

Minutes 7/6/2020

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.; Kyle Kapitansky, Police; Ravi Venkataraman, Planner; and Angelica Contis recorded the meeting for MMCTV Channel 15, also present: Marshall Paulsen, Jay Furr, Martha Nye, Jeff Forward, Chris Granda, Stefani Hartsfield, Jay Furr, Virginia Gifford, Amy Klinger, Lou Borie, Betsy Emerson, Tim ?, Martha Marciel, Tim & Marie Schonholtz, John Cohn, "Keeping Track", Jean Bressor, Steve Bower, Andy Squires, Kathleen Gent, Martha Nye, Alison Kosakowski, Brad Elliott

Called to Order: 7:00 PM

Welcome by David.

Comments from the public:

I. Additions or Deletions to Agenda

Chris Granda said there was a thief that had been stealing BLM signs and attempted to take the one in front of the Town Center building. Josh got the license plate of the van and the police have been able to track the records to a person in Richmond. He said that the investigation has stalled because the van is not at the address where it is registered. Chris said he understands that the police department exercises discretion but this is something that matters to the people involved and is a suppression of first amendment rights and asked that he be made aware of the outcome of the investigation. Josh responded that he had no further information.

II. Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present

a) Signature on final paperwork for the conservation easement agreement with the Richmond Land Trust for the Stage Road Community Forest

Josh reported:

- that we are here to finalize what was agreed upon previously,
- that the paperwork has to be notarized in person,

Roger moved to have Bard sign the easement, Katie seconded.

Discussion:

- David said he could come sign the paperwork.
- Roger amended his motion.

Roger moved to have David sign the easement, Katie seconded. Roll call vote: Katie, Christine, Roger, David, Bard voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Josh reported:

- that the Board needed to accept the baseline documentation report.

Bard moved to accept the baseline documentation report, Katie seconded. Roll call vote: Katie, Christine, Roger, David, Bard voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Josh said the next step was to vote to approve the Resolution and that it could be signed electronically.

Bard moved to approve the Resolution for the Conservation Easement Agreement with the Richmond Land Trust for the Stage Road Community Forest, Katie seconded. Roll call vote: Roger, Christine, David, Bard, Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Discussion included:

- Christine asked for clarification. Roger said, the Town of Richmond is paying to prevent future Selectboards from developing the land. Josh agreed saying, Richmond already owns the land.
- Wright Preston added that Bolton is 30 days behind Richmond in approving another parcel that adjoins this one. He said that tonight Bolton voted to place the notice in the paper and will vote at their next meeting.

b) Consideration of options for the EVSE project

Josh reported:

- that the EV station would charge two (2) electric vehicles and was being funded mostly by a grant. The original bids came in high and it may be best to go back out to bid because the increase was not budgeted for. Option 2 would require a waiver and Option 3 would be to fund the EV station without a grant.

Roger moved to go back out to bid for the EV station; Katie seconded. Roll call vote: Bard, Katie, Roger, Christine, David voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Discussion included:

- Steve Bower said that for option 2, it turned out that the reviews on the product were not good so he would not recommend that it, that Peck Electric has submitted another estimate and the net outlay by the Town would increase by about \$1050. He said that the estimate was not a guarantee. He thinks a few companies who do not really know the business put in high bids. Peck gave the impression they would bid and because the company was in the process of being sold the request to bid got lost in the shuffle.
- Christine: asked if the EV station worked in a similar way to parking meters that generate revenue? Steve replied that the grant requires knowing what the fees would be to end users and that the town agrees to charge users the cost of electricity. He added that the Selectboard would review the fees each year to determine if the rate was appropriate. Jeff Forward said if there could be savings by using the library meter.

c) Discussion of placing a sign on Bridge St. bridge to inform boaters of the boat ramp on the Volunteers' Green side of the bridge

Josh reported:

- that the Gifford's, who own the property across from Volunteer's Green, have been having trouble with boaters. He said the Gifford's have posted "no trespassing" signs but people continue to use their property. Josh said the Gifford's are asking for the Town to put a sign upstream of the bridge indicating where the town boat ramp is located. Josh suggested talking to local engineer to provide a suggestion on the placement of signage.

