**Selectboard Meeting**

**Richford, Vermont**

**Approved Meeting Minutes**

**June 5, 2023**

Chair Pond called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm with members Wally Steinhour, Alan Fletcher, and Kristen Sheperd present. Guests at the meeting included Joey Randall, Rowena Brown, Zoning Administrator John Libbey, Dani Janko, Robert Wetherby (Zoom), Town Administrator Michael Olio, and Cameraman Gerry Vaisey.

The board said the pledge of allegiance.

Chair Pond recognized guests. Robert Wetherby attended the meeting through Zoom to ask the selectboard for information on concerns he had about the Fire Department. Mr. Wetherby stated there was a policy put into effect that required fireman to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) in a fire zone in order to get paid. Mr. Wetherby said there are photos circulating of fireman in the fire zone without PPE. Chair Pond said he was not aware of such policy. Selectman Steinhour asked Selectman Fletcher from his experience as town clerk and selectman, is this something the Selectboard should address or the Fire Association? Selectman Fletcher responded with the town has only been involved with paying firefighters when they go to a fire scene. Enforcing rules has always been up to the Fire Association. Selectman Steinhour said he understands it the same way. This is a Fire Association issue, and the Selectboard does not have purview over it.

Mr. Wetherby decided to skip his second concern about the Fire Association’s meting minutes because the Selectboard would not have authority over it.

Mr. Wetherby’s third concern was harassment by a fire department / association member on his personal Facebook page. This happened when Mr. Wetherby posted about being banned from the Association’s Facebook page. This person also harassed Mr. Wetherby’s family member on the post as well. Mr. Wetherby said there will be pushback if a fire member, town official, or someone from another service does this again. Selectman Steinhour apologized that he feels this way, but reiterated this is a Fire Association’s personnel issue, and not with the town. Selectman Fletcher said the internal running of the Fire Department has always been handled by the Fire Association. Joey Randall is the Vice President of the Fire Association, and stated they govern its own members. Robert said he still had the floor and the selectboard needs to review public meeting laws, so they follow the proper procedures. Selectman Steinhour said again the Selectboard feels the issue is a Fire Association issue, not a Town of Richford issue.

Dani Janko attended the meeting to discuss a water bill she received for her 2-family dwelling with a tenant. It was a $ 4,000 bill, and she does not deny the water went through the meter, but she cannot afford the bill while on a fixed income. The leak was caused by a malfunctioning toilet valve which the tenant was unaware of. Chair Pond asked what the normal bill was? Dani said her average bill is $ 700. Selectman Fletcher said under the new water policy there will be an element of forgiveness. He asked to take some time to do the math on determining the forgiven amount. Chair Pond asked if the board agreed to a reduction of the water bill?

Selectman Fletcher motioned to forgive a portion of Dani Janko’s water bull in an amount that will be determined at a later meeting. Selectman Steinhour seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

Rowena Brown updated the Selectboard on the progress of planting flowers along the Post-Office retaining wall. She said beatification is planning to do it soon. Selectwoman Sheperd asked what is the date? Rowena said they are targeting the last week of June. They are hoping to round up a group of volunteers to do it.

Zoning Administrator John Libbey said he has a zoning violation that needed to be delivered. Officer Andre Labier agreed to deliver it, but said usually it is the responsibility of the Selectboard. Chair Pond asked if the Town Constable could do it? John said they could, but the location of this person is unknown. Selectman Steinhour said for the sake of safety, he feels Andre should deliver the violation.

John said a tree on Main Street is dead and needs to be cut down. This will be one of a handful that has been cut down in the last couple of years. He would like to see a plan to replant trees along Main Street as old ones get cut down. Selectman Steinhour said he will ask the highway crew to take it down.

Third, John brought up issues he noticed around the town hall. He said there are weeds growing around the building, there is a pile of salt breaking down the concrete, and he noticed the bottom of the pillars are starting to rot. Chair Pond asked the Town Administrator to write a list for Selectwoman Paquette since she did not attend the meeting.

