

Selectboard Minutes  
9/21/2020

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

Absent:

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Others Present by Zoom: Josh Arneson, Town Manager; Kathy Daub-Stearns, Admin. Assist.; Linda Parent, Town Clerk; Kyle Kapitansky, acting Police Chief; Ravi Venkataraman, Planner; Kendall Chamberlain, Water & Sewer Superintendent; Pete Gosselin, Highway Foreman; the meeting was recorded for MMCTV Channel 15, also present: Martha Nye, Jeff Forward, Ruairi Hutchison, Rebecca Rouiller, Laurie Dana, Sau, Chris Granda, Justin (RiseVT), Stefani Hartsfield, Wafic Faour, Judy Rosovsky, Patty Brushett, Judy Mc Vicar

Called to Order: 7:01 PM

**Welcome by David.**

**Comments from the public:** none

### **I, Additions or Deletions to Agenda**

- A) Josh stated that 2C update will be at the Oct 5 meeting.
- B) Bard said a written agreement with Radiate is nearing completion. He said, we are not ready tonight but should be by the next meeting. Katie agreed that Rebecca should be ready for the next meeting.

### **II. Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present**

- a) Recognition of the conclusion of the three (3) month period for display of the Black Lives Matter sign and flag at the Town Center

Discussion:

- David said that Chris Granda has requested extending the time for the flag and the sign to be at Town Center.
- Chris thanked the board for their courage in having the flag and sign at Town Center and acknowledged the Racial Equity Group and its subcommittees for the work they are doing. Chris said he was concerned about the political implications his proposal was to extend the time the sign and flag are displayed at Town Center to the middle of October.

David said Chris has made a formal request and asked how does the board wanted to handle the request.

Katie moved to have the flag and sign displayed at Town Center until mid-October, Bard seconded.

Discussion included:

- that Linda is getting a lot of phone calls about Town Center being a public building and that is supposed to be neutral. Linda added that she took the flag down to fly the flag

- at the half mast for the death of the judge. If the board extends having the flag and sign, Linda asked permission to give callers the board members phones numbers.
- that Bard said he can appreciate that Linda is in an undesirable position. He told a personal story of how his father was able to do things that were not open to people of color.
  - that Wafic Faour did not think BLM is political position and is for discussion purposes saying that black and brown people have been disenfranchised in a racial system and unless we make it political, it is not political. He said that white people putting a sign outside their house does not end racism. To say it is political and be afraid of phone calls or that all lives matter, or blue lives matter lessens black lives matter. Wafic felt keeping the flag up was essential to keeping the conversation going.
  - that Christine thought the Board owed Linda and the community an explanation. She said that this was an opportunity to encourage callers to contact board members by email.
  - that Katie thought Linda should point them to the Resolution, why we decided to do this in the first place and that board members emails are on the website, that the conversation should be directed to the board members. Bard agreed. He said Linda could give his home phone number out.
  - that Christine asked Chris why he chose the middle of October. Chris said he was trying to respect the boards decision of having a limited time and did not want to interfere with the election process. He said he was angry that Linda was getting angry calls about the sign and flag adding that no one reached out to him about the sign or flag when he made the offer. He thought there is fear and confusion on both sides but that we need to have these difficult discussions adding that the sign and flag on public property makes it hard to ignore and that was the point.
  - that Roger said this is an important issue to address. Burlington has school closed, that is a problem for low income families, that Huntington has no sports, but rich kids figure out how to do it with low income kids losing out. Roger said he would prefer to discuss the fact that 40% of kids are on free or reduced lunch adding, let's solve those problems.
  - that David said 10/17 is a Saturday. Katie said, Chris asked if the sign and flag could be kept up indefinitely. Bard replied, as a point of order, a motion is either without an explicit date or amend to have no date.

Katie amended her motion to keep the sign and flag up indefinitely adding that If people want to chat with the board then they can chat with the board. Being no second the motion failed.

Discussion continued:

- Wafic Faour said, as a town you are saying, yes, it is political if you take it down for political season. This flag represents the conversation.
- Roger said he does not want people to see the sign and flag and think we are done. There have been discussions all summer. He is concerned about discussions that are surrounding the police department.
- that Bard said as a point of order Katie was in the process of picking a date for her motion. David agreed.
- that Chris said to Roger that the point of taking action and not just having symbols he addressed in his opening statement and that he believed that the discussions being had are making a difference. Chris said this is about how we treat our fellow citizens.