Discussion included:

- that Virginia Gifford reported that the problem is that most of the canoers come off the river onto their property. She asked that in addition to a sign they could see on the bridge that another sign to located near the boat ramp indicating to where to exit the river.
- Josh said that after Float-a-palooza the organizers were told that the Town would expect a better organizational plan with their application but with COVID they may not be having it.
- Jean Bressor said that with COVID a lot of people using the river and they are exiting and entering on the Gifford property adding that must be some way to communicate where they should be departing the river.
- Bard suggested signage that tells people what we want them to do. "Public Access on left" or "No Trespassing, stay left". In addition, have better signage at Volunteers Green, something on the bridge and something on the Gifford property. The more direction what to do will help.
- the Gifford's reported that Float-a-palooza was scary, that any events cause them to have to deal with people parking on their property and leaving their trash. They feel event organizers should be responsible for having people directing anyone attending adding that volunteers over the years have not been able to control people. Recently someone left 6 canoes and their belongings to go up the street to eat. A lot of people at the park these days.

Virginia Gifford added that Winooskiriver.org had wording for signage, her suggestion was: "pass under the bridge, bear right to exit river"

- Bard said we need to have a proposal, what signage, what size, and where to place them with more rigorous enforcement. Katie agreed. Christine would like to have this on the agenda for next week.
- Josh will work on wording and locations for signs.

d) Discussion Bombardier Meadow uses and parking in the eastern portion or Richmond

Josh reported:

- that there is an increased need for parking and asked if the meadow be used for parking, this issue being that an easement on the property allows for 5 parking spaces.

Discussion included:

- Jeremy Hoff, from the land trust said the property is a working hayfield so they try to keep foot traffic off the meadow adding that there are some endangered species nearer to the river. He said he understood the issue and was trying to make sure the easement is being adhered to also.

Note: Residents from the area met using one Zoom connection provided by John Cohn, it was not always apparent who was speaking. As a result, comments from the group are identified as "resident or residents"-

Residents said:

- that the parking situation is not working
- that they appreciate the land trust and value them,

- that there is concern is for safety with vehicles parked on the edge of the road blocking the view of pedestrians and other vehicles,
- that they do not want to wait until an accident happens suggesting that there should be no parking on the road with parking provided in the Bombardier meadow, -
- Residents showed pictures of damaged signs, cars parked along the road and pedestrians walking across the road.
- Current signs say “no parking on the road” so people are parking on the side of the road and on private property. Their suggestion was that signs should say “No parking, cars will be towed”.
- Residents asked for permission to put temporary no parking signs to make it safe
- Marie and Tim Schonholtz added that they have a nice swimming hole in their backyard, so they posted a “Welcome to Our Backyard” sign. They are concerned that if there is more parking there will be more diapers in the bushes and people urinating on her property.
- Amy Klinger said her house closest to the Huntington Gorge and the Richmond Police Department have their hands full, her concern is a safety issue and emergency vehicles being able to get through adding people don’t know where to park so they just park on people’s property.
- Martha Marcie said “no parking on travelled portion of road” signs seem to give drivers permission to park on the side and park on private property. She would encourage “no parking” signs on parts of Dugway as well.

David asked for possible solutions to the problem. Jeremy Hoff replied that there is an increase in outdoor recreation, not just a river issue, Cochrane Rd is also bikers and runners. Confronting people is an unsafe thing to do.

- Lou Borie thought we need to take a holistic approach to these issues. Getting word out Huntington Gorge, Triple buckets and Bombardier’s field adding that with COVID we are a victim because Richmond has amazing places to recreate. He said that to create 5 spaces would mean needing to raise funds and it would not solve the problem. He suggested a shuttle system, two buses that would circulate at busy times of day.
- Jane and Betsy Emerson thought there need to be a short-term solution while working on a long-term plan.
- Chris Granda asked if there could be a caretaker for peak periods? He suggested someone in a reflective vest that would tell people what to do. John Cohn replied saying he had tried 6-10 times to do that and people were belligerent. He said he posted a sign that said, “For respect for neighbors please don’t park here”, the response he got was “it doesn’t say we can’t park here”.
- Chris Granda said he can confirm that it is out of hand and asked about paying for an officer to be there?
- Roger said that the more popular you make something the more people will want to use it. He would like to hear from the police department about how things are working on Dugway Rd. Kyle replied that Dugway is not going well, the same as Cochran and West Whitehill. He agreed and sympathized with residents adding that with staffing it is not possible, parking enforcement needs a fulltime person.
- A resident said, there is a balance of wanting people to enjoy the river, but this is a different year. We need to figure out some alternatives.

