

Selectboard Minutes 5/04/2020

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

Absent: none

Others Present by Zoom: Josh Arneson, Town Manager; Kathy Daub-Stearns, Admin. Assist.; Connie Bona, Finance; Pete Gosselin, Hwy; Superintendent; Ravi Venkatataman, Planner; Kendall Chamberlain, Water & Sewer Superintendent; Kyle Kapitanski, Police; and Angelica Contis recorded the meeting for MMCTV Channel 15, also present: Ken Heskett, Miles Heskett, Jon Lowe, Connie van Eeghen of OCCC, Susanne Parents of OCCC, Lou Borie, Rod West, Gregelias, Jana Brown, Preston Wright, and Judy Rosovsky

Called to Order: 7:06 PM

Welcome by David.

- I. **Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present**
- II. **Additions or Deletions to Agenda- none**

a) Update from Our Community Cares Camp (OCCC)

Connie van Eeghen, Treasurer of OCC Board, reported that at Town meeting residents approved bridge funding in the amount of \$20,000. As a result, OCCC has hired a new director, Susanne Parents. Connie van Eeghen introduced Susanne.

Susanne added information on the OCCC budget regarding grant and fund raising results to date. Susanne was not sure what the summer would look like stating that the camp is still committed to the community and that COVID may have things looking very different this year. Connie van Eeghen added OCCC is committed to the children noting that food insecurity over the summer and the opportunity to have social relationships is important and that they are working with other community organizations and the school to see how they can work together to deliver those services.

Discussion included:

- Bard asking what other towns contributed this year to OCCC? Connie van Eeghen responded that every town is a different story, that Huntington provided \$500, Jericho is providing a conditional \$6000 based on extending the food program, Bolton is providing \$275, and Underhill \$3600.
- Kathy Daub-Stearns asked if the camp had all its participants signed up and if so, how many were from Richmond? Connie van Eeghan responded she did not have the answer readily available, Bard asked that she get back to Josh who will pass the information to the Board. Connie van Eeghan was able to tell the board that in 2019 130 of the 400 children attending OCCC were from Richmond.

b) Scout Miles Heskett to discuss possibly building a new Town Center sign as an Eagle Scout Project

Josh introduced Eagle Scout Miles Heskett. Miles is looking for Selectboard approval to do an Eagle Scout project that would replace the Town Center sign.

Miles presented information:

- that the current sign has begun to deteriorate and the information on it is also outdated since the school no longer a tenant.
- that the proposed project would replace the sign completely and would include installation and assembly. The actual painting would be done by a local company to ensure a professional appearance.
- that the sign could have LED lights for lighting at night
- that the price would be in the \$700 - \$900 range with Troop 23 providing the labor, fund raising and any funds the Town would be willing to contribute to cover expenses

David asked if Miles could provide solid cost estimates for the board to consider. Miles responded that he would get back to the Board when he had the information gathered.

Bard moved to get a final proposal for new Town Center sign from Miles Heskett, Katie seconded. Roll call vote: David, Roger, Katie, Bard, and Christine voted affirmatively.

Josh will work with Miles to ensure the proposed signage will be in compliance with Town regulations.

c) Consideration of approval of entering into a conservation easement agreement with the Richmond Land Trust for the Stage Road Community Forest

Josh reported that the Board reviewed this a few months ago.

Wright Preston presented information:

- that he met with both the Richmond & Bolton Conservation boards about joining together small tracts of land from each town that are already surrounded by conserved land
- that both conservation commissions have approved the conservation and made recommendations to their respective Selectboards
- that both towns are using the same attorney and that is saving some money
- that the \$4500 from the conservation fund would provide: \$2500 to Richmond Land Trust Stewardship Endowment Fund, \$1000 in legal fees, \$500 in recording costs and \$500 in related expenses

Discussion included:

- Roger expressing that spending money to conserve land that is not accessible and that the Town already owns seems unwarranted
- Katie asked why conserve the land as opposed to keeping it as town property? Preston Wright responded that it would prevent the possibility of having wind turbines there as had been talked about for the Richmond property and in Bolton that land was looked at for the possibility of a dirt bike track. He thought it was important to conserve the property along with the property already conserved that surrounds it. Judy Rosovsky added that she thought funding was already approved

and that now it was about approving the language that's been drafted. Bard responded she was correct.

Bard moved to enter into a conservation easement agreement with the Richmond Land Trust, Katie seconded. Roll call vote: David, Bard, Katie, Roger, and Christine voted affirmatively.

After moving on discussion resumed when Preston Wright called back in asking the board to approve the \$4500. from conservation fund to finance the conservation easement agreement. After discussion it was decided to research previous meeting minutes, possibly the Aug. 19, 2019 meeting, and return with the information needed at the next meeting. David thanked Preston Wright for bringing it to the boards attention.

d) Update regarding Richmond's Annual Fourth of July Celebration

Linda Parent updated the Board saying it was a hard decision to come to, but considering everything, the annual Fourth of July celebration had been cancelled. Linda added that North Star Fireworks agreed to use the deposit that was paid for next years event.

