

Waterford Selectboard Regular Meeting Minutes

Monday, October 14, 2024 @ 6:00 PM

Davies Library

In Attendance: Ron Gray, Kevin Gillander, Sukey Watson, Marcia Martel. Attendance list attached.

Ron Gray called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Modifications to Agenda

- No modifications were made.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

- Approving the Special Meeting Minutes of September 23, 2024 was postponed until the next meeting.
- Marcia Martel made a motion to approve the meeting minutes as amended of the September 23, 2024 Working Meeting. Kevin Gillander seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0.

Citizens' Concerns

- Ron Gray explained that a certified letter was received last Friday. It was a notice of operating a waste management facility without a certification. Ron verified that the certification was submitted on time. He called NEKWMD today and left a message with the person who handles the submissions but hasn't heard back yet. Marcia Martel said she spoke with someone there who mentioned they received it. Ron will continue to work on the situation.
- Marcia Martel and Kevin Gillander met with Town Treasurer Heather Gonyaw. Heather explained she met with FEMA and the town now has a representative for the first flood. They are working on processing everything but it is a lengthy process. An application was submitted to FEMA for the second flood. We will be assigned a separate representative when that is processed. They will likely meet around Thanksgiving.
- Charles Lawrence brought up a letter from residents of Old County Road South concerning the Mad Brook Road bridge closure. The citizens are concerned because the road has been closed for two months, which is unprecedented. They want the state or an engineering firm to design a bridge that won't wash out. Ron Gray said we have received the results of the hydrologic study for that bridge from the Agency of Transportation with their recommendations, so now we can move forward with a design. The permanent solution will be put in place next year because it is not possible to get the materials

needed until then. Road Foreman Jim Hayes and his road crew did preliminary work last week to get the temporary solution in place. They had to wait for a crane to be able to take the deck off, which they did today. They will start pulling blocks tomorrow. They have to wait for the crane to set the blocks back up.

- Jim Hayes explained that the town was given two possibilities of what to do with the Mad Brook Road bridge as temporary solutions until the permanent one can be installed. The Board chose to rebuild the bridge as best they could, so that is what he is working on doing. Erosion occurred limiting the deck to 18' wide, so it will not be full-sized.
- Jen D'Agostino asked if the public could hear the letter. Ron Gray read the letter aloud.
- Tim Doyon spoke about an issue he is having that started years ago with the previous Road Foreman who was in the process of ditching the road Tim lives on. The ditch goes the full length of Tim's property road frontage and ends right where his gate is. The previous Road Foreman then dug a trench on Tim's property beyond the gate. Tim had to get another culvert installed to accommodate the water so it wouldn't wash out. Tim tried to discuss this with the previous Road Foreman, but he reported the Road Foreman became confrontational and the conversation was unproductive. The ditching diverted the recent flood waters onto his property and caused significant damage to the road, gate, and culvert.
- Jim Hayes confirmed he is aware of this issue and agrees that the previous Road Foreman went past his right of way. Jim believes the best solution is to put a culvert on the edge of the road to lead the water to the brook. He won't have time to do the project this year and he hasn't completed a full inspection yet. They will set up a site visit for the future.
- Kathy Hodgdon noticed that emails sent to selectboard@waterfordvt.gov are received by all Selectboard members as well as the Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Clerk, and Administrator. She expressed that she would like to be able to send emails to just the Board members.
- Kathy Hodgdon also stated how concerned she was about the road conditions on Old County Road South. She reported that it has not been graded since the floods and people are driving on the wrong side of the road to avoid the problem areas. Jim Hayes responded saying he is the only person who can run the grader and he is working as fast as possible. There is so much to be done he has to work on a priority basis, so he is busy with other pressing issues.
- Jim Hayes went on to say that he and his team member are stripping the pit to get it ready in case they are able to start crushing gravel before winter, but he hasn't heard back about the matter. There are 900+ loads of material that need to be hauled and he is only a crew of two.
- Town Clerk Deb Benoit reported that no applications have been submitted for the open positions. Jim said he wants the wording of the ad to be edited to be more reader-friendly and informative. He gave the board an example of what he thought could get more applications in. Deb read aloud the current ad. It was posted in the Caledonian Record

several times. Marcia Martel wanted to post the ad in additional places to try to reach more people. Jen D'Agostino recommended VLCT or Facebook.

