

TOWN OF CLARENDON, VERMONT

MINUTES

SELECTBOARD MEETING-REGULAR

Monday, September 14th, 2015

SELECT BOARD MEMBERS:

Robert Bixby, Clerk
Robert Congdon, Jr. (A)
Michael Klopchin, Chair
Arthur Knox
Rick Wilbur (A)

CALL TO ORDER: At 6:00 p.m.

PRESENT WHEN MEETING CALLED TO ORDER: Select Board (3), the Administrative Assistant, the Treasurer, the Road Commissioner, and Town Agent Gale Licausi. Citizens present were George Ambrose, Carol Geery, Marion Pratico, Cindy Davis, and John McKenna.

AGENDA ADDITIONS/DELETIONS: The Board Chair advised that the Ira Select Board, scheduled to attend, were not coming and should be deleted from the agenda; Selectman Bixby moved to remove Ira from the agenda, Selectman Knox seconded, the motion carried unopposed. The Administrative Assistant requested that the New Copy Rates be tabled for the present; Selectman Knox motioned to delete New Copy Rates from the agenda, Selectman Bixby seconded, the motion carried unopposed.

APPROVAL OF SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES: Selectman Bixby motioned to approve the August 24th, 2015 Select Board minutes subject to omissions or corrections, Selectman Knox seconded, the motion carried unopposed. There were no corrections to the minutes.

HIGHWAY: The Road Commissioner was present and participated in discussion.

Salt Shed: The Board Chair asked the Road Commissioner about the proposed Salt Shed, the Road Commissioner responded that Selectman Congdon was looking into prices for the shed, a brief discussion followed about possible dimensions and placement. Selectman Knox advised that the shed needs to be done soon.

School Bus Stop Sign: The Administrative Assistant advised the Board and the Road Commissioner that a citizen on Walker Mountain Road had requested a School Bus Stop Ahead sign for the sharp corner in Clarendon Springs; the Road Commissioner requested that the Administrative Assistant get the exact address for correct placement of the sign.

The Board Chair asked if any members had concerns for the Road Commissioner. Selectman Bixby reminded the Road Commissioner of an ongoing issue on Shrewsbury Road; the Road Commissioner advised that it would be addressed this week as there are now more trucks in the garage. Selectman Knox asked about the paving work on Walker Mountain Road, specifically the shoulders of the road; the Road Commissioner responded that the work was not done yet, and Fuller Sand and Gravel would be finishing the shoulders. The Board Chair suggested a possible guard rail on Chapman's Corner; a brief discussion followed regarding the school buses turning at the y-intersection on Walker Mountain Road; the Board Chair advised that it was not safe, and suggested the Church parking lot as a safer alternative; the Road

TOWN OF CLARENDON, VERMONT

MINUTES

SELECTBOARD MEETING-REGULAR

Monday, September 14th, 2015

Commissioner stated that the parking lot is not always plowed during winter months at the times the school bus is out. The Board Chair instructed the Administrative Assistant to call the school about the matter.

The Board Chair asked the Road Commissioner if he had any concerns; the Road Commissioner advised the Board that he would like to build a grizzly sand screen, and would like approval to spend \$1000 on the project; a brief discussion followed on the purpose and need for the grizzly. The Board had no objections, the Board Chair stated that the funds in the Highway budget are at the Commissioner's discretion.

The Board Chair asked if the public had any questions for the Road Commissioner, there were none.

APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS PAYABLE AND PAYROLL WARRANTS: All new warrants and warrants previously signed by the designated Select Board member were approved and signed by all Select Board members.

