

**TOWN OF STAMFORD  
SELECTBOARD MEETING  
December 21, 2023  
(UNAPPROVED)**

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

Visitors: Debra Burchard, Laura Champagne, Jedidiah Gramlin, Lisa Gramlin, Sheila Lawrence, Beth Phelps, Deborah Righi, James Righi, Denise Rondeau, David Saldo, and Trevor Tatro.  
William Levine, Emergency Management Director.  
David R. Tatro, Road Commissioner.  
Lori Shepard, Selectboard Secretary.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

MOTION by Nancy Bushika to find that premature public discussion of personnel matters would place the town at a substantial disadvantage. SECONDED by Kurt Gamari. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

MOTION by Nancy Bushika to enter executive session for employee reviews pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(5) and 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3). SECONDED by Kurt Gamari. All in favor. Motion APPROVED. The Selectboard entered executive session at 5:00 p.m. Michael Brothers, Dave Tatro, Luke McKay, Debra Burchard, Theresa Denault and Lori Shepard were each invited individually to participate.

MOTION by Mike Denault to exit executive session. SECONDED by Kurt Gamari. All in favor. Motion APPROVED. The board exited executive session at 6:20 p.m. No action was taken.

Nancy Bushika opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance, welcomed everyone, and read a statement with procedural rules for the meeting. The upcoming tax sale topic was added to the agenda as well as an executive session at the end of the meeting.

**HEARING OF VISITORS**

1. Beth Phelps stated that she filed a notice to build an agricultural structure on her property. There were many questions asked of her. She read the state law and the town's Zoning By-laws and said the structure she is building is within the guidelines. There was a lot of discussion at the last Planning Commission meeting concerning her building and the Zoning Administrator had stated that she did not want to sign the notices. Beth Phelps asked whether the town clerk could sign them as received. Mike Denault noted that the Zoning Administrator is new and this was an opportunity for all of us to learn. Deb Burchard said she would sign the building notices.
2. Sheila Lawrence said that at the last Planning Commission meeting there were board members who couldn't get a word in because people in the audience were so outspoken. Mike Denault suggested she speak to the Planning Commission chair about it. Sheila Lawrence and Kurt Gamari agreed that it was a very lively meeting and Aaron Malachuk did a good job as chair.
3. Dave Saldo feels the speeding on the Main Road is bad and the Selectboard should purchase the digital radar speed signs. The board discussed permanent vs. portable signs. Kurt Gamari supported the digital radar sign as a compromise to hiring the sheriff. Pam Tworig stated that the board received a very aggressive letter from a resident who feels the board should have hired the sheriff. Denise Rondeau suggested contacting the Wilmington Police Department to see if they will patrol in Stamford. After further discussion, the board agreed that the matter should be brought to the town in a clear and concise way.

4. Dave Saldo felt it is a terrible idea to allow houses to be sold to FEMA and noted that the town will lose tax money. The board explained the FEMA buyout program and that houses in the river corridor and DFIRM would be eligible for the program. Dave Saldo noted that houses in the river corridor have existed in Stamford for over 100 years and it's not good to let the federal government come in and take them. Mike Denault agreed with him. The board reviewed the number of potential houses at risk and whether the Selectboard should set criteria they would consider for a buyout or whether they would accept the standards already outlined by FEMA. Dave Saldo felt the FEMA buyout decision should be a town vote. Sheila Lawrence noted that the Planning Commission was given five different Flood Hazard Area By-law models and they chose to adopt model five which was more flexible than the other models.
5. Deb Burchard conveyed a message from Janet Hurley from the Bennington County Regional Commission asking if the town wanted to pursue the Municipal Technical Assistance Program. The deadline to participate is December 31, 2023. The program covered municipal septic and water infrastructure and other projects that did not seem to benefit the town.
6. Laura Champagne asked about trash being dumped at the recycling station after hours. Pam Tworig noted that she dropped off the cardboard boxes from the Wreaths Across America ceremony after hours but was not dumping trash.
7. Tom Nazzewski provided a copy of the certificate of insurance coverage for the snowmobile club.

#### MINUTES

MOTION by Mike Denault to accept the regular meeting minutes of December 7, 2023 as written.  
SECONDED by Kurt Gamari. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

#### SELECTBOARD ORDERS

The Selectboard reviewed and approved the following orders:

- WARRANT #49 \$ 7,793.39 payroll
- WARRANT #50 \$156,380.64 accounts payable

#### FINANCIAL

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

#### ROAD CONDITIONS

1. The highway crew has been dealing with winter, minor flooding and mud, but the roads are in good shape. There is only a thin layer of gravel left on our roads.
2. Pam Tworig was approached by a resident who complained that The Lane sign was faded and requested a new sign. Dave Tatro advised that his budget for road signs is very small and he needs to prioritize his work. The road conditions are always much more important and signs are often at the bottom of the list. There are several signs that should be replaced. Dave Tatro will take a look around town. Mike Denault requested that if people cannot attend a meeting person that they send in a written letter to the Selectboard. He said Selectboard members have no authority to make decisions or act individually.
3. Laura Champagne said the rocks are really sticking up on Brown Brook Road. It needs gravel and some culvert replacements.

