**Selectboard Meeting**

**Richford, Vermont**

**Approved Meeting Minutes**

**May 1, 2023**

Chair Pond called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm with members Wally Steinhour, Alan Fletcher, Sherry Paquette, and Kristen Sheperd present. Guests at the meeting included Joey Randall, Heather Moore, Zoning Administrator John Libbey, Rowena Brown, Town Administrator Michael Olio, and Cameraman Gerry Vaisey.

The board said the pledge of allegiance.

Chair Pond recognized guests. He started with John Libbey who asked what is the police coverage situation? There has been an uptick of four wheelers and ATVs at night. Selectwoman Paquette said Officer Andre Labier has pictures and is aware of it. Chair Pond said Officer Andre has been very responsive to calls, but he is only one person. John asked, has Franklin County Sheriff given any timeline to when we can expect more coverage? They are hoping by summertime there will be more frequent coverage.

John on behalf of the revolving loan fund, discussed Richford Ambulance requesting a loan for a new stretcher. Selectwoman Paquette met with the revolving loan fund committee for it. Chair Pond asked the selectboard if there were any comments or discussion on the loan? There were none.

Selectwoman Paquette motioned to approve the revolving loan fund for financing of the new ambulance stretcher. Selectman Steinhour seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

Rowena Brown followed up on sprucing up the retaining walls in the back parking lot of the Post-Office. Selectman Steinhour said he talked to Jason and found out it is not on the town’s property, but Ave Maria’s. Selectman Steinhour called and asked permission from Ave Maria to trim the shrubs, and they said it was okay. Rowena said she can be available this week to work on it.

Everyone discussed the activities going on along the river front. There are still people camping out and starting fires. Chair Pond said it is a hangout spot, and encouraged people to report fires when they see them. There are homeless people who hang around at the end of Willow Street by the old Atlas Plywood foundation. Selectman Steinhour said the police are aware of the activities, but it comes down to coverage. Selectwoman Paquette added Officer Andre is always notified after something happens. It is difficult to catch in the act.

Heather Moore, the director of the afterschool program for Franklin Northeast Supervisory Union, attended the selectboard meeting to discuss an event she is organizing at Richford’s town hall. She explained that over the last couple years, students took part in surveys about healthy living, their perceptions of their community, etc. On May 17 there will be a presentation at the town hall from 5-7 to review the survey data and to have a round table discussion on what improvements can be made in the community. Then there will be a follow-up meeting on June 14 from 5-7. She hopes the community driven data will help identify needs for the community and identify potential projects. Heather said she believes there is a need for a youth center in Richford and Enosburg. There are instances where municipalities run it, and others just support it. Other communities have unique models on how to operate youth centers. Selectwoman Paquette likes the idea, but added the Cornerstone Youth Center was successful for a while, but had difficulties towards the end with supervision. Selectman Steinhour asked if FNESU could manage it? Heather said the supervisory union is at full capacity. She said ideally two adults would be managing the youth center. There is flexibility in what could be offered for students like cooking classes, music lessons, hangout time, etc. Selectwoman Paquette asked could a community center be better, so everyone can be involved? Heather responded with data showing students prefer having their own space, and having a shared space may deter them from utilizing the community center. Selectwoman Sheperd asked if they considered working with Notch? Heather said they have not collaborated with Notch for a couple of years. Heather concluded her discussion by saying the state is looking to expand opportunities for youth centers so it could be a valuable future project for Richford.

Next the selectboard discussed the assistant zoning administrator job description. Selectman Steinhour said it needs to be more positive. Selectwoman Sheperd agreed. John Libbey handed out a worklist from 2022 to the selectboard. He said there needs to be a mindset change about zoning, as many people do not comply. Selectman Steinhour said maybe they can implement stronger ordinances, but Selectman Fletcher said it cannot go beyond zoning bylaws. They could implement stronger bylaws, but it ultimately comes down to enforcement. Selectwoman Paquette asked how many hours does John work a week? John estimated approximately 10 hours a week. The selectboard considered how many hours the assistant zoning admin position should work and the pay rate. John said milage should be accounted in the position too. Selectman Steinhour proposed 30 hours a month, and a pay range between $ 18 to $ 22 dollars an hour for the assistant zoning administrator.