GUEST-George Ambrose: Mr. George Ambrose presented the Board with a letter addressed to the voters of Clarendon, Shrewsbury, Wallingford, and Tinmouth regarding Act 46. (See attachment 1.) He advised that Act 46 concerns the consolidation of school governance, not schools themselves, with a preferred configuration of schools serving K-12 under one school board. Currently Rutland South Supervisory Union has 815 resident students; 900 are needed to consolidate the boards. A study committee is required, with representation from the four towns; the representatives on the study committee were stated, and Mr. Ambrose advised that the minutes from the committee will be posted. Mr. Ambrose advised that there are two options available: 1. The district preferred configuration of consolidating the school boards; 900 resident students are needed, RSSU has 815. John McKenna stated that other schools have gotten these waivers. 2. Consolidation under Acts 153 and 156, under which a minimum of 4 districts are required; RSSU has 5. Mr. Ambrose advised that both options required the study committee; whatever plan the committee agrees upon must then be approved by the Agency of Education, and must demonstrate increased educational quality with decreased expenses; after the AOE approves the plan, then the voters must approve as well. Why this change needs to be done was discussed; it is the law currently, there will be a reduction in property taxes, schools will keep small school grants, and it provides for sharing of resources. Mr. Ambrose stated that if it is approved, the schools will operate on a day to day basis as they always have, the change will be in the school board; he advised that if nothing is done, in 2018 the Agency of Education will then organize the schools as they see fit, and school closures are a possibility. John McKenna advised that currently schools are limited in what they can increase their budgets by, and if the budget goes over that number, significant penalties will be incurred which will raise tax rates; he discussed the many difficulties in that situation, including rising health care costs, and stated that if the plan is approved, the budget caps would not be in place because it will be a new district. Mr. McKenna advised that the schools are trying to keep below the budget cap and are not looking for an excuse to spend money, but that the cap may involve cutting teaching staff at a time when student enrollment is growing, which would hurt the students. Meetings are being planned to inform the public, but Mr. McKenna advised that help is needed getting the news out, and perhaps getting the waiver for having less than 900 students. The Board Chair asked if it appeared that a consolidation with Rutland City was being pushed; Mr. McKenna replied that he was unsure about the State's intentions, that there had been communication with the Rutland Superintendent; he advised that RSSU is more prepared than many other districts, and that in his opinion, RSSU is more likely to gain schools than lose any. Marion Pratico asked when the study

TOWN OF CLARENDON, VERMONT

MINUTES

SELECTBOARD MEETING-REGULAR

Monday, September 14th, 2015

needed to be done by; it was replied that January 2016 was the aim, as RSSU wants to get as much for tax incentives as they can. Carol Geery commented that many school boards across the district already work together and have many of the same members, so the representation will not be very different than what it is now. John McKenna commented that the representation will be population based. There was a brief discussion on how that representation is calculated by population. Mr. Ambrose advised that if the public liked how the schools are now, then the consolidation will help keep it that way; he advised that letters had been sent to other school boards to discuss what RSSU was doing. Public information meetings were discussed, John McKenna advised that letters will most likely be sent after the meetings to inform the public of what had transpired. The Board Chair advised that the letter presented to the Board would be posted on the website. Selectman Bixby asked if there was a possibility, once the consolidation was passed, of the State forcing the district to accept other schools; Mr. Ambrose replied that the schools would have to request joining the district. Mr. McKenna advised that most likely any "orphaned" schools would be forced together into a new district. Requirements of Act 46 were discussed, as well as what might happen to school choice and schools that have it. Mr. Ambrose advised that if the consolidation is approved there will have to be a special election to elect new directors for the new board and to approve a budget; a discussion followed on the challenges of crafting a budget for the potential new district; Mr. McKenna reiterated that the schools will not change, the governance will. Selectman Knox asked what the Select Board's role was in the process, Mr. Ambrose replied helping to get the word out, Mr. McKenna spoke of possibly writing a letter to the legislature for the potential waiver needed, a brief discussion followed. The Select Board asked to be kept informed, and the Board Chair reiterated that the letter would be posted.

GUEST-Gale Licausi, Town Agent: The Town Agent advised the Board that she had updates regarding ongoing litigation, and requested an Executive Session to discuss.

EXECUTIVE SESSION REQUESTED BY TOWN AGENT TO DISCUSS ONGOING LITIGATION: Selectman Knox motioned to go into Executive Session to discuss litigation, Selectman Bixby seconded, the motion passed unopposed. There was a brief discussion on the need for Executive Session and the town's attorney. Executive Session was entered at 6:46. Upon return to the public, Selectman Knox motioned to exit Executive Session, Selectman Bixby seconded, the motion passed unopposed, Executive Session was exited at 7:26. The Board Chair advised the public that the Board had been updated on legal documentation by the Town Agent, a brief discussion followed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS [10 minutes]:

Marion Pratico asked if the town had been reimbursed for the 7b paving work; the Treasurer responded that the town had paid for the work and the Administrative Assistant had submitted for reimbursement. Ms. Pratico asked Gale Licausi, the Clerk of the Planning Commission: if a regular Planning Commission meeting was scheduled, the public attended, and there was a quorum, why was the meeting not held? The Planning Commission Clerk explained that for the meeting in question, there had not been a quorum of four, so the remaining members, not wanting to waste time, decided to hold a workshop, for which they did not need a quorum. The workshop had begun, when a fourth member arrived unexpectedly. The members decided to continue with the workshop, since it was already scheduled. A discussion

TOWN OF CLARENDON, VERMONT

MINUTES

SELECTBOARD MEETING-REGULAR

Monday, September 14th, 2015

followed on the meeting in question, at which point the Board Chair advised that Public Comments had used up its allotted time and was finished.

