

**TOWN OF STAMFORD
SELECTBOARD MEETING
September 19, 2024
(UNAPPROVED)**

Present: Selectboard: Nancy L. Bushika, Chair, Michael G. Denault, Kurt Gamari, Douglas Wright, and John Dunn.

Visitors: Sally Bohl, Laura Champagne, William Levine, Marta Miller, Thomas Nazzewski, Beth Phelps, Daniel Potvin, Debra Righi, James Righi, and Mohammed Saie.
David R. Tatro, Road Commissioner.
Lori Shepard, Selectboard Secretary.

Nancy Bushika opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance, welcomed everyone, and read a statement with procedural rules for the meeting. Additional correspondence was added to the agenda.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

1. MOTION by Nancy Bushika to find that premature public discussion of a personnel matter would place the town at a substantial disadvantage. SECONDED by Mike Denault. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

MOTION by Nancy Bushika to enter executive session for a personnel matter pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3). SECONDED by Mike Denault. All in favor. Motion APPROVED. The Selectboard entered executive session at 6:00 p.m. Sally Bohl and Lori Shepard were invited to participate.

MOTION by Nancy Bushika to exit executive session. SECONDED by Kurt Gamari. All in favor. Motion APPROVED. The board exited executive session at 6:15 p.m. Action: The Selectboard will advertise for a part-time Assistant Assessor Clerk position. The rate will be negotiable and training will be available. The Selectboard will contract with NEMRC to hire John Tiffany as the Assessor for the 2025 Grand List season.

HEARING OF VISITORS

1. Mike Saie asked the Selectboard to visit his property to determine if the water runoff problem he is having should be fixed by the town. A former Road Commissioner blacktopped the ditch and swale over 20 years ago and it is deteriorating. Dave Tatro feels the property owner needs to install a driveway culvert to control the water and referred to the town's Highway Ordinance. The Selectboard will visit the property.

2. Dan Potvin and a committee of local residents is organizing a Stamford Resiliency Fair on Saturday, October 19, 2024 from 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. There will be experts who will have tables and give presentations on emergency medical basics, seed savings and several other self-sufficiency topics. He hopes to build bridges in town and a sense of community. He asked the Selectboard to assist with a town-wide mailing. John Dunn suggested that it would be less expensive to have a local printing company make postcards which can be sent out and a couple people will donate to defray the cost.

3. Marta Miller spoke on behalf of the Conservation Commission. She gave a presentation at the recent Conservation Commission meeting on the Emerald Ash Borer beetle, the Poison Parsnip plant and Japanese Knotweed plant. She would like to have links to this information added to the town website so people can identify and know what to do if they see the invasive species.

MOTION by Mike Denault to grant permission to add this information to the town website. SECONDED by Kurt Gamari. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

MINUTES

MOTION by Mike Denault to accept the regular meeting minutes of September 5, 2024 as written. SECONDED by Doug Wright. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

SELECTBOARD ORDERS

The Selectboard reviewed and approved the following orders:

WARRANT #37 \$ 8,786.94 payroll

WARRANT #38 \$41,545.71 accounts payable

ROAD CONDITIONS

1. Dave Tatro has been replacing culverts and installing stone-lined ditches on Jepson Road as part of the Grants-in-Aid project.
2. The truck is back from the shop but there is still a problem with it.
3. Dave Tatro received a quote of \$600,000.00 to pave Mill Road and County Road up to the intersection of Maltese Road. He feels it is a great price and the town should consider getting a twenty year loan to also pave Jepson Road and the beginning of Lesure Road at the same time. He feels it will considerably reduce the amount of maintenance required and the traffic studies that have been done support a decision to pave these roads. The town's grader is a 1998 so paving these roads would increase the grader's useful life. He will get a solid figure for budget time so the Selectboard can consider a warrant article.
4. The town received a grant to resurface East Road. The project will cost \$230,000.00. The grant funds provided will be \$160,000.00 so the town will have to come up with \$70,000.00 to complete the project.
5. Nancy Bushika spoke with the contractor who will provide a quote to repair/replace the highway garage doors.
6. The MERP (Municipal Energy Resiliency Program) assessment has been completed for the town garage and the Selectboard received the report. The Road Commissioner will work with the Town Clerk to submit a grant application for MERP funding.
7. The tree company has been very busy but will provide a quote to cut the trees at the intersection of The Lane and East Road.
8. Doug Wright saw an article in the Bennington Banner discussing ways to deter speeding such as speed bumps and radar signs. He will look into it and report back to the board.

RECYCLING

Nothing to report.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Nothing to report.

NEW FIRE TRUCK LOAN

Bill Levine read a letter from Paul Ethier concerning the financing of the fire truck. The Adams Community Bank will work directly with the town clerk to complete the loan. The Fire Company has pledged \$20,000.00 toward the purchase through fundraising efforts and will receive a FEMA grant to purchase the hoses, nozzles and other equipment that will need to be installed. The Fire Company thanked the Selectboard for their overwhelming support. Interest rates just went down a half percent so the loan rate will be better than previously quoted.

LEGAL TRAIL

At the last meeting, the board decided to change the classification of the 0.3 section of County Road from the intersection of County Road and National Forest Trail No. 301 to the Pownal, Vermont town line from a Class 4 road to a legal trail. Tom Nazzewski, on behalf of the local ATV club, asked for the Selectboard to amend its prior motion from June 2, 2022 to allow ATV use on the newly designated trail which should be designated as Legal Trail #5. They also asked for the Selectboard's support of their pursuit of a grant to improve the Sucker Pond Trail from its intersection with the new Legal Trail #5 to Woodford. The Selectboard discussed the matter. Mike Denault asked several questions to confirm that the Selectboard will retain full authority over the trail, that jeeps and other vehicles will continue to be allowed and that the town won't be on the hook for anything. Nancy Bushika asked for a certificate of insurance naming the town as an additional insured. The Highway Ordinance will also need to be updated.

MOTION by Mike Denault to open and authorize the legal use of ATVs on the following town highways: all town Class 4 roads, including the Legal Trail #5 (LT5) portion of County Road from its intersection of TR 301 to the Pownal town line, also including the Class 3 section of Klondike Road from its intersection with Risky Ranch Road to the class 4 section of Klondike Road. All operators and passengers are required to follow and be in compliance with all town, state and federal laws and regulations regarding the operation of ATVs. The Town of Stamford Selectboard reserves the right to amend or reject this authorization at any time. SECONDED by Kurt Gamari. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

MOTION by Mike Denault to sign the Resolution in support of the ATV Club's pursuit of a grant for Sucker Pond Trail improvement. SECONDED by Doug Wright. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

STAMFORD SIGN

The placement of the sign has been staked out. The grass slopes down away from the road and the board felt it is not an ideal place as the sign may be hard to see. Kurt Gamari felt the municipality should have the freedom to place its sign in the most suitable and visible location. Mike Denault felt variances should be used when they make sense. The board will restake an area closer to the road where the placement makes more sense and will revise its permit application to reflect the new distance. If the permit is denied, the Selectboard will seek a variance from the Zoning Board of Adjustment. If the variance request is not successful, they will install the sign at 51 feet from the road.

PLANNING COMMISSION RESIGNATION

The board read the letter of resignation from Maura Hawkins.

MOTION by Mike Denault to accept the resignation of Maura Hawkins from the Planning Commission with regret. SECONDED by Kurt Gamari. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

Anyone interested in serving on the Planning Commission should submit a letter of interest to the Selectboard.

2023 GRAND LIST

The town clerk asked the Selectboard to re-sign the 2023 grand list form stating there were no suits pending as it has been misplaced. The Selectboard signed the form.

ARPA FUNDS

The Selectboard discussed the best use of the ARPA funds which need to be committed by December 31, 2024 and spent by the end of 2025. They considered the grant match for East Road, payment of the bill for the storm debris removal, the purchase of a new heating system for the highway garage and new highway garage doors.

MOTION by Nancy Bushika to designate the remainder of ARPA funds to the East Road resurfacing project. SECONDED by Mike Denault. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

DVFIBER

No one has applied for financial assistance to help with their DVFiber installation costs.

FEMA PROGRAM

The paperwork for reimbursement of the damages on the last five roads reached completion and was submitted to the town for a final review. An error sent it back to the drawing board.

ELECTION

Lori Shepard advised the board of some changes with the upcoming election. The state will be mailing all registered voters an absentee ballot. People who wish to vote in person on November 5, 2024 should bring the ballot they received with them to vote. People who do not bring their ballot with them to vote in person will need to sign an affidavit. Because the state has mailed the ballots, they have only provided the town a small number of ballots for in-person voting. The polls will open at 8 a.m. and close at 7 p.m.

BOARD OF ABATEMENT

The town has received a request for an abatement and will be scheduling an abatement hearing.

TOWN BANK ACCOUNTS

The treasurer has met with Berkshire Bank and Adams Community Bank representatives to discuss consolidating the bank accounts. The auditor suggested this would streamline the reconciliation process and eliminate the need to obtain a tax anticipation note each spring. The banks discouraged putting all funds in the same basket and felt the operating checking accounts need to be separate from the active money market and also separate from the funds earmarked for growth. This defeats the purpose of the auditor's suggestion. The Selectboard said they would support whatever decision the treasurer makes.

DELINQUENT DOG LIST

One dog owner has licensed his dog and another has promised to come in. Luke McKay has tried to contact each person. The Dog Officer will be asked to continue to work to bring the dog owners into compliance.

CORRESPONDENCE

1. The town reviewed correspondence from a resident asking about the list of delinquent dogs from the last meeting and about the new town sign. The Selectboard will respond.
2. The town reviewed correspondence from a resident asking about the unused punches on the transfer station access cards. The Selectboard will respond.

VLCT WEBINARS

The Selectboard discussed paying for town officials to participate in various webinars that are offered. They decided that they will pay for board members to attend a webinar at the town office. If a board member wants to watch the webinar at home, they will be responsible for payment of the webinar.

MOTION by Mike Denault to adjourn. SECONDED by John Dunn. All in favor. Motion APPROVED. The meeting ended at 9:15 p.m.

Kurt Gamari
Clerk

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REMINDERS

1. Townspeople should sign up with the state's free communications network, VT-Alert. You can sign up at vtalert.gov to receive notifications. You can choose how you would like to be alerted (phone call, text or email) and can choose what type of alerts you would like to receive, i.e. weather, road closures, public health, etc.
2. Anyone interested in applying for the part-time Assistant Assessor Clerk position should submit a letter of interest to the Selectboard.
3. Anyone interested in serving on the Planning Commission should submit a letter of interest to the Selectboard.
4. The Wednesday afternoon summer hours at the transfer station will end on Wednesday, October 30, 2024.
5. The town office is open Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. and on Thursdays from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. Closed Mondays.