

**TOWN OF STAMFORD  
SELECTBOARD MEETING  
March 7, 2024  
(UNAPPROVED)**

Present: Selectboard: Nancy L. Bushika, Chair, Michael G. Denault, Kurt Gamari, Douglas Wright and John Dunn.

Visitors: Debra Burchard, Tammy Elias, Alden Finney, Jedidiah Gramlin, Lisa Gramlin, Marta Miller, Debra Righi, and James Righi.  
David R. Tatro, Road Commissioner.  
William Levine, Emergency Management Director.  
Lori Shepard, Selectboard Secretary.

Nancy Bushika opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance, welcomed everyone, and read a statement with procedural rules for the meeting. There was an additional excess weight permit added to the agenda. There were no changes to the order.

**REORGANIZATION OF BOARD**

MOTION by Mike Denault to nominate Nancy Bushika as Selectboard Chair. SECONDED by Kurt Gamari. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

MOTION by Kurt Gamari to nominate Mike Denault as Vice Chair. SECONDED by Nancy Bushika. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

MOTION by Mike Denault to nominate Kurt Gamari as Clerk. SECONDED by Doug Wright. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

**APPOINTMENTS**

The Selectboard acknowledged a letter from Sheila Pecor requesting re-appointment to the Zoning Board of Adjustment and a letter from Lisa Gramlin who was interested in serving on the Planning Commission when a seat becomes available. The Selectboard deferred making any appointments and will send letters to those officers up for renewal to ensure they are interested in serving again.

**JUDICIAL BUREAU APPOINTMENTS**

MOTION by Nancy Bushika to remove Pam Tworig and Marie Kelly-Whitney as Issuing and Appearing Officials and add Doug Wright and John Dunn as Issuing and Appearing Officials. SECONDED by Mike Denault. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

**DESIGNATION OF MEETING DATES**

MOTION by Mike Denault to meet on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of each month at 6:00 p.m. SECONDED by John Dunn. All in favor. Motion APPROVED. Meeting dates are subject to review and may be changed.

**DESIGNATION OF NEWSPAPER FOR PUBLICATIONS**

Nancy Bushika contacted the local newspapers and determined that the Berkshire Eagle has the highest circulation in town.

MOTION by John Dunn to designate The Berkshire Eagle as the newspaper for publications. SECONDED by Nancy Bushika. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

DESIGNATION OF SELECTBOARD MEMBER TO REVIEW WARRANTS

MOTION by Mike Denault to designate Nancy Bushika to review bills and have the authority to approve payments prior to Selectboard meetings. SECONDED by John Dunn. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

DESIGNATION OF HIGHWAY LIASON

MOTION by Mike Denault to appoint Kurt Gamari as liaison to the highway department. SECONDED by Doug Wright. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

DESIGNATION OF SCHOOL LIASON

Kurt Gamari noted that the school liaison was not listed. Mike Denault felt if the joint meetings resume, that a liaison might not be necessary. The board agreed that they can appoint a liaison if it seems necessary.

DESIGNATION OF SHERIFF/STATE POLICE LIASON

MOTION by Kurt Gamari to appoint Mike Denault as liaison to the sheriff's department/state police. SECONDED by Doug Wright. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

DESIGNATION OF DV FIBER REPRESENTATION

MOTION by Mike Denault to appoint Bill Levine and Robert Briggs as DV Fiber representatives. SECONDED by Kurt Gamari. All in favor. Motion APPROVED. A letter will be written to CJ Vadnais to see if he would like to continue to serve as a DV Fiber representative.

TOWN WEBSITE

Marie Kelly-Whitney previously offered to continue to take care of the town website. Jed Gramlin offered as well. Nancy Bushika acknowledged that there were problems when someone outside of the Selectboard took care of it. Mike Denault noted that it is important that the person appointed stay within the town's guidelines and felt Marie Kelly-Whitney has done a good job.

MOTION by Kurt Gamari to appoint Marie Kelly-Whitney to continue to take care of the town website for one year and see how it goes. SECONDED by John Dunn. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

HEARING OF VISITORS

Jed Gramlin stated that he was recording the meeting on his phone to test the video and sound quality. He would like to be able to send the recordings to Marie Kelly-Whitney so they are available on the town website. Nancy Bushika will contact the Vermont League of Cities & Towns (VLCT) for a model policy.

