



**Town of Whitingham  
Office of the Selectboard**

**MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 20, 2019**

*These Minutes shall be accepted into the public record (with any corrections noted) at a future meeting of the Whitingham Selectboard.*

The Whitingham Selectboard held a regular meeting on Wednesday, November 20, 2019 at 6:30pm in the Selectboard Office of the Municipal Center, 2948 VT Route 100, Jacksonville, VT.

Selectboard members present: Wayne Wood, Vice Chair; Wayne Corse, Craig Hammer, and Scott Reed.

Others present: Gig Zboray, Selectboard Office Administrator; Marylee Putnam, Bookkeeper; Almira Aekus, Town Clerk & Treasurer; Carl Jillson, Ruby Brown, Phil Edelstein, Richard Lemaire, Rodney Bemis, Marshall Dix, residents; Dan Hollister, Animal Control Officer; Trevor Manse, Casella Waste Management; Harry Farrington and Steve Foster, Honora Winery; Dave DiCanto, Sewer Plant Chief Operator.

**Call to Order. Additions or Changes to Agenda.**

Wayne Wood called the meeting to order at 6:30pm. Discuss holiday gifts was added to the agenda under other business.

**Hearing of visitors (for concerns not on the agenda)**

Harry Farrington of Honora Winery came to the table to discuss the sewer pump on his property. There is a problem with the macerator. He can't understand why he is responsible for it. Research indicates that Mr. Metcalf installed the pump at some point after the sewer system was installed. The town sewer department is not responsible for equipment that was installed after the sewer lines were installed. Mr. Farrington questioned if there was any way to get some help with it, grants for example. The BDCC was mentioned as a possible resource for him.

**Transfer Station, Trevor Manse to discuss hauling**

Trevor Manse (formerly of TAM Waste Management now of Casella) came to the table to discuss hauling of our municipal waste from the transfer station. The recycling market is very bad right now and there is also a landfill crisis, many have closed recently. Casella has a permitted landfill expansion up in Coventry. They also started using a landfill in the Adirondacks. The cost of hauling waste to either location is expensive. But now that TAM has merged with Casella they at least have capacity to deal with the waste and the recycling.

Composting: July 1, 2020 all organics will be banned from the landfill. July 1, 2019 anyone producing 18 tons per year was required to compost. There was a mileage exemption if you were more than 20 miles from a composting yard, but that no longer exists. Mr. Manse is not sure what is going to happen. Home composters are exempted from composting meat, bones and dairy. He suggested we consider having a sticker for just organics and leaf & yard waste.

Mr. Manse will work with Gig to provide an idea of future costs for budgeting purposes.

### **Sewer Department**

#### **Request to be removed from sewer billing because house demolished**

A letter was received from Nicole O'Hara, owner of 6717 VT Route 100 in Whitingham Village. The house was in terrible shape when purchased and they decided to tear it down. There is currently no dwelling on the property and no plans to rebuild. Ms. O'Hara has requested that the property be discontinued from the sewer billing. When setting the current sewer rate this request was anticipated and addressed in the calculation. **A motion was made by Wayne Corse to discontinue 6717 VT Route 100 (account # W19), at a prorated rate, from the sewer billing rolls and that a letter be written to Ms. O'Hara to make clear that if they ever decide to reconnect they have to pay the full connection fees set at that time, seconded by Scott Reed, all in favor.**

#### **Butch Jillson with questions/comments**

Butch Jillson came to the table. He discussed the flat rate sewer billing, noting that many years ago the town was sued because it was unfair. He is concerned about the sewer expense and that many locals might not be able to afford it in a few years. He suggested using meters again. He claims we won't have to replace all the meters, that many still work. Mr. Bemis noted that if someone tampers with a meter they can be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. He feels that the town needs to go back to the meters. Mr. Lemaire noted that most places require a filter before the water meter.

Gig notified the board that she has contacted Mark Johnson of RCAP Solutions. He will be able to work on updating the sewer ordinance after the holidays. RCAP provides services to towns for free. The engineers aren't convinced that the RCAP version of a sewer ordinance will properly cover the engineering aspects. When the update is complete Weston & Sampson will review the ordinance and either make minor changes or give the town a price quote to update the ordinance in full.