Selectman Steinhour motioned to approve the assistant zoning administrator job description as discussed. Selectwoman Paquette seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

John brought up a zoning issue with the board. He wanted to discuss what would happen if someone put jersey barriers on the edge of their property alongside the road. Selectwoman Paquette asked shouldn’t it be so many feet from the right of way? There is nothing against jersey barriers in the zoning bylaws. John was concerned with this impacting the use of a town right of way. Selectman Steinhour thought if there is access to the right of way, which there is since jersey barriers can be moved, then is there anything that can done? It is still private property. Chair Pond wondered if it could be considered a fence. Selectman Steinhour asked if there is a definition of a fence in the bylaws? John said the definition of a fence in the bylaws talks about creating a boundary. Chair Pond said he thinks putting up jersey barriers can be considered creating a boundary. If it could be considered a fence, John said then it would need to be at least 18 inches away from the property line for maintenance.

Selectman Steinhour asked John what could he tell the selectboard about 130 Thomas Street? John responded that there is less trash there than last year, but it is still bad. Since it has been a rental property, the housing officer has been sending pictures of trash to the fire marshal, and the health officer has been notified as well. Chair Pond added they need to install a water meter too. John said he will recite them for zoning. Selectman Steinhour asked for a follow up at the next meeting.

Continuing zoning discussions, Selectman Steinhour asked John about the Guillemette Road settlement that was signed. Selectman Steinhour thought it was signed off with the understanding of only having two agricultural units which was defined as 1,000 pounds apiece. Who enforces this? Is it the town or the court? John believes it would be the town, and there could be a date when the settlement takes effect. Selectman Steinhour asked John to check on the timeline.

John added a property owner in East Richford has not been responding to court summons for a zoning violation. A summary of judgment was issued, and John had to send pictures to the attorney to see if the issue was resolved. Pictures showed it was not, so the attorney will follow up with the court.

Selectman Steinhour said there has been junk moving around on the golf course road, and he wondered what is considered a junk yard? John said it is 4 unregistered and uninspected vehicles. Selectman Steinhour said this is hidden from the road. John said they can only view from a public place so it would be difficult to enforce. Selectman Steinhour asked what about a business who has equipment that has not moved in years? John responded businesses are limited, but a new bylaw has been created that states businesses cannot store merchandise outside, but if it was prior to the bylaw implementation, it is grandfathered. Rowena explained this is where the selectboard could step in to create an ordinance which would mean there is no grandfathering. Selectman Steinhour wondered when the town could condemn a building due to public safety? Chair Pond said he does not believe there is such authority, it would have to come from the fire marshal. Joey added he asked this question to the housing officer, and the fire marshal would only be for rental properties and businesses. Selectman Steinhour said this would be for a business. Chair Pond said then it would have to go through the fire marshal.

Town Properties – Selectman Fletcher had more discussions with the attorney about selling town properties. For 50 Farrar Street, they recommended no restrictions as it could be discriminatory. Selectman Fletcher believes they have to make a decision. Selectman Steinhour wondered if it could be leased instead of sold. Alan said the town has invested $ 27,329 into the property. $ 7,220 was just for trash cleanup. The selectboard would like to pursue talking with Habitat for Humanity to gauge their level of interest in the property. Selectman Fletcher emphasized that the town acquires properties through tax sale as a last resort so there is a consequence for people not paying their property taxes. It is not for the town become a landlord.

Spring Community Trash Cleanup – Selectman Steinhour said there were discussions with Wetherby’s Trash Removal to have a spring community cleanup day on May 20. Selectman Steinhour said he felt it should go to the board first before proceeding.

Selectwoman Paquette motioned to have a spring community trash day on May 20. Chair Pond seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

The board moved to approve the 4/17 meeting minutes and the 4/20 special meeting minutes.

Selectwoman Paquette motioned to approve the 4/17 meeting minutes. Selectwoman Sheperd seconded. Motion passed 4-0 with Chair Pond abstaining for not being present at the meeting.

Selectwoman Paquette motioned to approve the 4/20 special meeting minutes. Selectman Steinhour seconded. Motioned passed 3-0 with Chair Pond and Selectwoman Sheperd abstained for not being present at the meeting.