Everyone was very disappointed but agreed it was the right choice to keep people safe. The board acknowledged that it must have been a hard decision and one no one would want to make.

e) Consideration of request by Gabe Firman to waive a DRB fee and fine

Josh reported that Gabe Firman has requested that the Selectboard waive the DRB fee and fine citing that he would have been able to use the rounding rule had it been in place. Since it was not he's had to apply twice and would like the second fee waived adding that the penalty for the deck would have been avoided if there hadn't been so much confusion surrounding what was the right thing to do.

Gabe Firman said it was a clerical thing, that it took so much time to get approvals for zoning amendments and no one really knew what to do. The deck was tied into the housing units permit. Gabe added that he was looking for consideration and understanding of the circumstances that included the rounding rule initially being applied to both districts, then when he applied the rule hadn't yet been approved. He said he moved forward with the deck so he didn't have to lay workers off. Gabe added that for 2 years he had followed the rules trying to do what was right and that this was a timing problem.

Discussion included:

- Katie's acknowledgment that from the very beginning of the process Gabe had indicated that his plan was for there to be 4 housing units
- Roger adding that the process that has just been gone through has been irregular stating that Gabe got no advantage. In the future we need to do zoning changes in a different way

Roger moved to waive the additional fees and fine imposed, Bard seconded. Roll call vote: David, Kate, Roger, Christine, and Bard voted unanimously.

f) Update on COVID-19 response

Josh reported:

- that in the last week departments have been complying with addendum 11 stating that training Certificates for all employees except a few part timers are on file at the Town Center office. Josh added that the policy that was drawn up for the Boards consideration was discussed at the department head meeting and then sent to VLCT for their input. What became clear is that the policy that is being required continues to evolve. VLCT suggested waiting for additional guidance coming from ACCD and project work safe.
- that late last week Senate and House passed the bill on property taxes that would allow the governing body of an municipality the authority to change the tax rate related to the municipal portion of the property tax bills, change the method of payments (ie due dates), and waive interest and penalties. Josh added that these were not mandates, just permission and that it was a temporary authority.

Discussion included:

- Katie asked about mortgage forbearance? Connie Bona responded that the largest receivables come from escrowed monies stating that currently the numbers show we are at the half-way mark for payments adding comparing 2019 to today we are about \$36,000 behind in collections. Connie expects that the week that payments are due she will get about 300 checks.
- David asked if there is a deadline on adoption of the new stay safe policy? Josh responded that there is none yet and that the goal is to have a sound policy that meets the required criteria and keeps everyone safe.

III. Other Business

a) Consideration of approval of COVID-19 Policy

Moved to a future agenda

b) Update on Bridge St. infrastructure project

Josh reported:

- that construction had started however the RR permit was causing a delay. He reported that all information had been submitted for the permit but the RR was taking more time than anticipated causing there to be a need to adjust the work schedule.

Discussion included:

- David asking about any feedback from businesses or residents since construction started? Josh replied he's gotten very little feedback, positive or negative.

c) Update on Dugway Rd. project

Josh reported:

- that there has been no word back from FEMA on the plans submitted
- that he has moved forward with the easement with the land trust for constructing the wall outside of the right of way if the reconstruction is approved for it
- that a safety plan is in place that closes the gorge and that the press release was picked up by WCAX

d) Consideration of setting towing fees

Josh reported that per our ordinance when the town requests a vehicle be towed the Selectboard is to have set the fee and fine adding that the average tow fee is \$150 plus the parking ticket and any storage fee charged by the towing company.

Discussion included:

- Kyle Kapitansky reporting that he looked into what the local tow companies were charging and that \$150 was the established fee for towing in Richmond.
- Rod West, owner of a tow company, added that the Selectboard should consider a “not to exceed” number because there is a difference between towing from the gorge in good weather and towing at 2AM in the dead of winter and that the number should be higher at \$250 since this about towing any time of year and not just Dugway Road
- Bard noted that the tow fee in Burlington is \$50 according the website
- Roger said that there are many miles to cover within the Town of Richmond and depending on where the tow company is coming from and going to is also a consideration
- the question was raised: who will be the arbitrator? the Police Chief? the Town Manager?

Katie moved to set a “not to exceed” towing fee of \$250, Christine seconded. Roll call vote: Bard abstained. Roger, David, and Christine, voted affirmatively.

e) Signatures on loan refinancing documents

Josh reported that the Board had previously approved the refinancing of 5 loans adding that the Board now needs to sign the paperwork.

f) Signatures on Bridge St. Infrastructure Replacement loan documents

Josh reported that these documents are the same as the same as the loan refinancing.

Connie requested that everyone carefully sign all the places that require signatures.

IV. Approval of Minutes, Warrants and Purchase Orders

Christine moved to approve the Minutes of 4-27-20, Roger 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.

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 policy

appointments for boards and commissions

next Monday meeting, 5/11

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 9{145 PM.