#### RECYCLING

1. Pam Tworig was approached by a resident who has not been able to get to the town office to purchase a new transfer station card. They would like to be able to purchase the access cards right

at the recycling center. The board will discuss it next year when the new recycling card season begins.

2. The recycling monitors are overwhelmed with the amount of batteries they have acquired and have asked for some additional time to tape and package them to send out. Dave Tatro was not aware that they had so many batteries. He will look into it.

#### EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Lori Shepard did not have a chance to update the Continuity of Operations Plan with the changes from last meeting. The plan will be discussed at the next meeting.

#### FINANCE COMMITTEE

Mike Denault felt it is good to have a Finance Committee to review and support the budget. Deb Burchard and Sheila Lawrence volunteered to serve on the Committee. Nancy Bushika noted that the guidelines established by the Selectboard require at least three or four members. Anyone interested in serving on the Finance Committee for this budget season should send in a letter of interest to the Selectboard by their next meeting on January 4, 2024.

#### BUDGET MEETINGS

The Selectboard scheduled budget work sessions for January 4, 11, 18, 22 and 25. Nancy Bushika will talk to the School Directors to reschedule the joint meeting previously scheduled for January 25, 2024.

#### TAX SALE

The tax sale has been scheduled for Wednesday, January 3, 2024 at 10:30 a.m. A Selectboard member will need to attend to accept the property if there are no other bids.

#### TOWN OFFICE

The town office will be closed for the week between Christmas and New Years.

#### FEMA BUYOUT

Nancy Bushika said she had trouble receiving the application so it has not been filed yet. Deb Burchard confirmed that there will be no up-front costs to the town. Pam Tworig reviewed the FEMA website and saw where FEMA paid to raise the road in order to protect a house instead of just buying the property. Mike Denault feels the money would be better spent if they helped fix the problem so the homeowner could stay in their house, rather than tearing down the house and taking it off the tax roll.

#### NEW STAMFORD SIGN

The Zoning Board of Adjustment meeting to discuss the new sign has been scheduled for Wednesday, January 10, 2024 at 6 p.m.

#### ZONING ADMINISTRATOR PAYMENT STRUCTURE/PERMIT APPLICATION FEES

Deb Burchard provided a synopsis of the permit fees that were reviewed at the last meeting.

#### LAW ENFORCEMENT

Mike Denault spoke to the Bennington County Sheriff Office. The patrol rate they are offering Stamford has increased to \$72.50/hour. It will include travel time, although they are agreeable to

sharing a portion of the travel time with Readsboro. The sheriff will commit to scheduling 15% of the time to late afternoon, weekend and evening coverage. This rate will probably work out to the town receiving a 70% reduction in hours compared to what the town received in 2022. The contract will be discussed at budget time.

#### SCHOOL CUSTODIAN

Nancy Bushika advised that the Stamford School has hired a new custodian. Rich Cristofolini has agreed to train him. The Selectboard will send a letter of appreciation for coming out of retirement again to serve the school and town.

#### DELINQUENT DOGS

Nancy Bushika spoke with Luke McKay. There are still three dogs that are not licensed with the town and the two dog owners seem to be ignoring the Judicial Bureau tickets. When Luke McKay contacted the court to follow up, the court had not received the tickets. They may need to be re-issued if they are not received by the court.

#### TAX FILING

1. The town clerk has reluctantly agreed to submit to the new multi-factor authentication and biometric data verification required by the IRS. She asked if a board member would be willing to submit as well since a second person is also needed on the account. Nancy Bushika agreed.
2. The IRS did not accept the town clerk's letter disputing the charges for the 2nd quarter 2023 tax filing. Pam Tworig suggested that the town request an IRS Tax Payer Advocate to assist us.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION by Pam Tworig to find that premature public discussion of a personnel matter would place the town at a substantial disadvantage. SECONDED by Mike Denault. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

MOTION by Pam Tworig to enter executive session to discuss employee salaries pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(5) and 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3). SECONDED by Mike Denault. All in favor. Motion APPROVED. The Selectboard entered executive session at 8:30 p.m.

MOTION by Mike Denault to exit executive session. SECONDED by Kurt Gamari. All in favor. Motion APPROVED. The board exited executive session at 9:35 p.m. The new salaries will be given to the treasurer.

MOTION by Mike Denault to adjourn. SECONDED by Kurt Gamari. All in favor. Motion APPROVED. The meeting ended at 9:38 p.m.

Marie Kelly-Whitney  
Clerk

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## REMINDERS

1. Townspeople should sign up with the state's free communications network, VT-Alert. You can sign up at [vtalert.gov](http://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 on the Finance Committee for this budget season should send in a letter of interest to the Selectboard by their next meeting on January 4, 2024.
3. 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.