structure is the worst he has seen in his nearly 30 years of experience. The dramatic decrease in reimbursements is throwing EMS into a financial crisis nationwide. Calex has also lost significant revenue due to the rise in non-transport calls. EMS can only bill insurance companies when they transport the patient to a hospital, so they cannot bill when responding to roadside calls or treat-and-release calls such as lift assist requests, etc. Calex received 107 calls from the town of Waterford during 2023, and 71 were non-billable, which is about 65%- nearly triple the national average. Inter-facility transfers were an essential source of revenue for Calex, but there has recently been an astounding decrease because of changes in hospital operations. All costs have risen significantly in recent years- labor, insurance, healthcare, workman's comp, etc. Various consequences of the pandemic allowed them to postpone raising their rates since 2020,

but those options are no longer available. This combination of circumstances led Calex to void their old contracts with every town and offer new ones at higher rates.

- Michael Wright responded to various questions from board members and citizens. He verified that if Waterford does not agree to the new contract, Calex will not respond to calls from the town. He clarified that Waterford took longer to hear about the upcoming change in rates than other towns because they had a period without a board representative at Calex. The current board representative for Waterford is Roger Leroux. Michael Wright listed off rates of other EMS providers in the area, and all are significantly more expensive with less coverage. Calex offers 24/7/365 coverage. He noted that there is currently an EMS bill in state legislature being considered, and recommended that citizens contact their representative to voice their opinion.

Great River Hydro Appraisal (Discussion/Action)

- The Selectboard signed the contract. The hydro appraisal will cost around \$12,000 but is expected to generate \$146,000 in additional tax revenue.

Review Articles for Town Meeting (Discussion/Action)

- The Selectboard went through each proposed Town Meeting Article with the Town Moderator, Maurice Chaloux. The vote to approve the Articles was delayed until after the discussion of the proposed Fire Department Article to purchase a new tanker truck.

Fire Department Article Proposal (Discussion/Action)

- Town Treasurer Heather Gonyaw contacted VLCT to get information about the article for buying the Fire Department a new tanker truck. She learned that financing that exceeds 5 years needs to be voted on by ballot, which is why this proposal isn't part of the articles for the upcoming Town Meeting. The ballot can either be part of the Town Meeting or be done in April if the deadline for the Town Meeting cannot be met.
- The ballot could not be approved at this meeting, so a Working Meeting was scheduled for the Selectboard on Monday, January 22, 2024, which will meet the deadline of January 25 for the ballot to be included in the Town Meeting. The Selectboard noted that the ballot needs to list the cost of the tanker truck being purchased, so they decided to send out for best and final bids in hopes of getting the results by the Working Meeting.
- The warning for the Town Meeting was presented. Sue Hayes motioned to approve the Town Meeting warning as amended. Warner Hodgdon seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0.

Letter from the Historical Society

- President of the Historical Society Helen Pike was given the floor to present a letter of plans to restore the historic cemetery on Daniels Farm Road. All board members signed the letter.

Fire Hydrant Snow Removal (Discussion/Action)

- Fire Department Representative Roger Leroux requested that the Highway Department remove snow and clean up around fire hydrants and by the back door of the fire station. Highway Department Road Foreman Jim Hayes confirmed they will get it done.

Kirby Selectboard Letter (Discussion/Action)

- The Kirby Selectboard sent a letter requesting a written agreement for future Fire Department services. Sue Hayes volunteered to compare Fire Department documents to the 2009 Service Reimbursement Ordinance and revise the ordinance to match.

Citizens' Concerns

- Kathy Hodgdon Noted that the Cemetery Committee Meeting has an agenda item for an Executive Session, but they do not have the authority to make any changes to personnel because their members were appointed by the Selectboard. She also stated that they don't have minutes posted for their meetings. The Selectboard will look into this further.

Agenda Items for Next Meeting Mon Jan 22

- Fire Truck Bids
- Service Reimbursement Ordinance Update

Executive Session 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(B) - Personnel

- Warner Hodgdon motioned to enter Executive Session. Rob Begin seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0. The group entered Executive Session at 7:22 PM.
- Gary Allard made a motion to invite Heather Gonyaw to Executive Session. Warner Hodgdon seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0.
- The Group exited Executive Session at 7:59 pm. No action was taken.

Adjourn

- Rob Begin made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Sue Hayes seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0. The meeting was adjourned at 8:02 pm.

Waterford Selectboard Meeting January 8, 2024

Sign In Sheet

Name

Signature

Kathy Hodgdon

~~John Smith~~

Chen Gray

Roger Leroux

Sallie Lewis

Marcia Martel

Howard W. Kemick

~~HOPE~~

Jim Hayer

KEVIN GILLANDER

Deb Benoit

Kathy Hodgdon

~~John Smith~~

Chen Gray

Roger Leroux

Sallie Lewis

Marcia Martel

Howard W. Kemick

~~HOPE~~

Jim Hayer

Kevin Gillander

Debra Benoit