MINUTES

MOTION by Mike Denault to accept the regular meeting minutes of February 15, 2024 as written. SECONDED by Kurt Gamari. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

SELECTBOARD ORDERS

The Selectboard reviewed and approved the following orders:

- WARRANT #7 \$ 9,366.14 payroll
- WARRANT #8 \$26,301.41 accounts payable
- WARRANT #9 \$ 8,067.97 payroll

## WARRANT #10 \$18,111.46 accounts payable

### ROAD CONDITIONS

1. MOTION by Nancy Bushika to accept and sign the Annual Financial Plan for Town Highways. SECONDED by Mike Denault. All in favor. Motion APPROVED. Nancy Bushika asked to have the auditor reserve the two early state aid payments received last year so they can be recognized this year.
2. MOTION by Nancy Bushika to accept and sign the Town Road and Bridge Standards. SECONDED by Mike Denault. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.
3. MOTION by Nancy Bushika to accept and sign the Certification of Compliance for Town Road and Bridge Standards. SECONDED by Kurt Gamari. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.
4. The highway crew has added stone in a few places. The roads are in good shape, but it will be a few more weeks before they can grade.
5. The articles to fund and purchase the loader were approved at town meeting and Dave Tatro has begun the search for a used loader. He would like to trade in the current loader so there is no liability to the town for selling it.
6. Dave Tatro noted that Green Mountain Power's response during the recent storm and resulting power outages was completely unacceptable. There were several trees that came down on the electrical wires. He could not get to the highway garage due to a downed tree. The tree company hired by Green Mountain Power was not willing to cut down the tree. The highway crew was forced to cut a tree hanging on the lines when the Fire Department was called out for a chimney fire and had to get through. A letter will be sent to Green Mountain Power.
7. Dave Tatro provided copies to the board of the Spring Road Posting Notices.

### RECYCLING

The two battery boxes have been mailed out.

### DVFIBER

1. Bill Levine said the agreement to sign up for internet service contains the clause that they will provide up to 25 feet of wire from the house entrance to the router. The \$140 charge seems to be the rate when additional cable is needed.
2. Nancy Bushika recalled sending \$7,500.00 last year to help people with installation fees. She asked if he knew if money had been used and what the unused balance was. People voted that the unused portion should be returned to the town. Bill Levine will look into it. He recalled that outreach workers were supposed to be trained to bring assistance to people in need but doesn't know where that stands.

### EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

1. There were two power outages last week, one lasted from 1 to 2 1/2 days. Some people asked what the town was doing for them but no one called 911 to say they needed help. Some suggested people could have stayed at the Fire Department but he said that room is not set up for that purpose. He acknowledged that the library opened as a warming shelter. Bill Levine said that although the school gym is our emergency shelter, it has no showers and can't accommodate pets so it can only be used as a daytime warming shelter, not overnight. The question was raised about using the shelter if school was in session. Bill Levine said if a longer stay is necessary, the plan would be to use St. Elizabeth's in North Adams. He feels the town needs a procedure of who is going to open the shelter and take care of the people. Deb Burchard asked about the Stamford

Community Church. Nancy Bushika acknowledged that the town needs help with this and a group will need to be formed.

2. Bill Levine had decided that he does not want to be appointed as Emergency Management Director. He is willing to work with the Selectboard and mentor the next person. Kurt Gamari thanked him for his dedication and expertise.

3. Bill Levine requested that the Selectboard members take the ICS-100 course.

#### TOWN MEETING RESULTS

The Selectboard reviewed the results of town meeting. They felt voting the school budget by Australian ballot was confusing. Bill Levine felt Paul Dupuis did a great job as moderator. Deb Burchard asked if someone could come to the podium and give a presentation during town meeting and Bill Levine said no.

#### STAMFORD SIGN

Nancy Bushika stated that the Zoning Board of Adjustment upheld their decision that the sign should be removed by January 28, 2024 and did not grant an extension. Mike Denault noted that if this was a private business with a sign violation, that letters would be sent fining the property owner, but it is silly to fine our self and pay our self. Deb Burchard acknowledged that she has not acted on the violation because she didn't want to. Deb Burchard and Bill Levine feel the Selectboard can change the By-laws to make the municipality exempt from the sign restriction. Mike Denault feels it's in the best interest of the town to keep the sign. The board debated keeping the sign up while they investigate the process or taking it down and storing it temporarily and then putting it back up once the By-laws are amended. Jed Gramlin recommended that they take the sign down in the interim. Mike Denault felt the board should consider exempting the municipality from other restrictions in the By-laws. Nancy Bushika disagreed and felt the Selectboard was stepping on the Planning Commission's toes if they change the By-laws themselves. They questioned whether the Selectboard could vote to amend the By-laws or whether a public hearing was necessary first.

MOTION by Doug Wright to remove the sign. SECONDED by Nancy Bushika. 4 in favor, 1 opposed (Mike Denault). Motion APPROVED.

Bill Levine pushed the board to warn its intent to change the By-laws. Nancy Bushika felt the Planning Commission should be asked to update the By-laws. Kurt Gamari felt the board was risking no votes if the board consults with the Planning Commission. Nancy Bushika will contact VLCT to see if the Selectboard can amend the By-laws and whether they need to have a public hearing first.

#### FEMA BUYOUT PROGRAM

Nancy Bushika presented the board with a large packet from Brian McWalters from Vermont Emergency Management. She would like the board to review the information and be prepared to discuss it at the next meeting. Deb Burchard asked the board to research the program. Kurt Gamari said he has determined that there are only four structures in the 100-year floodway and saying yes to this request does not mean that anything will happen overnight. Other property owners may not want to participate or may not even qualify for the program. He said flood relief is noted in the town's Flood Hazard Regulations. Kurt Gamari feels people did not have all of the information on the program at town meeting in order to put it toward a town vote. He thinks this issue has been blown out of proportion. Mike Denault noted there are other programs available to save the home instead of demolishing it. He asked how the town would benefit from participating in this program. Kurt Gamari said the town would save pollution from ending up in the river and relieve flood

mitigation downstream. Deb Burchard noted that Trouts Unlimited was considering applying for the FEMA buyout program on her behalf. The board will contact Brian McWalters to ask if only the homes in the 100-year floodway are eligible, whether homes must have sustained damage or only have the potential for damage, and what criteria they use to approve a property.

#### TRANSFER OF LOT 270 IN ALPENWALD

MOTION by Mike Denault to sign the deed transferring Lot 270. SECONDED by Kurt Gamari. All in favor. Motion APPROVED. The town has received all of the fees from the buyer.

#### UNIFORM MUNICIPAL EXCESS WEIGHT PERMITS

MOTION by Mike Denault to approve the Uniform Municipal Excess Weight Permit applications from West Oil Company, Inc. and r.k. Miles. SECONDED by Kurt Gamari. All in favor. Motion APPROVED. The appropriate fees and insurance information were received from each applicant.

#### BILMONT'S COUNTRY STORE

Kurt Gamari received an informal complaint and asked if the lights were still left on at night.

#### MOWING BIDS

John Dunn asked who takes care of the damage from plowing. Last year the mowing contractor was hired to repair the lawn. The mowing bid information will be added to the next agenda.

#### CORRESPONDENCE

Nancy Bushika received an email concerning the FEMA meeting to discuss the preliminary data in the Deerfield River watershed portion of the Flood Insurance Rate Map sections of town.

#### JOINT MEETING WITH SCHOOL DIRECTORS

Nancy Bushika will contact Erika Bailey to schedule a joint meeting.

#### BUILDING MAINTENANCE

Mike Denault felt that if the town took on some of the building maintenance it would be less costly for the taxpayers since increasing the school budget affects their per-pupil weight and impacts their tax rate. They discussed painting the building and Bill Levine suggested using ARPA money. Nancy Bushika noted that ARPA money needs to be allocated by the end of December 2024 and spent by December 2026 so the Selectboard will have to develop a plan. There were several suggestions proposed.

#### BOARD OF CIVIL AUTHORITY TRAINING

Nancy Bushika has contacted VLCT to provide training this spring but has not been able to finalize the date.

MOTION by Mike Denault to adjourn. SECONDED by Kurt Gamari. All in favor. Motion APPROVED. The meeting ended at 9:12 p.m.

Kurt Gamari  
Clerk

/las

## REMINDERS

1. Townspeople should sign up with the state's free communications network, VT-Alert. You can sign up at [vtaalert.gov](http://vtaalert.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, Emergency Management Director, or any other appointed position, should contact a Selectboard member or the town office.
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.