

Selectboard Minutes 5/11/2020

Members Present by Zoom: Christine Werneke, Katie Mather, Bard Hill, David Sander, Roger Brown

Members Present by phone: none

Absent: none

Others Present by Zoom: Josh Arneson, Town Manager; Kathy Daub-Stearns, Admin. Assist.; Connie Bona, Finance; Pete Gosselin, Hwy; Superintendent; Kendall Chamberlain, Water & Sewer Superintendent; Kyle Kapitanski, Police; and Angelica Contis recorded the meeting for MMCTV Channel 15, also present: Patty Brushett

Called to Order: 7:06 PM

Welcome by David.

I. Additions or Deletions to Agenda- none

Katie asked if anyone has been thinking about how the Town will handle the voting process? After a short discussion surrounding the legislature looking at it also it was decided to put it on the agenda for the 5/18/2020 meeting.

II. Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present

i. Update on COVID-19 health crisis response

ii. Update on Town department operations

(combined report)

Josh reported:

- that the Police Dept. has been continuing as they have been
- that the Water & Sewer Dept. have been busy, Kendall is reporting more flushable wipes in the systems even with the mailer notice that went out
- that the Fire dept lifted the burn ban but is still asking residents to call in to notify the department of fires more than the size of a camp fire so they don't respond to false alarms.
- that Pete Gosselin met with Mr. Savoy regarding the work on Pleasant St., Josh noted there is still work being done on the easements for the Savoy properties. He added that the highway department has been doing culvert mitigation work on Dugway Rd from damage sustained 2 years ago,
- that the bathrooms are closed at Volunteers Green per the governors order but that the cleaner will be getting them ready for use since they haven't been cleaned out from the 10/31/2019 flooding.
- that the flags will be going up on Route 2 and Bridge Street even though there will be no parade this year
- that the Library curbside pickup is going well and Rebecca is planning non-group events for the summer
- Connie is tracking tax payments and reported receipts are up \$20,000 from last year at this time adding full details won't be known until after the 5/15/2020 deadline.

- that Planning & Zoning continue working on affordable housing and the DRB has a busy schedule showing residents are moving forward with construction projects
- that the grant person has started collecting data for the project
- that Linda will begin scheduling researchers on Tuesdays & Thursdays Josh added that researchers will schedule appointments and use the small conference room and copier, Linda or Martha will provide them the research materials they request so they are not leaving the room, Connie will keep her door closed when researchers are in the building.
- that little league has been postponed indefinitely and that there may be something later in the season depending on guidance, parents and players
- that June 5th the farmers market will begin, the plan is to set up behind the play structure to better socially distance
- that Green Up Day has been moved to 5/30/2020 statewide

iii. Discussion of employee compensation

Josh reported

- that the majority of workers are back to their regular schedule but that part-time workers at the Library are still receiving checks while not working. Josh added that Rebecca is working with the Library Trustees to see how to keep employees busy.
- that Karen Stockwell has been working a shortened schedule due to bathrooms at Volunteers Green being closed

iv. Review of draft COVID-19 Safety & Health Work Plan

Josh reported that last week VCLT put out a sample policy to guide towns in creating their own. The most current policy has been sent out to department heads for discussion at the next department head meeting and the no touch thermometers have arrived making it possible to begin surveying employees right away.

Discussion included:

- Christine asking about operationalizing the plan. Josh responded that training by VOSHA has already been done already and once the workplan is instituted safety and health checks will go into place with dept heads going over the plan with their staff.
- Connie added that health checks don't need to be documented with Bard adding that the information being provided is guidance, not mandates so implementation varies
- Connie went on to say that doesn't matter whether you have allergies, a cough is a cough and it requires staying home according to the guidance.
- Christine wondered if it should be a plan and not a policy so that it wasn't etched in stone but could be an evolving document. Bard agreed saying we will want the plan to be fluid over time as opposed to a policy so it can be changed easily over time as guidance continues to evolve.

v. Update on options the Selectboard has for property tax collection and budget adjustments

Josh reported:

- that the guidance is the same as what has been reported previously and that currently S344 is not law.
- that there is still nothing about payments to school fund

Discussion included:

- Patty Brushett saying, as it relates to property taxes, a lot of people are out of work and we'll know on 5/15/2020 how many people were able to pay their taxes. She added that by statute a person isn't supposed to pay more than 2% of their income toward property taxes and she wondered if anyone knew if on a local or statewide level anyone was addressing the 2% issue?. Bard said he knew of conversations at the state level including huge deficits in the budget this year and worse deficits predicted for next year. Bard added that the Federal Government has sent relief to workers, and may do so for states and local governments but no one knows how that will play out
- Patty said the 2% issue was not going to get resolved until next January when property tax relief would come through the Homestead applications. Patty added that In a dire situation, should we have many people in town who are not able to pay their property taxes due to COVID challenges, we could ask those who can to pay their property taxes in full to carry the town until there could be help from other sources. Bard responded that 70% of property taxes goes to the school fund and that the Town is obligated to pay the education fund regardless of whether the total amount has been collected. He added that it is plausible to ask people who can pay ahead to do so and then the civil abatement authority would kick in if necessary.
- Connie added that state adjustments do lag a year and that normally there is less than \$100,000 of delinquent property taxes after the current payment adding that this year the number may be \$200,000. Connie reminded everyone that the tax collector will work with people to put a plan together to get property taxes paid over time.
- Bard asked to include the Delinquent Tax Collector at the next meeting then asked: Do we want to ask people to pay ahead? Roger responded that he didn't think we needed to right now suggesting that the idea should be saved in case it was needed down the road. Bard agreed saying we will have to see what facts we have in hand when the time comes and see what financial relief comes from the state and federal governments.
- Connie added that the refinancing of loans has helped cash flow. Bard added that the Town's financial reserves are helping keep us well situated with cash flow.

vi. Consideration of town wide recognition of victory over COVID-19 and remembrance of those who have passed

Josh reported that David Healy, a Richmond resident, asked if on a local level the Town would consider a victory over COVID-19 / remembrance of those who have passed due to COVID-19 recognition of some sort in the future.

