

MINUTES OF 12/8/2014 SELECT BOARD MEETING

In attendance: Ron Tallman, Dustin Comstock, George Wild, Jr, Kathie Felch, Lee Youngman

At 6:05 pm, Board Chair Ron Tallman called the meeting to order.

1. On a motion made by George and seconded by Dustin, the minutes of the November 13, 2014 meeting were approved as presented.
2. George led a discussion about the floor drain in the town garage. The VLCT safety inspection in October cited the drain as a trip hazard. It was removed and replaced. The issue of the earlier letter from the State of VT indicating that the drain needed to either be removed or improved with a storage tank has not yet been addressed. It's now too late in the winter to do anything about it. The board tabled this discussion until spring, but instructed Kathie to budget \$2500.00 for the installation of a tank next year.
3. Kathie brought up the idea of lumping all of the salaries paid to elected and appointed town officers in one number on the town warning, and referring people to the budget they will be voting on at town meeting for the breakdown. Many other towns do this. In addition, Kathie brought up the amount we pay to auditors. It's been \$10.00 per hour for at least 15 years now, and the work they do is very technical. We have not been able to attract anyone to fill Mike O'Brien's spot even after advertising it twice in the town newsletter and at least twice on front porch forum. Many towns, finding themselves in a similar position, have gone to an outside accounting firm conducting the annual audit. Kathie put out an RFP for audit services last year, and got bids ranging from a low of \$11,800 to a high of almost \$13,000. On a motion made by George and seconded by Dustin, the board authorized Kathie to advertise the position at \$20.00 per hour for the new year, and to budget auditors pay at \$20.00 per hour. We will revisit the broader question at the 12/29/14 special meeting devoted to the budget.
4. Tom Peairs had raised concerns about the open meeting law. As the law now states, all meetings must be warned at least 48 hours in advance, and with an agenda posted on the town website 48 hours in advance. All draft minutes must be posted on the town website within 5 calendar days of any open meeting. If the town is cited for violating this timeframe, the town will pay the fines. Any fine will not be passed down to the members of the committee or board who failed to post on time. The board asked Kathie to advise all other boards and committees that if the agenda is not given to the town clerk's office at least 48 hours in advance, no meeting can be held.
5. Kathie reported that Dan Richardson, the town's attorney, has not heard further from the American Towers attorney and has nothing new to report on the cell tower proposal.
6. Lee reported on the most recent MSHA inspection. Although we were not cited, the inspector indicated that the systems Lee set up following the advice of the last inspector, were not adequate. She has fixed the problem, set up the paperwork the way this inspector requires, and has put into place several steps he requires. Most notably, any time we begin or cease operations at the town pit, we must fax a form over to MSHA in Manchester. In addition, Lee had to laminate several safety signs for John Barnes to display at the pit. She estimates that she spent at least 30 hours on this project last month. Associated General Contractors of Vermont puts on annual MSHA training several times a year at a cost of \$75.00 per attendee. She recommends that we add this training item to next year's budget to make sure the training happens. Ron instructed Kathie to set up a separate training line in the budget for MSHA-related trainings.
7. The board reviewed the Random Rescue proposal for next year. Random Rescue will charge \$25.00 per day for a maximum of 5 days. If the owner of the dog does not come forth at the end of those 5 days, Random Rescue assumes ownership and responsibility for the animal and will work to adopt it out, at no further cost to the town. If the owner of the dog does come forward in those 5 days, the cost is passed on to the owner. On a motion made by Dustin and seconded by George, the board adopted Random Rescue as the official town dog pond. Dustin offered to post this information on area bulletin boards.

8. Kathie reported that our Orange County Court taxes will be level funded this year.
9. Dustin gave an update on the Eastman Road Dry Hydrant Grant. The dry hydrant was installed on 11/18/2014. Chris Violette of Barre Town will provide the signage that covers all required state language concerning parking. They still need to cut the pipe and install the actual hydrant, but all of the pipe and pumping materials have been installed.
10. Ron requested that David John, the man who manages the cemetery trust funds, come to the next meeting in January to discuss the investment policy of the town. We don't actually have a written policy and need to craft one. Ron also thought the sample financial policy from VLCT looked fine as is.
11. Lee told the board that the rat infestation issue on Route 302 has been dealt with. The property owner did remove all the garbage from the dumpster by the deadline. Lee sent a certified letter to Steve Farnham in East Orange to follow up on the trash on his property, but he only picked it up 2 days before the deadline Lee gave him to clean up. Kathie will ask John Barnes to go take a look to see if trash is still there.
12. Kathie gave the select board a list of antiques found in the basement of the town hall: An old, handmade box that is about 6' long and has beautiful handmade hinges, several old double seated folding chairs, 2 old deacon benches, a clothes dryer rack, old wooden screens from the original windows which are still in the box, plus stuff previously uncovered in the vault: the Merci Train lithograph, the original door handle from 1804 from the town hall, a carriage light from 1906. She has talked to Butch Johnson to come take a look at them and give us an idea of the value. There was some discussion about auctioning off some of these items to keep them in town, and put the money in the Town Hall Restoration fund. The board would also like us to get quotes from other dealers.
13. The board reviewed and approved payroll and accounts payable.
14. The board reviewed the budget, noting where we overspent and where we have a surplus. Kathie noted that the \$20,000 Capital Equipment line item will be moved to committed funds. The board is looking in to purchasing a sander for \$8000.00. We will continue budget discussions at the 12/29/14 meeting.
15. Ron signed Hall Rental agreements. There were no fleet permits and one new driveway permit. The driveway permit was tabled until spring. George suggested a solution to the driveway permit application for Smith Road: Have the property owner build up the driveway in front of an existing berm, install a swale which will direct water to a low spot behind the berm. This will eliminate the need for the town to ditch around the driveway or for the owner to put in a driveway culvert.
16. The date of the next meeting was set for 12/29/14 at 6:00. The sole topic of discussion will be the 2015 budget.
17. Other business: Ron would like to draft a letter and send it to our legislators in support of Scott Milne. Ron also directed Kathie to contact a friend who used to own a security business to look at the alarm system.
18. On a motion made by George and seconded by all, the meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Attest:

Lee Youngman, Assistant Town Clerk