- Christine asked if David could ask attendees to pause so the Selectboard could discuss it? David agreed adding that he was surprised at the number of cars and people on Cochran Rd., that there are no easy solutions.
- Katie asked about barrel cones in that area thinking it could be an immediate public safety solution while looking at longer term solutions. Kyle responded saying he was not sure what the process is to make the road a no parking area, but it is a long process. He added that the barrels on Dugway Rd get moved for people to park.
- Roger asked about placing big rocks there to prevent people from being able to park.
- Josh said that an ordinance change takes 2 to 3 months and rocks might be a quicker solution. Bard said that we need to follow the Ordinance, it is the proper thing and that he was not in favor of private entities putting up signs on the road. He thought that VLCT might have some suggestions adding that the reason an ordinance takes so long is so that things are done thoughtfully and has a due process component.
- Chris Granda said that the town could have police enforce the parking problem. Roger asked what law the police would use, that people are parking legally. Kyle added that the parking problem is not anything the department can enforce. Roger said there is too much interest and we need to make it less accessible and prevent people from parking there.
- Bard said we just had a similar discussion about river access, tell people what to do. He asked if there is a place where people could park? adding that if we accept that people are very motivated to access the river, then we need to direct them where to park. David did not know where that would be.
- Lou Borie said that if the Town does place rocks along the road rocks will need to be placed all along Cochran Rd near the River Shore Preserve or that area will become even busier.
- Christine thought we should look at placing rocks. She wondered how people are finding out about Richmond adding that other towns intentionally invite people, maybe we should put out our own messaging. Encourage others about what is wanted and what is not. Christine thought that having a document with a map with a proposed parking area, or a place that that is more a drop off point, everyone gets out and the driver parks somewhere else and walk back. That may be an idea that can move forward.
- Someone asked if the Town owned property on Cochran Rd. Roger said it was discussed a while back. Bard said it has been discussed as parking, tennis courts & gardens, it is about an acre. Roger asked if Josh could figure out when that meeting was and find out what was supposed to happen. Roger thought having a parking permit for residents would help. John Cohn added that users could purchase a permit. Roger said that people would come to town for the permit and it could have an educational component to help people know where they are going and allowed to park. John Cohn thought it could help support the local economy, subject to safety.
- Roger asked if the Police Department could do extra patrolling? Kyle responded, yes.
- A resident said that the Police Department has been doing a great job, that speeding is an issue.
- A resident asked about the possibility of having a three way stop sign at the intersection. David thought that was a good suggestion. We have some ideas going forward and will bring this back next week. Christine asked if we were starting the process to make this a no parking area? Roger replied that by the time we are finished with the ordinance process it is 3 months down the road. We can talk about what next summer looks like. Like Dugway this is a long-term process. Christine agreed.

- Residents thanked the Selectboard for taking the time to hear them and work on a solution.

e) Update on Unified Planning Work Program grants and cash match

Josh reported:

- that these are grants that SB agreed to previously and the applications were approved. He added that the Transportation Committee has asked to have both grants submitted and the \$8000 grant match requested was previously approved and covers both grants. Ravi did not have any additional information saying he is still working on the details for the scope of work on these projects.

f) Consideration of approval of State Municipal Planning Grant

Ravi reported that this grant dovetails with the housing regulations. He said that he is working on the grant application and needs the Selectboard to be signed and a motion to adopt the resolution for the Municipal Planning Grant to be submitted.

Christine moved to adopt the resolution for the FY21 Municipal Planning Grant, Bard seconded. Roll call vote: Katie, Roger, Christine, Bard and David voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Josh noted that the budget will be \$200 over matching grants for FY21. Ravi said MPG goes into FY22. Josh said that can be budgeted for FY22 then. Christine said, if we receive the grant then we will know the actual amount we need to match. Ravi agreed. Christine wondered if we are 6 days into the fiscal year and we have spent our budget do we need to increase it next year? Josh said we planned this grant work and did not think there were other grant opportunities. Ravi agreed adding any future planning would be FY22.

g) Consideration of forming an Affordable Housing Committee

Ravi reported:

- that the Planning Commission decided to have a separate task force and will coincide with the grant.
- that the Housing Committee would work with the Planning Commission and Selectboard adding that this is an action item within the Town Plan.
- Christine asked if they were looking for members for the Housing Committee. Ravi responded 5 from the community and 4 from other boards, suggesting at least 1 Selectboard member liaison.

