

Minutes
West Fairlee Selectboard Meeting
Monday August 5, 2013

Present: Beverly Ash, Cory Austin, Fred Cook, Delsie Hoyt

Visitors: Jamie Masterson, Will Becker

The meeting was called to order at 6 pm.

Cory Austin moved to approve the minutes of the July 15, 2013 regular meeting; Fred Cook seconded; approved.

Visitors

Jamie Masterson and Will Becker asked about speed control options for Stevens Road. While the Selectboard was sympathetic to the residents' concerns, it was determined that Stevens Road is a private, shared driveway not a Town road, so the Town has no jurisdiction..

Review Financial Statements (July)

Projected expenses appear to be running within budget. It was noted that there was a new line under general expenses for the capital improvement note for the community building.

Roads

Grant Anticipation Note: Documents from Merchant's Bank were reviewed and signed for the Grant Anticipation Note of \$210, 000 which will bridge paving expenses until the Town is reimbursed by the State for the Class II Road Grant. It was moved and seconded to sign the note. Approved.

Better Back Roads Grant pending application: Notifications of grant awards were to have gone out today.

Wild Hill: Preparation for paving is progressing. BlakTop is expected to pave in late August.

Beanville Road: There are some ditching and drainage issues that need to be resolved prior to paving. Bev Ash and Delsie Hoyt will look at the Downing property with Jonathan Blake, A temporary easement may be required to taper the lawn to meet the ditch.

Robinson Road: There is a failing culvert below the Dragons' proposed new driveway. Currently, the culvert extends across Lory's lawn to their pond. Delsie Hoyt and Fred Cook will look at it with the homeowner and Jonathan Blake to consider alternatives to daylight the culvert closer to the Town's right of way.

Austin Road: Melody Bacon, reported that the road is rough; Jonathan Blake will take a look at it, Allan Rowell is scheduled to grade the road shortly.

Old Business

Community Building Renovations: Progress continues; additional concrete cutting put them slightly behind schedule. The cold air return duct, long recommended for the meeting room, should be installed prior to sheetrocking. Bev Ash moved to have Perry's install the cold air return; Corey seconded; approved.

Delinquent dog letters went out; the deadline is Wednesday August 7th.

Mutual aid from Thetford Police Department: Corey Austin will continue to follow up on this topic.

New Business

Setting the Tax Rate: The Grand List will be turned over to the Treasurer this week. Hoyt moved that a Special Selectboard Meeting be warned for 4:45 p.m. Monday August 12, 2013 for the purpose of setting the tax rate; seconded; approved.

Transfer from Capital Expense Note: Fred Cook moved to approve transfer of \$31,952.14 from the Capital Expense Note to the General Fund to cover invoice #3 from G. R. Porter for the Community Building; Corey Austin seconded; approved.

Status of Treasure Island property tax exemption: Delsie Hoyt informed the Selectboard that she had been contacted by a reporter from the Valley News regarding property tax exemption for Thetford's Treasure Island. A provision slipped into H295 at the last minutes of the legislative session by Senator Mark MacDonald, with no consultation whatever with West Fairlee Town Officials, would exempt Treasure Island from property taxes beginning in 2014 as an entity providing "public access to public waters". Further investigation revealed that legislators, and officials from Property Valuation and Review and VT League of Cities and Towns were given the impression that the Thetford property was similar to a small, (225FF), free public beach owned by the Town of Hardwick located on Caspian Lake in Greensboro which was also included in the provision. They were unaware that at \$1.26 million, Treasure Island is the third most valuable piece of property in the Town of West Fairlee and includes 10.6 acres and includes 1700FF. Officials were also unaware that Treasure Island charges for admission to the beach and use of other amenities and that residents of the Town of West Fairlee had never received free or discounted admission. The provision would require West Fairlee to essentially "donate" over \$9,000 in municipal tax to an entity which provides no special benefit to its own residents. Though the wording is not clear, it appears that the "school tax" would be spread across taxpayers State-wide.

Fred Cook related that a Thetford Selectboard member attending the Tri-Town Lake Study Committee stated that Thetford just became aware of this provision and was concerned that the issue not disrupt the work underway to study the outlet dam. Hoyt noted that according to their minutes, the Thetford Selectboard discussed the exemption at their June 3 meeting, but that the two issues were clearly separate.

With facts in hand, Senator Jane Kitchel has agreed to revisit this provision in the next legislative session. In the meantime, Property Valuation and Review will be looking closely at whether, or

what portion of, the Treasure Island property meets the intentions of the legislation. Hoyt has prepared a brief for legislators and VLCT which outlines West Fairlee's concerns.

Municipal Planning Grant: Submission of a grant proposal was discussed: using those funds to re-envision the Town's village center. It was felt that until people see what it could look like without Bean Hall, they will never be willing to go forward on doing something about it. The planning grant is likely to be competitive, but under \$8,000 wouldn't need matching funds. It was decided to go ahead and pull a proposal together, because something needs to be done about Bean Hall.

Orange County Sheriff contract: The new contract with the Orange County Sheriff's Department was tabled. It was decided to see if a representative could come to the August 19th meeting to discuss the contract.

Options for use of Sheldon Miller Fund: Town Attorney, Paul Gillies, should be back to us with an opinion shortly.

Memo from the Trust for Public Lands re: Scanlon property and Brushwood Forest: A landowner interested in selling a parcel abutting Brushwood Forest contacted the Trust for Public Lands. There was agreement that this is an issue for the Conservation Commission to investigate further and make a recommendation to the Selectboard. Fred Cook noted that while the property has the advantage of abutting the existing Brushwood Forest, there was an opinion that it may be overpriced for the amount of timber left on it.

Recycle schedule – The schedule for monitoring recycling was set, and the Board agreed to discuss hiring a recycling monitor at the next meeting. Hoyt noted that, as expected, the cost of the first "pull" of the recycling containers was substantially lower than the previous company; \$203 net down from nearly \$600 before for similar volume.

Bev Ash moved to sign the orders; Corey seconded; Approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.