Update from Town Administrator – Last week the TA and Selectman Steinhour visited property owners for the rail trail extension project. They visited Fred’s Energy, Pat Stanley, and Greenwood's Bakery. Information about the project was left at Fred’s office in Derby for their review. Pat Stanley was amenable to Selectman Steinhour’s idea of leasing a piece of town land in exchange for the trail going through his property. Greenwoods has some concerns with ATV traffic and activities on the current path. Some of these concerns could be addressed with the project from better lighting to narrowing the path in certain spots to lessen ATV traffic.

Selectman Steinhour added Vermont Natural Forest Products was willing to take the old piles of wood around Pat Stanley’s property for mulch. Pat said it was okay to take. The highway crew will deliver it to VNFP.

The Town Administrator reported the governor’s visit on May 15 will be about opportunities to use APRA dollars for municipalities and businesses.

Highway Report – Selectman Steinhour said road grading continues, and there have been some cleanup projects. The highway crew worked on the new ADA ramp behind the Post-Office to fill the gap between the edge of the ramp and the pavement. They also have been working on installing a new net to catch foul balls at the playground baseball field. There have been some difficulties installing it, but there are potential solutions that will be pursued. Street sweeping has finished. Chair Pond asked if the crew is still looking for work? Selectman Steinhour said no since work is picking up for them due to the time of year.

Buildings Report – Selectwoman Paquette said to give a thank you to the highway crew for all the work they did at town hall to resolve issues found by the fire marshal. She said Bobby Peters will be working on providing a quote to do some work in the boiler room. D&D will be redoing some office lighting.

The Post-Office boiler needs to be replaced. Mercy’s plumbing and heating gave an estimate of $ 15,000 for a new steam boiler. Selectwoman Paquette said this might be a good time to review alternative heating sources. As Selectman Steinhour reported, the ADA ramp has been finished off by the highway crew.

Water & Sewer Report – Chair Pond said water readings were done and bills were sent out. Some water meters need to be replaced. At Vermont Natural Forest Products, the fire hydrant was hit again, and needs to be replaced. They are looking into adding poles to avoid future damage. Noyes / Home Street fire hydrant needs to be replaced as well. Selectman Fletcher said water and sewer meetings are still on going, and asked for an update on the policy being uploaded to a Microsoft word document? Selectman Steinhour said there is no definitive timeline as of right now. Selectman Fletcher said it is getting to the point where it could hold up progress. He continued saying the water policy is close to being finished, and then work will start on the sewer policy. The TA was tasked with setting up another water and sewer policy meeting.

Selectman Steinhour asked about the follow up to the Eastern Ave water bill? Selectman Fletcher said it needs to be enough to cover the fees and base charge, and additional usage for treating the water. It will be tabled until the next meeting to get exact details. The selectboard would like it on the next meeting agenda.

Selectman Steinhour said he has one item he forgot to bring up. He said back in November the selectboard was approached about potentially installing a gate on the Benson Road. It was brought to his attention that a gate was installed, and a lock was put on. A property owner could not access their property because of it. Selectman Steinhour will continue to investigate the issue to see what can be done. Maps indicate it is a driveway, and others say a class four road. Selectboard can approve to pen it, but it cannot be locked. Selectman Fletcher said there is a state highway map in the vault for Richford.

Parks, Playground, and Cemeteries Report – Selectwoman Sheperd said ball games have started. She said she met with the Town Clerk to discuss cleaning up in the parks. As of right now no one is responsible for it. Selectwoman Sheperd asked Selectwoman Paquette if they could talk about the gentleman needing community service to put some hours in the park. Selectwoman Paquette agreed to get in touch about it. Dog bags have been put up in the parks as well. The water at the playground building was turned on.

Selectwoman Sheperd asked who is responsible for the cleanup of the graffiti on the retaining wall by Dollar General? It would be the property owner’s responsibility. Selectwoman Paquette suggested maybe there are students who are willing to clean it up, and with the owner’s permission, it could be done.

No items were discussed in other business.

Meeting adjourned at 7:43 pm.

Submitted by

Michael Olio – Town Administrator

Attest: