

**TOWN OF STAMFORD
SELECTBOARD MEETING
September 1, 2022
(UNAPPROVED)**

Present: Selectboard: Nancy L. Bushika, Chair, Carol A. Fachini, Michael G. Denault, and Pamela Tworig.

Brandon Field was not present.

Visitors: Carolyn Brooks, Laura Champagne, Joseph Dean, Theresa Denault, Eleanor Derby-Kilfoyle, Kurt Gamari, Marta Miller, Sheila Pecor, Beth Phelps, Deborah Righi, James Righi, Jo Anne Young, and Natalie Yorke.

Martha Staskus, Norwich Technology.

David R. Tatro, Road Commissioner.

William Levine, Emergency Management Director.

Lori Shepard, Selectboard Secretary.

Nancy Bushika called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., opened with the Pledge of Allegiance, welcomed everyone, and read a statement with procedural rules for the meeting. Additional correspondence and a new business item were added to the agenda. There were no changes to its order.

HEARING OF VISITORS

1. Martha Staskus from Norwich Technology spoke to the board about a potential wind turbine project. She has worked on the Searsburg, Deerfield and Hoosac wind turbine projects. The State of Vermont has a Standard Offer Program to get new reusable energy sources on the ground. This program is for turbines up to 2.2 megawatts. She was approached by a landowner who was interested in solar but when she visited the location she knew there was a greater opportunity for wind energy. They will need to conduct research on biology, rare plants and wildlife habitat in the area as well as collect four seasons of wind data. Once they submit their application, Green Mountain Power will need to conduct feasibility and impact studies. She anticipates this taking around three years. The results of the study will determine whose land the turbine will ultimately be placed on. The town will receive additional tax money on the value of the structure. Kurt Gamari stated that this location is within the desirable area determined by the Planning Commission. Nancy Bushika asked about the Governor placing a moratorium on wind projects. Martha Staskus said that is no longer in effect. There are certain daytime and nighttime decibel levels that can't be exceeded as well as having to be a certain distance from the nearest residence. All abutters as well as the town will be notified as part of the application process.

2. Joe Dean is concerned with the shrinking road budget and the condition of the roads going in the wrong direction. Mud season last spring was so bad there were a couple days when a fire truck or ambulance could not have gotten up the road. He recognizes no one wants higher taxes, but the highway budget is too small to keep up with the road maintenance. He requested that the Selectboard develop a long-term plan for road improvement. Nancy Bushika thanked him for coming in.

MINUTES

MOTION by Mike Denault to accept the regular meeting minutes of August 18, 2022 as written.

SECONDED by Pam Tworig. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

SELECTBOARD ORDERS

The Selectboard reviewed and approved the following orders:

WARRANT #33 \$ 6,896.94 payroll

WARRANT #34 \$15,276.62 accounts payable

ROAD CONDITIONS

1. Dave Tatro advised that Lesure Road, and most roads in town, were not built right from the beginning. Adding stone and gravel does help but the town cannot afford the work that really needs to be done. Twenty years ago there were five houses on Lesure Road. Now there are twenty and many houses have numerous cars travelling back and forth all day. The current highway budget is significantly lower than it was fifteen years ago. Last year's mud season consumed the whole road maintenance budget for the year which means there is no money left for gravel or improvements. Nancy Bushika agreed that they should increase the highway budget. She suggested authorizing Dave Tatro to overspend the budget and use some of the highway fund balance. The board discussed gravel vs. pavement and the fact that all improvements deteriorate over time. Laura Champagne made some suggestions, such as campaigning or obtaining sponsorships from people who want to invest in our community. Dave Tatro stated that the town needs to limit the expansion on our roads, maybe by making bigger lot sizes. Pam Tworig agrees that we need to stop the sprawl on the backroads and reduce the traffic. Natalie Yorke mentioned a new infrastructure bill. Mike Denault responded that it is federal and the money will go to the states. It's too soon to know if the state will pass the funds along to towns. Bill Levine suggested a warrant article to raise \$100,000.00 or whatever amount the board determines, for road maintenance and improvement. The board will look at this during budget season.
2. The Lincoln Road bridge project should be done by the end of September, early October.

RECYCLING

1. Carol Fachini has had difficulty with a resident who shows up early at the recycling center. Last week they left their trash for the recycling monitors to throw away because the transfer station hadn't opened yet. The board will get signs with the hours of operation on them and directed Carol Fachini to keep the gates closed until the transfer station opens.
2. The structure that holds the buckets at the transfer station is very shaky. The board asked Dave Tatro if he could reinforce it.
3. Carol Fachini advised that a section of one of the platforms is spongy and she is worried someone might go through it. The board authorized Carol Fachini to buy some plywood for reinforcement.
4. The board reviewed the Recycling Update and discussed the fees for the upcoming recycling year which begins on November 1st. Nancy Bushika estimated that the transfer station cost about \$42,000.00 last year, not counting salaries, and made about \$11,000.00 in income. It is a service the town provides for its residents. There was much discussion about the rates.
MOTION by Mike Denault to increase the initial fee for punch cards to \$95.00 (senior rate \$40.00) and increase the fees for demolition by 20%. SECONDED by Pam Tworig. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.
5. There will be a free Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day on September 17, 2022 in Dorset, Vermont from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