Gig also spoke to Weston & Sampson about the state's request to reduce capacity and install two RBC units at each plant. They will start with "gentle pressure" on the state to reverse their request, if that doesn't work Gig offered to get our state representatives involved. The board would like a letter drafted to Jeffrey Fehrs of the DEC Facilities Engineering Division and cc our state representatives and senator.

### **Animal Control Officer, update**

Dan Hollister came to the table to tell the board of what he found when going to listen to the dogs on Fuller Hill Road. He heard the dogs as he was approaching from the Wilmington Cross Road, he heard continuous barking for approximately 40 minutes, much longer than 15 minutes noted in the ordinance. Mr. Hollister has not talked to the dog owner yet. The board suggested Mr. Hollister talk to the property owner, give them a verbal warning and ask them to come up with possible solutions. The board would like some note of progress within 2 weeks. Due to problems with the Vermont Judicial Bureau Mr. Hollister feels tickets should not be issued at this time.

### **Medical insurance, final review and decision**

Marylee Putnam came to the table to answer any questions the board had about Medical Insurance options. MVP offers a lower cost but that plan also offers less benefits for the

employees. After discussion, **Wayne Corse made a motion to continue with Blue Cross Blue Shield Bronze Plan** (renewing the same as current), **seconded by Craig Hammer, all in favor.**

The deductibles have increased by approximately \$200. **Wayne Wood made a motion that the employees will continue to pay the last \$1,500 for a family/2 person plan and \$750 for single plan, seconded by Craig Hammer, all in favor.**

#### **Employee relations:**

##### **discuss survey options/methods**

An item in the Strategic Plan is to enhance employee relations. One way to do that is to issue a short survey (possibly just one question) enclosed with paychecks. After discussion it was decided that conducting a “stay conversation” with employees would be better than a survey.

##### **critique recent event**

On November 1<sup>st</sup> the board served an appreciation luncheon to the employees. Board members made donations of meat, drinks, chips, desserts, etc. toward the luncheon and the town paid \$58 for some needs from the Jacksonville Store. In the future it was noted that the food should be ready when the employees arrive. The board should interact more with the staff. They would like to hold it when Almira and her staff can attend. Mr. Lemaire heard good things about it.

##### **discuss how to implement regularly scheduled employee reviews**

Mr. Wood suggested a 6-month (mid-term) review and an annual review. There was a conversation about the term “review” and that it might be construed as negative. Mr. Corse wanted it made clear that the board would like to make note of positives. He also questioned if the board could review other elected officials. Gig will ask Jill Muhr of VLCT to come down and discuss options with the board. Mr. Dix noted that at the municipality where he works in Massachusetts his Selectboard was advised not to do reviews because they are not trained for it. Mr. Wood is trained and qualified to do it.

#### **Schedule first town-wide get together, pick a topic**

Another task in the Strategic Plan is to begin hosting town-wide get togethers to offer the opportunity for residents to meet, mingle and ask questions of the Selectboard. Mr. Wood suggested the topics of broadband and sewer. Mr. Reed thought maybe no topic, or perhaps something called “the state of the town”. Mr. Lemaire questioned how the townsfolk would know about it. It will be advertised in the January newsletter, on the website, Facebook and flyers posted around town. “Open forum” was suggested as a title. The residents present suggested the first event be held on a weekend during the day. The first event is scheduled for Saturday, January 4<sup>th</sup> at noon with a snow date of January 5<sup>th</sup> at noon.

#### **Discuss results of meeting with School Board**

Wayne Corse and Scott Reed attended the school board meeting on November 19<sup>th</sup> to discuss a contract for plowing in exchange for community use of the building and grounds. They seemed amenable to the idea. The Selectboard asked that Gig speak with Town Attorney Robert Fisher to have a contract drawn up. Uses mentioned are Town Meeting, Maple Fest, playgrounds, Old Home Week, funerals in the auditorium, snow mobile parking, etc. It might be better to just indicate community activities in the contract. Mr. Fisher will know what is best.

