

**TOWN OF STAMFORD
SELECTBOARD MEETING
January 18, 2024
(UNAPPROVED)**

Present: Selectboard: Michael G. Denault, Vice Chair, Pamela Tworig, Kurt Gamari, and Marie Kelly-Whitney.

Nancy L. Bushika was not present.

Visitors: Sally Bohl, Debra Burchard, Alex Dargie, Lisa Gardner, Jedidiah Gramlin, Lisa Gramlin, Victoria Jefferies, Sheila Lawrence, and Sheila Pecor.

William Levine, Emergency Management Director.

Lori Shepard, Selectboard Secretary.

Mike Denault opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance, welcomed everyone, and read a statement with procedural rules for the meeting. Additional correspondence, a request for a warrant article, and an executive session were added to the agenda. There were no changes to its order.

HEARING OF VISITORS

Jed Gramlin stated that it would be rather simple and fairly inexpensive to record or live-stream the Selectboard meetings. He suggested starting with recording first and then if the board desired, they could move to live-streaming.

MINUTES

MOTION by Kurt Gamari to accept the regular meeting minutes of January 4, 2024 as written.

SECONDED by Pam Tworig. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

MOTION by Kurt Gamari to accept the regular meeting minutes of January 11, 2024 as written.

SECONDED by Pam Tworig. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

SELECTBOARD ORDERS

The Selectboard reviewed and approved the following orders:

WARRANT #1 \$ 7,745.43 payroll

WARRANT #2 \$62,143.50 accounts payable

FINANCIALS

The Selectboard reviewed and confirmed financial statements for the month of December.

ROAD CONDITIONS

None.

RECYCLING

Mike Denault noted that the ends of batteries accepted at the transfer station need to be covered with electrical tape.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

The town's Hazard Mitigation Plan is almost finished.

BUDGET WORK SESSION

The Selectboard worked on the 2024 budget. Bill Levine asked about his request to hire a third highway laborer. Dave Tatro would rather spend the money paving roads to reduce his workload than spend money on a third person. The board will wait to see how the final budget looks and discuss it with Dave Tatro.

WARRANT ARTICLES

1. The Selectboard reviewed the first draft of the warrant and the proposed articles. The Selectboard will allow the voters to decide whether to fund law enforcement. Mike Denault stressed the importance of calling 911 for any emergency, not the Bennington Sheriff.
2. The town received a valid petition signed by registered voters asking the town not to participate in the FEMA buyout program. Bill Levine suggested for clarity's sake to change the wording to ask the voters to participate in the program and not to include the full paragraph as presented. Mike Denault questioned the moderator guidelines concerning changing the wording of a voter-backed petition. The petitioner will be contacted. The Selectboard contacted the Vermont League of Cities & Towns who said it is the Selectboard's decision whether to participate in the FEMA buyout, not a voter decision, so a vote on this article would be advisory only. Deb Burchard asked the board to attach her statement to the minutes as to why she wants the buyout approved. She is frustrated that there has been no movement on the buyout program. Mike Denault said the board agreed to look into it, but when the documents were received, he was uncomfortable signing them and had several questions. Kurt Gamari agreed that there seemed to be much more town involvement that the board wasn't told about. The board will contact the FEMA buyout representative.
3. Marie Kelly-Whitney has contacted other towns concerning the digital speed radar signs and will search for grant funds.

SELECTBOARD REPORT FOR TOWN REPORT

The Selectboard will review the Selectboard report at the next meeting.

NEW STAMFORD SIGN

The Selectboard received the Zoning Board of Adjustment's decision denying its appeal for a variance. Sheila Pecor was not happy that the Selectboard has sought advice from outside agencies, the ZBA and the town attorney who all confirmed that proper procedures were not followed, yet because they don't like the decision, they are going through hoops to not follow the By-laws. Bill Levine said the January 28, 2024 removal deadline is not valid since the decision was not made in an open meeting. Bill Levine proposed a warrant article that the town pursue all options available before removing the sign. He revealed some of the options he was researching. Kurt Gamari questioned the waiver process. Sheila Lawrence felt the Zoning Board of Adjustment had to follow the By-laws and issued their decision following the rules. The Selectboard felt removing the sign is not in the best interest of the town. Mike Denault would like to ask the Zoning Board for an extension. Deb Burchard feels the date is inconsequential and nothing will happen until the Zoning Board meets again. She said she would have to enforce the ZBA decision by fining the town if the removal date was valid.

MOTION by Marie Kelly-Whitney to contact the ZBA stating the Selectboard does not recognize the January 28, 2024 removal date as it was not a result of a public meeting and would like to postpone the removal date until school is out. SECONDED by Kurt Gamari. 3 in favor, 1 opposed (Mike Denault). Motion APPROVED.