DEERFIELD VALLEY FIBER COMMUNICATIONS UNION DISTRICT

Bill Levine reported that the CUD is conducting a survey and you may see people reviewing the telephone poles on or near your property. Many of the telephone poles are also being replaced to support the new infrastructure. The high-speed internet service should be available within the next year.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Bill Levine hopes to pull out the emergency trailer and review the contents before cold weather hits. In an emergency the town should be able to shelter up to twenty people at the school and another twenty could be sheltered at the fire station if needed. Nancy Bushika feels we all have good neighbors.

SPECIAL TOWN MEETING AND CANNABIS VOTE

Nancy Bushika stated that the Selectboard reviewed the local option tax and found out the town does not qualify to levy the tax. The vote to allow a retail cannabis dispensary in town did not pass. There were 49 votes in support and 79 votes against it. The Selectboard can continue to watch the laws and in the event the state decides to start giving money back to towns that host a retail shop, they can always have another vote. Kurt Gamari noted that the only source of income for the town is taxation. Mike Denault suggested taxing commercial property higher using zoning. Natalie Yorke felt assessing a commercial tax rate could be done regardless of the location of the commercial property.

DOG WEBINAR

Nancy Bushika and Luke McKay attended a dog webinar. Nancy Bushika said they learned that our ordinance is outdated and after the board has completed reviewing policies they should look at the dog ordinance.

WEBSITE POLICY

Nancy Bushika explained that this policy was created in 2019 when the board developed the website. Carolyn Brooks would like to see the calendar filled more in advance.

RESIGNATION OF SELECTBOARD MEMBER

Brandon Field's resignation was received today.

MOTION by Mike Denault to accept the resignation submitted by Brandon Field with much regret.

SECONDED by Nancy Bushika. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

Nancy Bushika asked if the board wanted to advertise the vacancy, appoint another member now or stay as a four-person board until March.

MOTION by Pam Tworig to remain a four-person board until March.

MOTION by Carol Fachini to appoint Dan Potvin to fill the vacancy since he received votes in the past election.

The board decided to deal with one motion at a time. Nancy Bushika SECONDED Pam Tworig's motion for purposes of discussion. Mike Denault stated that when Chris Warren resigned it was near the election and the board chose not to appoint a new member. At another time there were several months until the next election and the board appointed Dave Tatro to fill the vacancy. Mike Denault stated he would like to advertise the position until the next meeting to give others the opportunity to submit a letter of interest. He agrees with Carol Fachini that Dan Potvin did receive half of the votes but he is not ready to make a decision. After minimal discussion, Nancy Bushika

called for a vote on Pam Tworig's motion to remain a four-person board until March. 1 in favor (Pam Tworig), 3 opposed. Motion FAILS.

Carol Fachini reiterated her MOTION to appoint Dan Potvin to fill the vacancy until the March election. SECONDED by Mike Denault. Carol Fachini said he received half the votes, has experience, and has knowledge of the budget process. 1 in favor (Carol Fachini), 3 opposed. Motion FAILS. MOTION by Mike Denault to wait until the next meeting to see if any other people are interested. SECONDED by Carol Fachini. Nancy Bushika was concerned that there wasn't enough time to get the word out. Mike Denault felt even tonight board members went back and forth with the recycling fees and a 2-2 vote means nothing gets done. He feels there is still two-thirds of the year remaining before the March election. Nancy Bushika called for the vote. 3 in favor, 1 abstained (Pam Tworig). Motion APPROVED.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Carol Fachini was approached by the school custodian requesting that the mowing contractor use an organic weed killer because the school will be painting the building. The mowing contractor should be trimming every other mowing. Mike Denault asked if the trimming was being done. He felt the principal or a school representative should come to the meeting. Pam Tworig suggested the school should have written a letter to the Selectboard. Pam Tworig was not comfortable with chemicals being used on school grounds. She will speak to the principal directly.

2. Mike Denault mentioned that the building alarm could not be set after the last Selectboard meeting and it was discovered that a classroom door was ajar and would not shut and latch. The alarm company was contacted during the situation. Lori Shepard spoke with the school about the door and there has been no further problems with the alarm.

MOTION by Mike Denault to adjourn. SECONDED by Nancy Bushika. All in favor. Motion APPROVED. The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Carol A. Fachini, Clerk

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REMINDERS

1. Anyone interested in filling the vacant seat on the Selectboard until the March 2023 election should submit a letter of interest before the next Selectboard meeting.

2. There will be a free Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day on September 17, 2022 in Dorset, Vermont from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.