

**TOWN OF STAMFORD
SELECTBOARD MEETING
April 4, 2024
(UNAPPROVED)**

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

Visitors: Sally Bohl, Debra Burchard, Alden Finney, Jedidiah Gramlin, Lisa Gramlin, Marta Miller, Sheila Pecor, Debra Righi, and James Righi.
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 were no additions or changes to the agenda. Nancy Bushika stated that Jed Gramlin was video recording the meeting.

HEARING OF VISITORS

1. Lisa Gramlin asked how the Planning Commission terms were decided since it was not clear at the last meeting. Peter Greenbush was the first appointment made at the last meeting and was given the first vacancy created by Aaron Malachuk's request not to be reappointed. Lisa Gramlin was the second motion made and was given the next available seat created by the resignation of Deb Burchard. Kurt Gamari felt if someone is already serving on a board and wants to be reappointed, that the Selectboard would reappoint them.

2. The Selectboard recognized Carolyn Brooks' email resigning from the Planning Commission. They noted that Alden Finney had previously sent in a letter of interest to serve on the Planning Commission. Kurt Gamari felt that Jenifer Hughs should be given a chance since she was an ex-officio member who may want to become a voting member. Doug Wright felt Alden Finney has already expressed an interest and should be considered for the appointment. Nancy Bushika agreed.

MOTION by Doug Wright to accept the resignation of Carolyn Brooks from the Planning Commission. SECONDED by Mike Denault. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

MOTION by John Dunn to appoint Alden Finney to the seat vacated by Carolyn Brooks whose term ends in 2027. SECONDED by Mike Denault. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

3. The Selectboard recognized the email from Maura Hawkins requesting reappointment as Septic Officer.

MOTION by Kurt Gamari to reappoint Maura Hawkins as Septic Officer. SECONDED by Mike Denault. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

MINUTES

MOTION by Mike Denault to accept the regular meeting minutes of March 21, 2024 as written. SECONDED by Doug Wright. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

SELECTBOARD ORDERS

The Selectboard reviewed and approved the following orders:

WARRANT #13 \$10,351.16 payroll

WARRANT #14 \$68,072.80 accounts payable

FINANCIALS

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

ROAD CONDITIONS

1. Wade Masure, the Loss Control Consultant at the Vermont League of Cities & Towns will be inspecting the highway garage and town office on April 12, 2024. He is the one who suggested that the town adopt the CDL policy for the highway department.
2. Nancy Bushika received a response from Michael Burke at Green Mountain Power concerning the problems that occurred during the last power outage.
3. Lori Shepard provided a summary of the difficulties she has had filing the July 2023 flood road damages with FEMA. It has been extremely time consuming and they refused to approve the culvert upgrade installed on Klondike Road. The town consulted with the Agency of Transportation representatives who were instrumental in convincing FEMA to accept the project. All damages have been submitted except for the Mill Road costs because the town is still waiting for the contractor to replace the damaged guardrails.

RECYCLING

1. Another hauler has filed their registration form with the town.
2. Mike Denault asked if the town accepts mattresses at the transfer station. He knows a company that accepts mattresses and recycles them which may be better for the town. He will get more information and may invite them to a future Selectboard meeting.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

1. Bill Levine reported that Bob Briggs has been working with Paul Ethier.
2. Bob Briggs met with the Town Clerk to review last year's Local Emergency Management Plan and discuss ideas he had for improvement.

DVFIBER

1. DVFiber is holding an ice cream social in Whitingham to celebrate access to the high-speed internet and encourage more people to sign up. They will have knowledgeable technicians available to answer questions. Bill Levine said they would like to hold one in Stamford.
2. Bill Levine said there are a couple people in town who are waiting for internet because of a conduit problem. He encouraged others in town who may have conduit problems and who have limited means to call himself, Bob Briggs or DVFiber. The town paid \$7,500.00 last year to assist people with limited means.

STAMFORD SIGN

The sign has not been taken down yet. The board has not discussed whether they want to request a change in the Zoning By-laws. Kurt Gamari said the Selectboard would have to request the Planning Commission to make the change. The Planning Commission could choose to do it or not. Mike Denault stated that, at the end of the day, when the sign comes down, there won't be any sign. Kurt Gamari feels municipalities, schools, churches and fire stations should be exempt. Nancy Bushika reviewed 24 V.S.A. section 4413, the statute Mike Denault provided at the last meeting. Her interpretation is that when the Planning Commission makes its By-laws, it can only make certain exemptions. Kurt Gamari said the sign's not hurting anything by leaving it there, except hurting feelings. At the last meeting Dave Tatro was asked to take it down and he will get to it when he can.