Katie amended her motion to keep the sign and flag up through Sunday, October 25, Bard seconded. Roll call vote: Katie, Bard, Roger, Christine, and David voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

David encouraged board members to provide their contact information to Linda. Chris offered to have his contact information given out if it was appropriate. Katie asked that the Resolution be posted on Front Porch Forum so people can see it. Bard thought it should also be on the website. Katie thanked the Racial Equity Group for all their work and has been glad to hear their ideas and suggestions.

Discussion continued:

- Wafoc Faour said anybody working in any government agency can wear anything that says BLM, that it is not political. He asked the board to keep an open mind and not go along with people who are trying to make it political.
- Jeff Forward said responding to Roger's comment that he does not think the flag and signs are just symbols. He said that there is limited ability to have these discussions and it is a small step forward to have them. He thanked the board and the racial equity group for the work everyone is doing.
- Sau said Roger mentioned making a real change and the racial equity group welcomes anyone that wants to join.

**b) Consideration of approving a request for the use of Conservation Reserve Funds for tree planting at Volunteers' Green**

David said this request has been made by Jon Kart who is asking for \$200 to plant elm native trees.

Roger moved to approve the request; Bard seconded. Roll call vote: Bard, Roger, Christine, Katie, and David voted unanimously. Motion passed.

Discussion included:

- that Christine asked if this is in additional funding? Josh said yes, this is to protect trees that have been gifted to the town.
- David thanked Jon for his hard work.

**c) Update on Data Across Sectors for Health grant work**

Moved to the October 5<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**d) Consideration of setting a hearing date for amendments to Richmond Zoning Regulations for requirements for property owners claiming exemption under 24 VSA 4413**

Ravi reported that 10/20/2020 is the date he would recommend for the hearing date to amend the regulations adding that there are two draft motions in the packet.

Bard moved to accept the proposal to amend the Richmond Zoning Regulations Sections 1.2, 2.4, 5, 5.1 and 5.10.4; Katie seconded. Roll call vote: Katie, Christine, Roger, Bard and David voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Bard moved to warn a public hearing for October 19, 2020 on the amendments to the Richmond Zoning Regulations Sections 1.2, 2.4, 5, 5.1 and 5.10.4; Katie seconded

Bard moved for date Oct. 19 see pic, Katie seconded. Roll call vote: Katie, Christine, Roger, Bard, and David voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

**e) Consideration of submitting an application for the VTrans Bike and Pedestrian Grant**

Roger said this is for a sidewalk and that he had gotten excited by the prospect of having a sidewalk from the school to Southview. He said he thinks the town needs to have a way of building a fund for sidewalks. Roger estimated that it would cost \$250,000 to \$300,000. Roger said the matching funds would be \$40-\$60,000. Roger thought it would be great for the town to start building a fund for this and have the discussion it during budget season.

Discussion included:

- that Bard agreed that when you build sidewalks you get into hundreds of thousands of dollars saying we need to contemplate expanding the transportation line item and infrastructure.
- Roger said that in the past there had been a suggestion for a construction impact fee and that having money behind projects is what builds the head of steam that gets things going. He would like to have this be part of the budget discussion and it has to be real money, \$10-20,000 a year. Roger said we need to be connecting people to stores, recreation, and schools who do not have multiple vehicles in their family. Bard said he thinks about the resources different areas of Richmond have and thinks about the inequity. David said having things shovel ready is important in getting funding.

**f) Consideration of approving a contractor for the Library heating project**

David said that there was a concern that we may need to go back out to bid if we are changing the project. Josh said he and Connie went through the process and looked at the bids which were broken down into segments. Connie was satisfied that contractors were given the opportunity to bid on just the heat portion.