Discussion included:

- that Bard thought declaring victory might not be possible as the end time for COVID-19 will be illusive as opposed an exact moment in time like D-Day. He felt that something moral boosting would be better than declaring victory.
- Katie said there is still so much unknown and with no vaccine there may be a second wave of COVID-19 illness so she was opposed to using the term victory. She added that declaring victory could make safety oriented behaviors may go away. Celebrating workers, and the good work that people have done that have kept numbers down, yes, victory, no.
- Roger wants to be careful not to minimize things adding that there is a lot left to do.
- Bard stated that the ringing of bells has traditionally been a sign of victory and used as a warning so possibly the ringing bells at 7PM every night would be appropriate.
- David agreed claiming victory would be premature. Predictions indicate a resurgence of COVID-19 in the fall, if not before. He suggested looking at the idea again at another time.
- Katie suggested reaching out to David proposing a celebration of effort, Patty added, a celebration of unity in the effort against COVID. Being unified as a community is something we will need so when the next wave comes, we have that as our identity. Bard though Freedom and Unity are the words on the Vermont flag so it seems appropriate.

vii. Update on Bridge St. Infrastructure Replacement Project

Josh reported:

- that construction started last week and delays with the railroad permit caused the schedule to be adjusted
- that the construction company ran into a sewer line that was not on any plans so it has taken some time to decide how to rework the pipes to keep the lines 18" from each other. It was decided to bury the sewer line deeper and that will begin tomorrow.
- that the right of way permit from railroad came through so there will be a company that comes in to do the drilling under the tracks can be scheduled
- that getting information out to businesses and residents by email is working well, and that he continues to post information on Front Porch Forum and the Town website
- that the contractor broke a water service line that caused an outage and that having the email list made it possible to notify everyone right away
- that businesses have been in touch with questions, mostly about parking
- that he and Pete will continue to work with the contractor on marking the crosswalk outside the market and driving lanes to make it clearer for pedestrians and drivers
- that parking is not impacting businesses as much as COVID-19 is

Discussion included:

- that Bard thought the little lane markers were not adequate, that small cones or something more overt to help drivers understand where the lane shifts are and where pedestrians are supposed to be walking is needed.
- David thought there should be someone directing traffic

- Pete said he planned on speaking with the contractor about marking temporary lanes from the beginning of the lane shift back to where the regular road markings are used again with cones
- Katie added that it is important to let the construction company know we are expecting them to employ the greatest level of safety
- Kyle stated that from a police perspective there has been one complaint due to a driver parking in the travel lane because they couldn't tell that they couldn't. Kyle said that fortunately Rick was able to get the owner to move the vehicle before it needed to be towed.
- Pete will see the contractor in the morning

viii. Other COVID-19 health crisis item

Connie mentioned that on Friday someone from Post Office complained that there were transients leaning against the wall recharging their phones without masks and smoking and that she felt the police department had handled it very well.

IV. Approval of Minutes, Warrants and Purchase Orders

Bard moved to approve the Minutes of 5-4-20 Katie seconded. Roll Call Vote: Katie, Bard, Roger, Christine, and David voted affirmatively.

Invoices and warrants:

Roger looked through the invoices and thought they looked ok.

Discussion:

Roger asked Josh a question about the WEX paperwork/ quarterly report. Connie responded that it is the monthly statement for gas used by the police and highway departments adding that there are monthly fees but the discount on the price of the gas is more. Roger asked about the exception report and Connie responded that every gas purchase gets an exception report /adjustment to show the discount.

Roger moved to approve PO #3912 to the Vermont Land Trust, in an amount not to exceed \$20,000, Christine seconded. Roll call vote: David, Katie, Roger, Bard, and Christine voted affirmatively.

Roger moved to approve PO #3919 to J. Hutchins Company, in an amount not to exceed \$735,529. Bard seconded. Roll call vote: David, Bard, Katie, Roger, and Christine voted affirmatively

Discussion:

Josh reported that J. Hutchins company will submit invoices, that will be presented to the Water and Sewer Commission for approval, the approval of the PO will allow those invoices to be paid. Josh added that there is a provision where 5% of an invoice is held back to ensure everything is done as expected and will be paid out upon completion of the project.

Roger moved to approve warrants as presented, Katie seconded. Roll Call Vote: Roger, Katie, Bard, Christine, and David voted affirmatively,

Josh will send the warrant out for signatures using DocuSign.

V. Discuss Items for Next Agenda

Update COVID 19-

work safe plan

appointments for boards and commissions

voting

tax payment receipts

Bridge Street project

volunteer green tree planting

VI. Executive Session if necessary -none

VII. Adjourn

Roger moved to adjourn, Katie seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, Katie, Christine, David, and Roger voted affirmatively. The meeting ended at 8:35 PM.