Bard moved to create the Town of Richmond Housing Committee and adopt the enclosed charge; Roger seconded. Roll call vote: Christine, Bard, Katie, Roger and David voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

h) Update on Racial Equity Working Group

Christine reported:

- that the group has met a few times and are meeting weekly
- that they have a large and diverse pool of talent
- Christine thanked Jay Furr who has been the groups communication specialist.

- that there is someone working on policy, policing and the policies that go with that adding what do we need to support our police dept is important.
- there is someone working on education, they are not just looking at our own education but a thoughtful education of others we would want to support. The senior community center is working on different programs also.
- there are others doing work for fund raising for reparations and they are willing to provide opportunities at whatever levels of comfort there are.
- that members are action oriented.
- that there are a couple of other resources, a potential survey about why Vermont is so white and the possibility of having a sister town in the south so we can hear from the people on the receiving end of discrimination.
- Chris Granda said he feels fortunate to be part of the group and appreciates Christine's time. Jay Furr added that there are decades of experience in the group. Katie was happy that we are able to bring resources together and be action orientated.

III. Other Business

a) Discussion of speed limits on Rt. 2

David stated that this is the section of Rt 2 that goes over the Winooski River to the bottom of French Hill. He said that there has to be a request made asking the Selectboard to look at changing the speed adding that it is a narrow section of road with cyclists, joggers, and traffic to the nursery.

Discussion included:

- Alison Kosakowski Conant saying the speed limit is 40 down French Hill and people race through the flats where it's 50 and then it's 40 again at the bridge. She said the road is in bad condition, the old concrete road is under the pavement and has created a ridge. There have been quite a few accidents she said that have ended up on her property. When she asked VTrans, she was advised to go to the Selectboard and request a traffic survey be done. She thanked the Richmond Police Department for being so responsive to the problem and the Selectboard for taking the time to hear her.
- Josh said that the Town of Williston is asking VTrans for a study as well. Roger said he spoke to the person in charge of traffic studies and was told they are backed up so the study will take a while.
- Bard said the history of Route 2 is that when the Selectboard asked VTrans to do a study 6 years ago and the speed was lowered from 50 to 40. The issues included pedestrians and cyclist use of the road and the differences between getting hit at 50 vs 40. Bard thought the Board should pursue it.

Bard moved for the Selectboard to formally request a study from VTrans; Katie seconded. Roll call vote: Roger, Katie, Christine, Bard, and David voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

b) Update on police staffing and the police chief hiring process

Josh reported:

- that there have been staffing changes.
- that Chief Muldoon is retiring after 20 years of police work, he will be missed. In his 15 months here, Larry has gotten the Police Department exactly where we wanted it to be.

- that Rick Greenough will also be leaving, he has accepted an offer from the Williston Police Department, Rick has been with Richmond 15 years.
- We currently have two FT officers and continuing to try to fill officer positions. Josh suggested that the SB use the same process as was used when filling the chief position including having a hiring committee. The committee will review applications and select 2 top candidates then a public forum will be held. The positions will be posted in papers, VLCT, police hiring boards, and FPF. There were applicants from as far away as Texas when the position was posted the last time.

Discussion included:

- Roger thanking Kyle for stepping up to be Acting Chief saying he hoped that there would be local interest in the position. Kyle thanked everyone and said he hoped to continue Larry's vision and would see where the process takes him.
- David said he was interested in being the Selectboard liaison to the hiring committee but did not want to dampen anyone else's interest.

c) Consideration of approval of scope of work for FY20 Audit

Bard moved to approve the scope of work for the audit; Roger seconded. Roll call vote: Roger, Katie, Bard, Christine, and David voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Discussion included:

- Roger asking if the Town received any other quotes. Josh responded that the bid received last year contained a 3year option and was the only bid received. Roger said he did not like that no one else bid. Kathy responded that the reason more firms did not bid was probably because of the specialty nature of the audit. Josh said that other towns are paying comparable amounts.

d) Discussion on property tax payment due date

Josh reported:

- that the education tax rate we get from the State may be out by July 10 and bills would go out for payments to be made by Aug 15. The School tax bill to the Town gets paid 20 days after the due date to residents. This year the Selectboard has the option to change the date and push the education tax bill out. If we are not meeting next week, he suggested moving it, if we are meeting then wait and see if the tax rate comes in.

Discussion included:

- Roger saying that if we are not creating a problem for the school then changing the tax due date would be best. David agreed it should be changed.