Bard moved to hire NE Air Systems to do the heating portion of the library for \$50,000; Christine seconded. Roll call vote: Bard, Roger, Christine, Katie, and David voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

**g) Update from the Town Center and Library Building Committee**

Christine reported:

- that the focus of the committee has been on two things, how to move forward with the Library heat, and then what is the best use of the town center 3<sup>rd</sup> floor recognizing that we need to get organized for March Town Meeting. She said what the group is currently focused on is getting access to Town Center Funds to bring the buildings up to standards that will be for the next 50-100 years, and the immanent needs of the buildings and the long term campus. Christine said that phase one included the moisture needs and roof at the library and infrastructure needs of the town center building.

Discussion included:

- Bard asked Christine, for absolute clarity, are you including only the town center building and library and excluding the highway and fire department that has its own needs. Christine replied that there is a larger discussion regarding the budgeting process and how we are planning for the maintenance and replacement of things adding that there is a lot of maintenance needed and no funding for it.

- Bard said there is a history of talking about what is needed and there has been deferred maintenance over a long period of time. Bard thought we should be contemplating how to avoid doing that. Christine agreed that we need to do something and start the process.

Christine's report continued:

- she said that the committee has been talking with the Senior Center and the Historical Society with how to value their use of the building in a lease agreement saying they serve our towns community and are non-profits.
- that she has meet with MMCTV about space too.

Discussion included:

- that Jeff Forward commended Christine for chairing the committee and making progress. He wanted to respond to some things Bard brought up. Jeff said that the Town Center does not mean just the town center building, he considers both buildings critical to the whole village downtown. While the firehouse has issues it is not historical and not the heart of the community. They do need maintenance and upkeep but are different. Bard said that without disagreeing, others have other opinions. Bard said that when push comes to shove we cannot do without a fire department adding that with the COVID pandemic we do not know what the financial impact is so we should be really thoughtful about what we do with our cash and revenue going forward. Bard thought that when looking at the deferred maintenance on all these buildings we should ask what the voters want. Jeff replied that long term needs, critical needs like heating in the library is not an option, you have it or you do not use the building. Jeff said that the roof needs repair, it is a critical need, no roof, no building. He said he did not disagree with the fire house issues and the plan for that should be that when the bridge is replaced by the state there may be an opportunity to reduce some of the costs if the FD is going to remain on that site. Bard replied that a number of people view the library as an historical building, an old building, and the town center building is not saying maybe demolish the town center building and build a new one. Once we put significant money into the building the decision is made. Katie asked if we should have a public forum so that Christine is not walking down paths that the public doesn't want to go. Christine said the plan is to keep the buildings operational and look in March for the residents to decide if the Selectboard could have the ability to spend money, then bring options to the Town and have those discussions in 2022 and bring forward a recommendation. He thought the voters may vote to have a new town center building if the costs are the same as maintaining it. Katie asked if there should be a forum before a vote in March. Bard replied yes, the forum should take place beforehand.
- that Christine said when talking about hard numbers no one has them. She suggested that keeping things going in the next 12 months then discuss the future of the buildings. Once you get into this more and more things come up.
- that Jeff Forward said that the committee is doing a great job and we should let them continue and report back. David agreed.

#### **h) Discussion of health insurance for Town staff**

Josh reported:

-that last week insurance rates were announced for MVP and BCBS adding that if the employees changed nothing in their choices the change in rates combined will be 2.14 %. Josh said Hickok and Boardman is putting together comparisons for review and asked if the board had any criteria they wanted looked at.

Discussion included:

- Roger said coverage is getting worse. He said we have had two years now where we have not had a massive increase. He thought we should think about how the benefit is administered adding that if we are going to ask for employees to contribute to their health care costs we need to consider that it is not what employees signed up for.
- Christine asked if there is a decision that needs to be had tonight or if there more information we are waiting for. Josh replied that we can have Hickok & Boardman get whatever information we ask for. The question is what information /scenarios should be explored adding that if anyone has any thoughts they can also be explored. Christine responded that the costs are a big part of the decisions. She wants to understand the coverage that is being offered for the money being spent.
- Bard said that he observed that the difference between plans and provider networks is not very different because there are not many choices, in Vermont that is not the case everywhere else. Bard thought that if we are going to ask employees to pay a percentage then we should have an idea of how it impacts individual employees.
- Christine offered that in her career she has worked with insurers to make the plans that are offered. Josh offered to include Christine in the call with Hickok & Boardman, she appreciated that and wants to be included. She offered to work with employees on their selection of a plan. Roger said his sense is that we need to give the employees choices.

