

TOWN OF STAMFORD
SELECTBOARD MEETING
November 19, 2020
(UNAPPROVED)

Present: Selectboard: Nancy L. Bushika, Chair, Carol A. Fachini, Daniel J. Potvin, Christopher Warren, and Michael G. Denault.

Visitors: Aaron Malachuk.
William Levine, Emergency Management Director.
Lori Shepard, Selectboard Secretary.

Nancy Bushika called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. She led the Pledge of Allegiance and welcomed everyone. She read a statement with procedural rules for the meeting. There were no additions to the agenda or changes to its order.

HEARING OF VISITORS

Aaron Malachuk advised that at the last Planning Commission meeting it was stated that Dan Potvin is an ex officio member of the Planning Commission and his votes should not be counted. Aaron Malachuk did some research and spoke with Jim Sullivan from the Bennington County Regional Commission. Jim Sullivan noted an excerpt from the former Secretary of State, Deb Markowitz, and gave his opinion that there is nothing to prevent a Selectboard member from being appointed as a voting member of the Planning Commission. Dan Potvin said he was on the Planning Commission for many years before becoming a Selectman. Mike Denault noted that in small towns it is hard to get people to run.

MINUTES

MOTION by Carol Fachini to accept the regular meeting minutes of November 6, 2020 as written. SECONDED by Mike Denault. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

SELECTBOARD ORDERS

The Selectboard reviewed and approved the following orders:

WARRANT #45 \$ 7,697.80 payroll
WARRANT #46 \$33,683.03 accounts payable

FINANCIALS

The Selectboard reviewed and confirmed financial statements for the months of September and October.

ROAD CONDITIONS

Nancy Bushika spoke with Dave Tatro who had no problems to report. The highway department plowed and salted during the last storm and the equipment is working fine.

RECYCLING

Nancy Bushika has not had a chance to review the transfer station costs and compare them to the bid received from Casella. The board will discuss the bid further at the next meeting.

PROPERTY TAXES

A resident asked the Selectboard to consider waiving the penalty and interest of late tax payments this year. Mike Denault feels the board needs to view the town's financial affairs like a business. Dog and recycling income is considerably under budget and if the town waives additional money, it might have difficulty. Other board members agreed and noted that Vermont law allows for property abatements due to a variety of

reasons, including financial hardship, and the process works very well. The board made no changes to the penalty and interest structure currently in place and recommends citizens utilize the abatement if they choose.

BUDGET WORK SESSIONS

An executive session for employee reviews was scheduled for Thursday, December 3, 2020 at 6 p.m. The Selectboard will hold the first budget work session on December 17, 2020 at 6 p.m.

CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING

Board members would like to have a Christmas tree this year. Mary Lou McKay is not able to organize the program. Mike Denault will help to obtain the tree. Lori Shepard and Theresa Denault will string the lights. Luke McKay will be contacted for wagon rides. Aaron Malachuk offered to have coffee/cocoa and donuts available. The tentative date is Friday, December 4, 2020 at 6 p.m.

FINANCIALS

There were no questions concerning the 3rd quarter financials which were previously distributed. Nancy Bushika asked if the board would agree to pull off this year's interest on the Certificate of Deposits to help offset the town's reduction in anticipated income. The board agreed.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER VACANCY

There is some interest in the position and the Planning Board will schedule a meeting in early December to conduct interviews.

ELECTION/COVID GRANTS

The town clerk has applied for and received several small grants to reimburse the town for unanticipated costs incurred to run the November election safely and due to covid in general. The grants offer 100% reimbursement and require no matching funds. The grants can't be used as income to offset reduced revenue, they need to be used as a reimbursement for costs incurred. The board and town clerk discussed purchasing items to facilitate remote participation of Selectboard meetings. Mike Denault felt not everyone in town has good internet, or internet at all, and some do not have phones so it is important to continue to offer in-person Selectboard meetings.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Bill Levine said at some point the Selectboard will need to consider how to hold town meeting. Some towns are considering adjourning the meeting to a date in the spring or summer when the meeting can be held in person, outside, socially-distanced. Although waiting until spring would make it difficult for budgeting purposes.

DEERFIELD VALLEY COMMUNICATIONS UNION DISTRICT (DVCUD)

1. Bob Briggs found a grant to fund a Wi-Fi hotspot in town. The town currently offers free Wi-Fi at the school/library.
2. Nancy Bushika asked if the board would like Bob Briggs to call in to a Selectboard meeting to provide an update on the progress of the CUD. The board will be busy with budget work sessions and thought this might not be the best time. Anyone interested in learning what the DVCUD is doing is encouraged to visit dvfiber.net.

GOVERNOR'S EMERGENCY DECLARATIONS

Dan Potvin reviewed the restrictions put in the place by Governor Phil Scott as well as other Governors around the country. Since March we have seen schools shut down, churches shut down, holidays cancelled, families torn apart, travel restricted, small businesses destroyed and free speech censored. It looks like

Communism is being instituted because of a virus. Some Governors have restricted family gatherings and have said they will remove family members that are a high-risk and keep them in covid camps, which reminded him of German concentration camps. Dan Potvin told board members that they took an oath to uphold the constitution. Things are heating up out there and will only get worse. Vermont is one of the few states that does not allow martial law. The states that have pushed back and fought these measures have won. New York police are choosing not to enforce Governor Cuomo's order concerning Thanksgiving celebrations. Dan Potvin wanted to be clear that he will not tolerate the government taking away our freedom. He is working on something for the next meeting that he would like to put in place. Before covid started there was a bill brought before the legislature to amend the constitution that resources on private property would become the property of the state. Dan Potvin wants the Selectboard to stand strong and not give up our liberties and freedom out of fear. Mike Denault said he stands behind him 100% and agreed that fear does not void a person's rights. Carol Fachini also agreed.

TOWN OFFICE

Lori Shepard said the latest Governor's Declaration specifically orders all municipal governments to return to working from home to the maximum extent possible. The office has been closed since the onset of the virus and the town clerk and assistant have been working behind closed doors. They have been encouraging the use of email, snail mail or fax for most town business and making appointments for people who need to come in person. Lori Shepard expressed her frustration that although some work can be done at home easily, other work will be much more difficult to do at home and it will be less efficient. She is conflicted because the Governor's order will make her less accessible to the townspeople who sometimes still need to come to the town office. Mike Denault said he supported the town clerk no matter what decision she makes. Dan Potvin noted that the order is a recommendation, not a law. Nancy Bushika said that the town clerk is elected by the people and sets her own hours and supported that she has found a way to still respond to our residents and get work done.

CEMETERY COMMISSION REQUEST

The Cemetery Commissioners ask for all flowers to be removed from graves as winter is approaching.

MOTION by Mike Denault to adjourn. SECONDED by Dan Potvin. All in favor. Motion APPROVED. The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Carol A. Fachini
Clerk

CAF/las

REMINDERS

1. The town office continues to be closed in accordance with the Governor's Stay Home – Stay Safe Order to slow the spread of COVID-19, but we are open by appointment and are willing to assist our residents by email, regular mail, telephone or fax.
2. Please visit the town's official website: townofstamfordvermont.org.
3. The Wreaths Across America program will take place on December 20, 2020 at 12 p.m. We are short on wreaths compared to last year's donations. Please visit <https://wreathscrossamerica.org/pages/142555>.