MOTION by Mike Denault to table Bill Levine's proposed article until the next meeting. SECONDED by Kurt Gamari. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

RESIGNATION

MOTION by Mike Denault to accept the resignation of Susan Flash as Green Up Day Coordinator with regret and send her a letter of acknowledgement. SECONDED by Marie Kelly-Whitney. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

It was decided that no executive session was necessary.

MOTION by Marie Kelly-Whitney to adjourn. SECONDED by Kurt Gamari. All in favor. Motion APPROVED. The meeting ended at 8:02 p.m.

Marie Kelly-Whitney
Clerk

/las

REMINDERS

1. Townspeople should sign up with the state's free communications network, VT-Alert. You can sign up at vtalert.gov to receive notifications. You can choose how you would like to be alerted (phone call, text or email) and can choose what type of alerts you would like to receive, i.e. weather, road closures, public health, etc.
2. Anyone interested in serving as Green Up Day Coordinator should contact a Selectboard member or the town office.
2. The town office is open Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. and on Thursdays from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. Closed Mondays.

PETITIONS FOR WARRANT ARTICLES & ELECTED POSITIONS

The deadline for filing petitions with the town clerk for warrant articles to be included in the town meeting warning is Thursday, January 18, 2024. These petitions must be signed by 5% of the registered voters or at least 36 signatures. V.S.A. 17:2642(a)

The required signatures on a petition to run for an elected office are 1% of the registered voters or at least 8 signatures. The deadline for filing these petitions with the Town Clerk is Monday, January 29, 2024 by 5:00 p.m. Nominating papers and the Consent of Candidate form may be picked up at the Town Office. V.S.A. 17:2681(a) (b).

Elected positions to be filled this year are:

Town Moderator - 1 year term (*Paul Dupuis*)
School Moderator - 1 year term (*Paul Dupuis*)
Selectboard member - 2 year term (*Pamela Tworig*)
Selectboard member - 3 year term (*Marie Kelly-Whitney*)
School Director - 2 year term (*Elizabeth Parrington*)
School Director - 3 year term (*Kelly Holland*)
Collector of Delinquent Taxes - 1 year term (*Sally A. Bohl*)
Cemetery Commissioner - 3 year term (*David McKay*)
Cemetery Commissioner – 1 year remaining on a 3 year term (*Sheila G. Lawrence*)
Library Trustee - 3 year term (*Caroline S. Burch*)

Town meeting will be held on Monday, March 4, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. with the town portion first, followed by the school.

Voting will be held on Tuesday, March 5, 2024 from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. at the Town of Stamford Community Room. Applications for addition to the checklist will be accepted at the town office up to and throughout election day.

Absentee ballots will be available until 5:00 p.m. on Monday, March 4, 2024. Please call the town office at 694-1361.

Anyone interested in serving as an appointed board member, please review the expiring appointed positions in the town report and contact a member of that board or the Selectboard.

RECEIVED

JAN 18 2024

TOWN OF STAMFORD

Statement below was received from Debra Burchard to be included with the January 18, 2024 Select-board minutes

This proposed warrant article is short-sighted, poorly written, and negative. The select board has already voted to move forward with FEMA buyouts on a case-by-case basis, exploring all options with an applicant before a decision on the buyout program will be made.

I'm not sure why we would even entertain such a restrictive and final decision that will directly affect people's property rights, and I do believe that everyone here cherishes their property rights. In fact, that was the whole premise of our 2020 by-law revision.

Right now, new building in the River Corridor and Flood Hazard Area is restricted by our by-laws and building within the River Corridor is already a prohibited activity.

This is not just about my property, rather about everyone who is in the River Corridor and Flood Hazard Area that is now or can be in the future affected by the catastrophic flooding that we have been witnessing. Yes, our property on Clough Road is doomed, and we must deal with this now, but to permanently take away the right to use this program from every other property owner who might find themselves in a similar situation is woefully short-sighted on the part of the SB. Cite us, Dargie, Markland, Eunice Rice, etc.

I do believe that we participate in the NFIP, which dictates that we follow regulations within these flood prone areas. Could this jeopardize our standing within that program? Are we putting mortgage holders at risk of not being able to purchase flood insurance?

The FEMA buyout program is much more than a simple payment for a house that is at risk of flooding, rather it can be a safety-net for property owners-residents & non-residents-who are facing losing their biggest investment. Many of whom might face financial hardships as a result.

Many of the properties that are cited as "at-risk" are not necessarily a candidate for a buyout. FEMA has been successful in aiding relocating structures on higher ground, buying out a portion of the property so that the owner can rebuild elsewhere on their property, and generally working creatively to solve a property owner's problem.

This a program that is funded by all of our tax dollars. We all pay for it, although it is a zero cost to the town. I actually heard someone say about our situation, "too bad, it sucks to be you". Well, unfortunately, if this article is allowed to move forward, I'm afraid that "it will suck to be you, Stamford".

I am asking the Select Board to reject this warrant article and continue their original commitment to the town's people of Stamford to review these cases individually.