- Deb Caldwell thought that offering a sign-on bonus may help. Ron Gray pointed out that the Board is doing their best to balance incentivizing recruits and keeping the town budget as low as possible. He agreed that rewriting the ad and posting it in additional places is a good idea.
- Deb Caldwell pointed out that running an understaffed crew increases overtime costs which would be relieved if more staff were hired. Jim pointed out that the whole team working for Danville Municipality just received a \$2 per hour raise for retention.
- McLaughlin asked about our employee retention and why there is such a high turnover rate. Ron Gray said he is unsure why we are struggling to retain employees considering how good the benefit package is. He compared rates and benefits with other local municipalities and found Waterford to be a strong competitor.
- Debra Caldwell pointed out that we are also competing against companies who are not municipalities for hiring folks with a CDL. She recommended researching the average wage for all CDL drivers in the state and using that information to consider what could incentivize people to apply for town positions. Ron Gray said he spoke with a CDL driver for a different company and the wages offered by Waterford are comparable and the benefits are better. Jim Hayes pointed out that the biggest difference is town employees are on call 24/7. Jim and his wife Kristina Hayes expressed the impact and difficulties of being on call 24/7.
- Jen D'Agostino asked the Board to consider offering to pay for a CDL if a long-term commitment is made. She noted that Ron's patience and attention to citizens were noted and appreciated, but she is worried about what would happen if Jim Hayes becomes sick or is unable to work for any reason. She wants the Board to have plans and solutions for what they're going to do to move forward.
- Tim Doyon said he knows local people who hire out their grading services to towns, so there are options available.
- Sukey Watson explained that it is impossible to plan for every possible situation. They can only deal with events as they come and do their best to respond accordingly. She agrees they will have to widen their net to reach more people.

McLaughlin Drive (Discussion/Action)

- A site visit was conducted on September 23, 2024.
- The McLaughlin's had two major concerns- the reduced property access and the damage to their mailbox and shed.
- Ron Gray said that the damage done to the shed and mailbox must be sorted out with the company the town hired to do the work. The company told Jim Hayes they had tried reaching out, but the McLaughlin's said they have not been contacted. Ron agreed to help

them get in contact with the company and Jim will bring up the issue to the company again as well.

- The McLaughlin's believe it is the town's responsibility to take care of the issue since it was the town who had a contract with the company, not themselves. Ron explained that the contractors are held liable for any potential damage, and contractors are only hired if they present proof of insurance. Marcel Lapierre confirmed the company in question did present proof of insurance, so they will be able to reconcile the situation somehow.
- Jim Hayes commented on the reduced access to their property. He said the way the road was before did not work and needed to be fixed. He did the work in good faith to take down the shed and the town paid for it in exchange for approval to widen the road to an adequate size. Mrs. McLaughlin discussed other possible solutions to the flooding issue that would not have resulted in the loss of any of their property access, but Jim did not agree that they would have been sufficient solutions. Jim and the Board members recognize that their access to that property was reduced, but they believe it is still sufficient. Jim clarified that he did not intend to target them, he was just doing what needed to be done for the welfare of the town.
- Sukey Watson motioned to consider the property access matter resolved and no further action is needed. Kevin Gillander seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0.

Highway Update (Discussion)

- Road Foreman Jim Hayes pointed out two driveways on Simpson Brook Road that are in violation of the town's driveway policy and are causing problems with grading the road. He recommended the Board send them letters to let them know they are in violation and tell them what needs to be fixed. Marcia Martel agreed that sending letters is a good course of action.
- Grants have been taken care of. The town got a \$27k Better Back Roads grant for Simpson Brook Road and a \$18k Better Back Roads grant for Hale Road.
- Paving has been completed on Daniels Farm Road. He has one concern he will look into.
- Hale Road needs a guardrail put up. The footprint has changed so the guardrails need to be upgraded, and FEMA will reimburse the cost.