OLD BUSINESS:

Locked File Cabinets: The Administrative Assistant advised that she had looked into replacing the filing cabinets in question, and that it would be far more cost effective to spend the estimated \$150 to replace the locks. A brief discussion followed on the necessity of locking the cabinets; it was questioned why they were not placed in the vault, the Board Chair advised that there was no room in the vault. Selectman Bixby moved that the locks be replaced with the cost not to exceed \$150, Selectman Knox seconded, the motion carried unopposed.

The Board Chair recognized Cindy Davis, who asked about the recent office arrangement change. A brief discussion followed on the reasoning for the change.

NEW BUSINESS:

Appropriations Letters Deadline: The Administrative Assistant advised the Board that several organizations had inquired as to the deadline for appropriation requests to be put on the ballot for Town Meeting. November 1st was proposed, the Road Commissioner advised that November 1st was a Sunday, November 2nd was then agreed upon for the deadline. Selectman Bixby advised that requests received after that date should not be considered. The deadline would be posted on the website.

Special Officer for the Town, Jerry Tift: The appointment of the Special Officer for the Town was discussed, as well as the roll of the Special Officer versus constables. The Board Chair asked the Administrative Assistant to find when the Special Officer's term expires, and the issue of appointment was tabled until the next Select Board meeting.

Workshop Approval for Administrative Assistant: The Administrative Assistant advised that she would like to attend two workshops; a budget workshop on September 30th, and the Town Fair workshop on October 8th; the cost would be \$60 each. A brief discussion followed; Selectman Knox motioned that the Board approve the \$120 plus mileage, and thanked the Administrative Assistant for going to the workshops. Selectman Bixby seconded, and the motion carried unopposed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS ONLY (5 minutes): There were no public comments on agenda items.

TOWN OFFICER REPORTS:

The Administrative Assistant brought the following to the Board's attention:

1. Municipal Pollution Control Projects Priority List, the Rutland County Solid Waste District Financial Statements, and the Phase 1 Archaeology Survey Proposed Improvements – Area 5, Rutland Southern Vermont Airport. No action was taken, and the documents are available to the public in the town office.

TOWN OF CLARENDON, VERMONT

MINUTES

SELECTBOARD MEETING-REGULAR

Monday, September 14th, 2015

2. Letter from Kevin Morgan – the Board viewed a letter from Morgan Electric stating that he was available to do the upgrade to the town garage, which the Chair read aloud. There was a brief discussion on the budgeting of the work. The Board Chair asked if the Board still wanted to do the upgrade; Selectman Knox stated yes, Selectman Bixby also stated yes, but wanted a cost estimate. Cindy Davis asked why the job was not being put to bid, she was informed that it was too small a job. There was a brief discussion on what the job might cost; the Board Chair suggested a cap of \$2,500, the treasurer suggested getting an estimate. The Board Chair directed the Administrative Assistant to contact Morgan Electric with the details and to get an estimate of the work. Selectman Bixby suggested if the price is agreeable to get the work done immediately, the rest of the Board and the Treasurer agreed.

3. Health Officer – An update was given on a property on Windy Lane with a large refuse pile in the yard that could be a potential health hazard. The Board Chair advised that the Health Officer had attempted to contact the owners, but could not and believed the building to be abandoned. The Board Chair then informed the Board that the current Health Officer, Roxanne Phelps, had expressed to him that she may not want to continue in the role. The Administrative Assistant advised that Mr. Richard Griffith had expressed interest in the position; there was a brief discussion on the possibility, if the current Health Officer were to resign, of paying half pay to her as an assistant to the next Health Officer. Selectman Bixby stated the matter could be discussed at budget time. The Board Chair instructed the Administrative Assistant to contact both Roxanne Phelps and Richard Griffith to set up a meeting to discuss the matter.

The Treasurer explained for the Board's information that the current use hold harmless agreement has been turned into a grant agreement with the treasurer as the grantee, instead of the Board; the treasurer informed the Board that she had signed it.

SELECT BOARD MEMBERS CONCERNS: The Board Chair asked the members present if they had any concerns.

Selectman Knox reiterated his desire that the shoulders on the Walker Mountain paving job be completed.

Selectman Bixby requested that the water cooler in the town office have a cup holder attached so the cups would not be on the floor. He also advised the Board that he would like to make room in the budget for a flag pole for the town hall.

ADJOURNMENT: Selectman Knox motioned to adjourn at 8:08 pm, Selectman Bixby seconded, the motion passed unopposed.

SIGNED: _____ Michael Klopchin, Chair /s

SIGNED: _____ Robert Bixby, Clerk/s

These minutes taken by Administrative Assistant Heather Kent, and were approved August 28th, 2015.

TOWN OF CLARENDON, VERMONT

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SELECTBOARD MEETING-REGULAR

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APPROVED