Roger moved to change the tax due date to Sept 1, Christine seconded. Roll call vote: Katie, Christine, Roger, Bard and David voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Discussion continued:

- Katie asked if the whole “take out a loan thing” still on the table? Josh said it would not be necessary.
- Katie asked Josh if the Selectboard was meeting next week and wanted to remind everyone about signage promise.

e) Consideration of approval of a liquor license for Hatchet

Katie moved to approve Hatchet’s application for a liquor license, Bard seconded.

Roll call vote: Bard, Katie, Roger, Christine, and David voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

f) Consideration of adopting the VT Alert system

Josh reported:

- that this is a statewide system that people can opt into and is helpful to get information out to residents. This is the final letter to adopt the system.

Roger moved to adopt the VT Alert System; Bard seconded. Roll call vote: Katie, Christine, Bard, Roger, and David voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

g) Consideration of approval of Access Permit Application

Josh reported that this is for parking for Gillett Pond.

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

Discussion included:

- Christine saying, she doesn’t understand how we are putting a parking lot in next to Gillet Pond. Josh responded that the DRB has already approved the lot, the access permit is about the curb cut. Josh suggested that Suzanne or David Sunshine could help her understand the process.
- Brad Elliott responded saying the lot is small, 8-10 parking spaces where people now park on the road. During dam construction the lot will be used for construction vehicles and materials. There have been numerous permits. The lot could be used for fund raising events.
- Christine said she wished she could donate the \$150,000 needed to save the pond. She thinks it is great but is puzzled by inconsistencies and is troubled why some things get through and others are so hard. Roger responded that local people use the Pond repeatedly. The bulk of the people that use the gorge and river are not. The difference is people that want to use a resource show up, and others do not. Katie agreed that the Gillett Pond Committee is leading this. Brad Elliott agreed.

h) Update on Dugway Rd. project

Josh reported:

- that he has been working with engineer to get a bid out as well as working with the state regarding any historic preservation that may be required. Josh said he is still trying to get pricing for the fall, but we are getting to the end of the construction season.

i) Update on Bridge St. infrastructure project

Josh reported that the contractor is moving right along. If water quality tests come back clear the final connections can be made. Upper Bridge street sidewalks are being done this week and paving will go into next week. He said that there is a potential water line extension that would extend from Jolina Court down to Church St. and that the completion date would still be mid-August

IV. Approval of Minutes, Warrants and Purchase Order

Christine moved to approve the Minutes of 6/22/20, Bard 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. He asked about the late payment on the police cruiser. Josh said unfortunately, the bill came in and it didn't get processed by PD until the late fee came in and it cost us \$70.

Roger asked if we have bid out the diesel contract? We spend a lot on diesel. He also asked about condolence pastries. Kyle replied that it was for the State Police dispatcher that was killed on Route 89 in a motorcycle accident last weekend.

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.

Roger asked why the Rec committee applied for a food license. Josh said it's for the concession stand.

V. Discuss Items for Next Agenda

Signs for Cochran Rd and the Gifford's

Roger said off meetings were supposed to be COVID.

Notice of normal schedule being resumed beginning the 20th

CSWD update on Richmond reopening- does the town want to do something?

Where to Compost?

VI. Executive Session: Legal Matter

Bard moved to find that premature general public knowledge of the Selectboard's discussion of a pending or probable civil litigation or a prosecution, to which the public body is or may be

a party, would clearly place the Town at a substantial disadvantage, Katie seconded. Roll call vote: Bard, Roger, Katie, Christine and David voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Bard moved to enter into executive session to discuss a legal matter under the provisions of 1 VSA 313(a)(1) of the Vermont State Statutes and to invite the Town Manager, Josh Arneson, into the executive session, Katie seconded. Roll call vote: Bard, Roger, Katie, Christine and David voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Executive session began at 10:40 PM.

To get out of executive session: Bard moved. Christine seconded. All in favor. Exited session at 10:50pm.

To adjourn: Roger moved. Bard seconded. All were in favor (note we lost Katie as she did not make it back from the zoom room, so it was a 4-0 vote.) meeting adjourned at 10:52pm.

Bard moved to exit executive session; Christine seconded. Roll call vote: Bard, Christine, David, and Roger voted affirmatively. Katie was lost from the Zoom call.

Executive session ended at 10:50 PM.

VII. Adjourn

Roger moved to adjourn; Bard seconded. Roll call vote: Katie, Christine, Bard, Roger, and David voted affirmatively.

The meeting adjourned at 11:32