FEMA BUYOUT PROGRAM

John Dunn has done a lot of research. He has learned there are multiple programs out there, it's just a matter of applying. He said it comes down to whether the landowner wants to apply. Kurt Gamari said most of the programs require the town to pay a 25% match, but there is no match for the FEMA buyout program. Kurt Gamari does not feel elevating the house would work in this case. He said the state's objective is to re-establish flood plains. Nancy Bushika apologized to the board and the public for the site visit that was changed and then cancelled. Kurt Gamari felt it was a wasted opportunity to learn about river morphology and how it changes over time. Deb Burchard said Josh Carvajal, the state river engineer, could meet with John Dunn and Doug Wright this Wednesday. Deb Burchard said she has aerial photos and reports from Josh Carvajal about her property and John Dunn asked for a copy. Deb Burchard said the Selectboard could come individually but she does not want the liability of having townspeople on her property. Nancy Bushika did not feel the town should take on that liability either. Kurt Gamari noted that stream alteration permits are only given for emergency measures. Mike Denault felt that if the river is close to compromising a septic system, that would be an emergency that would qualify for a permit. Deb Burchard explained the slow progression of the river and then the drastic changes since July. She said she could rip rap the banking and the state engineer said she could either put money into it, or apply for the FEMA buyout. Kurt Gamari felt the property is doomed. John Dunn was looking forward to the site visit to learn what a property owner is allowed to do to protect their property. Mike Denault felt a landowner could only fix their own property, but FEMA could go in and fix more of the river. Mike Denault recalled that the vote at town meeting did not support the FEMA buyout. He said once the town says yes to this program, the town is in it for the long haul. He has been grappling with whether this is in the best interests of the whole town. He can't see how this program is for the betterment of the town. He said FEMA pays the resident, but passes the ownership and responsibility to the town. If other homeowners come forward, the town could be doing this ten or twenty times. Kurt Gamari did not feel others would want the FEMA buyout and felt each homeowner could be decided on a case by case basis. Mike Denault does not feel the board would be acting fairly if they handpicked who they would allow in the program and who they would not. Nancy Bushika questioned whether they could make a decision tonight. Deb Burchard pressed for them to make a decision. Doug Wright felt the townspeople voted this down at town meeting and the board needs to recognize that. Deb Burchard did not feel both sides were represented at that meeting and that people didn't know what they were voting for. Bill Levine suggested holding an informational meeting. He said the warrant article was poorly worded, biased and slanted. Mike Denault noted that at the last Selectboard meeting the motion to sign the paperwork and continue with the FEMA buyout program did not pass. The two new members have not changed their position. Mike Denault feels the town should be 100% in for everyone or not at all so there is no discrimination.

MOTION by Mike Denault to retract 100% from the FEMA program. SECONDED by Doug Wright. 3 in favor, 1 opposed (Kurt Gamari), 1 abstain (Nancy Bushika). Motion APPROVED.

MOWING BIDS

Nancy Bushika will work with the town clerk to finalize the mowing bids.

JOINT MEETING WITH SCHOOL DIRECTORS

Nancy Bushika contacted Erika Bailey. The School Directors would like to wait until the end of April or beginning of May. The board will propose April 25, 2024 or May 9, 2024 at 6:30 p.m. for a joint meeting.

SCHOOL INSPECTION

Kurt Gamari reported that the School Union Building Facilities Manager suggested that the school have a pre-OSHA inspection. He stated that his findings would be reportable to OSHA and the school would have to correct the findings. There was discussion at the Schoolboard meeting as to who owns the building, whether schools are exempt from OSHA, and why they would want to have the inspection. Mike Denault felt the town clearly owns the building but recognized the law saying once a school is built, they are in charge of the operations. If the town budgets for the building maintenance, it would be better for the taxpayers to use town money over school money.

BOARD OF CIVIL AUTHORITY TRAINING

Nancy Bushika contacted VLCT to request training but does not have a firm date.

BUILDING PERMIT APPLICATIONS/FEES

The Selectboard reviewed the application forms. They discussed the need to have everything in writing and how that would be recorded. There will be no fee to refer to the Planning Commission but a denial would require an appeal to the Zoning Board of Adjustment. The Selectboard will waive the recording fee of an application submitted if it is determined that the activity does not require a permit. Buildings started without a permit will be charged double the fee. Deb Burchard submitted forms from Pownal that she liked. Nancy Bushika suggested they integrate the best parts of the town form and Pownal form into one.

UNIFORM MUNICIPAL EXCESS WEIGHT PERMITS

MOTION by Nancy Bushika to approve the Uniform Municipal Excess Weight Permit application from CAMP Precast Concrete Products, Inc. SECONDED by Mike Denault. All in favor. Motion APPROVED. The appropriate fee and insurance information was received from the applicant.

ASSIGNMENT OF TOWN'S INTEREST

The Selectboard approved the transfer of its interest in the 5.75 acre parcel on Main Road at the last meeting. The Selectboard signed the assignment conveying its interest in the redemption period.

SELECTBOARD WEBINAR

Doug Wright attended a webinar that was held for Selectboard members. There is a new Selectboard manual available through the Vermont League of Cities & Towns. The town office will get an updated copy.

DOGS

Over 90 dogs have been licensed. The due date was April 1st. The town clerk will be sending out reminders to those who have not licensed their dogs.

2023 AUDIT

The auditors will be at the town office on April 29, 2024 and April 30, 2024 to work on the audit.

BENNINGTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

The sheriff contacted Mike Denault to revisit the contract. Mike Denault informed him that the warrant article did not pass at town meeting. The state troopers have noticed more people have been reaching out to them to request patrols.

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 Mike Denault. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

MOTION by Nancy Bushika to enter executive session for a personnel matter 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 7:35 p.m. Deb Burchard was invited to participate during the initial permit fee and salary discussion. After Deb Burchard left the executive session, the board resumed the salary restructuring discussion.

MOTION by Mike Denault to exit executive session. SECONDED by Kurt Gamari. All in favor. Motion APPROVED. The board exited executive session at 8:53 p.m. Action: the Selectboard changed the permit fees, effective tonight and restructured the Zoning Administrator's salary.

MOTION by Mike Denault to adjourn. SECONDED by Doug Wright. All in favor. Motion APPROVED. The meeting ended at 8:55 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 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 the town in one of the vacant appointed positions, 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.