During the School Board meeting the attending Selectboard members also expressed their support for the school and that the board would like to help make the school more viable but weren't sure how they could do that.

#### **Cell Tower – discuss lease buyout offer**

"TowerPoint" has submitted an offer to buyout the cell tower lease at the Transfer Station. They are currently offering a lumpsum payout of \$200,000 or they could structure that payment over multiple years claiming that the total can be substantially more than a lumpsum payout and provide a more secure yearly income between 10% and 35% more than what the current lease is paying (but for a shorter time). Our lease with SBA is currently paying \$1,373.15 per month (\$16,477.78 per year) with a 3% increase each year. The board is not interested in pursuing this offer.

#### **Highway Department, discuss new Drug & Alcohol Clearinghouse**

The US Department of Transportation has created a "Drug & Alcohol Clearinghouse" for Commercial Driver's that we are required to register on. Gig has reviewed the directions to register the town on the site. Gig has been acting as "Designated Employer Representative" (DER) to oversee the required drug and alcohol testing of the highway CDL drivers. In reviewing prior minutes Gig found that she was never officially authorized to do that. Therefore, Gig feels that she should now be authorized for that position as well as "Clearinghouse Administrator" which is required to set up a town account on the Clearinghouse. **A motion was made by Craig Hammer to appoint Gig Zboray as Designated Employer Representative and Clearinghouse Administrator for drug and alcohol testing of the town's CDL operators and to allow her to set up the town's account, seconded by Scott Reed, all in favor.** There are several new requirements to go along with the Clearinghouse; "queries" must be done on our drivers annually; new hire's must complete new paperwork and a "full-query" must be completed on them. We will have Occupational Drug Testing fulfill the requirements on the Clearinghouse. Due to these changes we will need to start updating the town's Drug & Alcohol Policy for CMV Operators. Gig has obtained a VLCT template and is working on it.

Mr. Janovsky provided his Highway Report for the board to review.

#### **Cannabis Resolution – discuss VLCT request and decide if willing to sign**

VLCT sent out a request for towns to sign a Municipal Resolution regarding Cannabis sales, Act S.54 which is pending state legislation. Their draft resolution advocates for all the necessary authority, autonomy, resources and taxing power at the local level. Mr. Wood expressed his disfavor of towns not involved receiving a 30% share of the income. Mr. Corse wanted it on the record that he once had a financial interest in a Cannabis company, but he has sold his stock. Mr. Corse suggested the topic be tabled until he has a chance to read the entire bill. He will let Gig know when to add it to the agenda again.

#### **Approval of Payables Warrant – November 21, 2019**

**A motion was made by Craig Hammer to approve Payables Warrant W2022 dated November 21, 2019, seconded by Scott Reed, all in favor.**

#### **Approval of Payroll Warrant – November 21, 2019**

**A motion was made by Craig Hammer to approve Payroll Warrant W2021 dated November 21, 2019, seconded by Scott Reed, all in favor.**

**Approval of Minutes of November 6, 2019**

A motion was made by Scott Reed to approve the Minutes of November 6, 2019 as written, seconded by Craig Hammer, all in favor.

**Other business / Office Administrator – as needed**

Appoint a Selectboard member to sign warrants in case of foul weather cancellation during the winter

A motion was made by Wayne Wood to allow any one Selectboard member to sign the warrants if a Selectboard meeting has to be cancelled because of foul weather, seconded by Scott Reed, all in favor.

Holiday gift for employees

Traditionally the Selectboard has given \$30 cash to each employee for the holidays. **Wayne Corse made a motion to increase the amount to \$100/\$50** (for a total of \$1,300), **seconded by Craig Hammer, all in favor.**

Budget

**Wayne Corse made a motion to allow Almira Aekus to fill in the budget numbers based on the current cost of living increase, seconded by Scott Reed, all in favor.**

**A motion to adjourn was made by Scott Reed, seconded by Wayne Corse, all in favor.**

Mr. Wood adjourned the meeting at 8:51pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
~Gig Zboray