**i) Update on first tax instalment of FY21**

Josh reported:

- that taxes came in very well.

Katie asked if we know the number of people who did not pay. Josh will get that information for the next meeting.

**j) Discussion of FY22 Budget process**

Josh reported:

- that we are headed into that time where we have budget meetings only and proposed 10/13 at 7PM be the first meeting
- that appropriation forms have been sent out

Discussion included:

- that Roger said he didn't feel it was necessary to have organizations present. Bard thought Roger was correct that it was not necessary to hear from organizations every year.
- Roger said that other than issues like OCCC he would advocate for looking at the applications and then decide if we need to hear from anyone.
- Bard asked if hearing from department heads was ok? Roger said yes, that is different.
- Katie said she would likely not be able to meet on 10/13 but she would read the minutes and catch up.
- Roger asked if we have a sense when we will start meeting in person again. Josh said he has been working on it. Roger thought being in person has value and is more productive. Katie and Bard thought it could be a while before meeting in person. Bard suggested Josh see what other Towns are doing. Josh agreed.

A date will be picked at a later time for the first budget meeting.

**k) Update on VLCT Town Fair**

Josh reported:

- that the VLCT Town Fair is being held virtually and the Selectboard is able to attend any seminars that look interesting, they need only to sign up.

**l) Consideration of approving a voting delegate for VLCT Annual Meeting**

David asked if Josh wanted to be the voting delegate? Josh said he was last year and would do so again if none of the board members were able.

Bard moved to have Josh be the delegate for the VLCT Annual Meeting, Roger seconded. Roll call vote: Bard, Roger, David, Christine, and Katie voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

**m) Discussion of paper of record for DRB meetings**

Josh reported:

- that he has investigated when things need to be published and what that would mean for the public and the zoning officers schedule.

Roger said he read through the report and he agreed. Bard said he was impressed with the analysis. Roger said he liked the Times Ink. Josh said the Times Ink is challenging because their dates are not consistent.

**n) Update on Police Chief Hiring Process and announcement of Public Forum to be held on September 24**

Josh reported:

- that the interview committee has narrowed it down to three (30 people)
- that those candidates will be interviewed by several employees
- that there will be a public forum where people can submit questions
- that the goal is to have all questions asked and answered
- that there will be a ZOOM call in and will be broadcast by MMCVT
- that the public can provide feedback on what candidate they would like to see.

**o) Update on Bridge St. infrastructure project**

Josh reported:

- that we are down to a few items and then we should be done
- that the final numbers for the project should be ready for the next meeting.

**p) Update on Dugway Rd. project**

Josh reported:

- that the archaeological study came back and there is nothing where we want to do the construction but want another study was recommended for the areas where the staging of materials will be.
- that he is still working on the final details of easements
- that construction will be in the spring

**III. Approval of Minutes, Warrants and Purchase Orders**

**Minutes:**

Bard moved to approve the Minutes of 9/8/2020, Christine seconded. Roll Call Vote: Roger, Christine, Bard and David voted affirmatively. Katie abstained. Motion passed.

#### **Invoices and warrants:**

Roger asked about what overpayments for taxes were for. Josh said that some people paid the whole amount then received a homestead adjustment causing the need for the refunds.

Roger moved to approve warrants as presented, Christine seconded. Roll call vote: Roger, Katie, Christine, Bard and David voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Josh will send the warrant out for signatures using DocuSign.

#### **Purchase Orders:**

Roger moved to approve PO #3967 to MMUUSD for estimated 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr. education taxes in the amount of \$1,595,302.76; Bard seconded. Roll call vote: David, Katie, Roger, Bard and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

#### **IV. Discuss Items for Next Agenda**

Dash grant

Radiate Art space agreement

Parking lot Cochran Road lot

Thru trucks issue on Kenyon Rd

Route 2 paving VTrans shoulder widths and light issues to enable sidewalks to park and ride

Speed limit issues

#### **V. Executive Session if necessary**

#### **VI. Adjourn**

Roger moved to adjourn; Katie seconded. Roll call vote: Christine, Bard, Roger, Katie and David voted affirmatively. The meeting ended at 9:43 PM.