Shadow Lake Road Paving Quotes (Discussion/Action)

- Ron Gray sent the quotes to Jim Hayes. Jim hasn't been able to get in contact with FEMA to sort out exactly what they will cover, but he is working on it. Marcel Lapierre offered to help and will try calling them tomorrow.
- Jim had asked Ron to contact Pike, Blacktop Inc, and Central Asphalt Paving to get quotes for the job. Blacktop did not submit a quote because they don't have availability in their schedule to do the job before winter.

- Ron read the offers from both companies for all three options given. Jim cautioned the Board to think about the choice they make in case FEMA can't pay for it, but he was worried about postponing the decision and being left without enough time to do the job.
- Marcel Lapierre informed the Board the town has about \$400k left of the \$ 1 million loan. The box culvert for Mad Brook Road should be covered by FEMA, so that does not need to be considered an expense.
- Marcia Martel motioned to accept Pike's offer for option 3 at \$98,350 if FEMA will cover it. They will call a special meeting to deal with the situation if FEMA will not pay for it. Kevin Gillander seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0.

Fire Department Update (Discussion)

- Ron Gray shared that Fire Chief Colin Fucci was not able to attend the meeting. Ron spoke with Colin and learned that the Rescue Turbo Truck needs to be fixed. They received a quote from Twin State Ford for \$4593.58, North Country Ford for \$4882, and Wes Ward Auto for \$5506.89. Colin recommended North Country Ford because they were the shop that was able to diagnose the problem.

Cemetery Committee Update (Discussion)

- Committee member Deb Benoit gave an update. They are set to distribute flags for Veterans Day. They have a new list in place that has been verified and they have the flags ready in-house.
- There were nine burials this year, six last year, and four the year before. Local funeral homes are expecting at least ten per year from now on due to the aging Baby Boomer population.
- Three new stones were installed this summer along with corner markers. They filled in one sunken grave and leveled off another.
- They sent a notice out that all cemeteries are closing on November 2. All things left on/at graves need to be collected by then. The flags for Veterans Day will be picked up by the committee a few days after the holiday.

Budget to Actual with Treasurer Heather Gonyaw (Discussion/Action)

- Town Treasurer Heather Gonyaw was not able to come to tonight's meeting. Assistant Treasurer Marcel Lapierre was present, but he said he is unfamiliar with the budget right now.
- Kevin Gillander and Marcia Martel met with the Transfer Station about their budget with Heather and they plan to meet with Jim Hayes next Wednesday. Marcia will reach out to Heather to make sure she can attend.
- Town Clerk Deb Benoit announced she and Heather need to know in advance what they will be discussing when they are requested to attend a meeting so they can be prepared with answers. She reminded Ron that the previous Chairmen were in constant contact

with herself and Heather to make sure the budget could be completed on time. She pointed out that they are always available to answer questions, but using two hours for a meeting where they only answer questions for a few minutes is not an efficient use of their limited work hours.

Appoint Library Trustee (Action)

- Library Trustee Jen D'Agostino nominated Caroline D'Anjou to fill the remainder of the term until Town Meeting. She has been a trustee in the past and volunteers for various library events, so she is well-prepared and involved.
- Sukey Watson motioned to approve the nomination. Marcia Martel seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0.

The first meeting in November falls on a holiday, so it will be held on Tuesday, November 12, 2024 at 6pm.

Marcia Martel announced that Great River Hydro has filed in court over their taxes.

Agenda Items for Next Meeting, October 28, 2024 6pm

- Development Review Board Hearing Application Approval
- Budget

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

- Marcia Martel motioned to enter Executive Session. Kevin Gillander seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0. The group entered Executive Session at 7:49 PM.
- The Group exited Executive Session at 7:59 pm.

Adjourn

- Marcia Martel made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Kevin Gillander seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0. The meeting was adjourned at 8:02 pm.