Selectman Steinhour asked John if he had an update on the Guillemette Road court settlement? John said it is up to the owner to follow the agreement, and if they do not, then it will go back to court.

The Selectboard would like to see the Assistant Zoning Administrator job posted.

The Selectboard needed to appoint Chair Pond for the Vermont Town Forest Fire Warden again. It is a five-year appointment.

Selectman Steinhour made a motion to appoint Andrew Pond as the Vermont Town Forest Fire Warden. Selectwoman Sheperd seconded. Motion carried 3-0 with Chair Pond abstaining.

Next the Selectboard moved to approve the 5/15/23 selectboard meeting minutes. Selectman Steinhour motioned to approve the minutes, and Selectwoman Sheperd seconded. Motion passed 4-0. Robert Wetherby voiced concerns about the minutes. The selectboard took his concerns into consideration.

Update from Town Administrator – On the rail trail extension project, Selectman Steinhour and the Town Administrator met with Trudell Engineering, and Greta Brunswick from Northwest Regional Planning to discuss the scope of work. There are permits that will need to be reviewed to ensure they are not expired. Selectman Steinhour posed the question, at what point does the Selectboard consider moving on from the project? The estimated payback would be around $ 150,000. Selectman Fletcher said if it comes to that point, maybe that would be good to reach out to Richford’s representatives. Selectman Steinhour asked Chair Pond about identifying where the water line is for the former hockey stick factory. Chair Pond said the reader is broken, so it will depend on when a new one can be ordered.

This week there will be a meeting on the Park & Ride project to check in on the engineering design phase.

Amy Brewer from Franklin Grand Isle Tobacco Prevention Coalition asked about conducting the annual cigarette butt cleanup in Richford. She will be going through the normal spots on Main Street and the parks.

The free water leak survey and water valve testing applications were submitted. Selectman Fletcher asked what happens if a valve is broken? The Town Administrator responded that the question was asked to the administrator of the applications, and no valves have been broken in this process. They also stated the testers are good at identifying issues with the valves before turning them.

There have been some updates on summer police scheduling. It seems like there will be an increase in coverage soon.

Highway Report – Selectman Steinhour said Pike Industries is ready to pave the South Richford Road. They were expecting to pave later in the summer, but Pike’s schedule was freed up. Selectman Fletcher asked when would they send a bill? He had concerns about paying prior to property taxes being collected. Selectman Steinhour said Pike is flexible with billing. At the end of the month someone will come up to crush stones that the highway crew collected. This will help save money on gravel. Selectman Steinhour said Seth Paul is going to be the new Assistant Road Foreman. Jason and Seth will be going to Lyndonville for a managers seminar later this week. On the road leading towards the playground there was a bump patched from the crew. It seemed to be from work conducted by the water and sewer department. Selectman Steinhour asked should water & sewer be responsible for the costs when they dig up the road? Chair Pond said the highway crew should bill the water and sewer department for doing the patching work. Selectman Steinhour would like to see a paving plan implemented to try and get ahead of paving the roads. Selectman Fletcher added when a road is identified for paving, they should check with the water & sewer department to see if a water line or curb stop needs to be replaced to ensure new pavement is not dug up.

Buildings Report – Selectwoman Paquette was not available to give her report.

Water & Sewer Report – Chair Pond read a list of water and sewer issues they encountered in the last billing cycle. Before addressing these issues, Chair Pond suggested they wait until the new water policy is implemented. Selectman Fletcher and Chair Pond would like to have a water policy meeting this week. Chair Pond said they may not be able to buy chemicals in bulk this year due to budget constraints. Selectman Fletcher asked if they could wait until the end of the year to see how they are doing with the budget? Purchasing in bulk would save on shipping costs. Chair Pond said he will ask Jeremy about it. The Green Ave water leak is still being worked on, but the leak has lessened.

Parks, Playgrounds, and Cemeteries Report – Selectwoman Sheperd said there is a virtual Vermont cemetery seminar tomorrow, and she plans to attend. It will be about how municipalities deal with the transition of ownership. Joey added it looked like some headstones were turned over at the Troy Street cemetery.

Other Business – Selectman Steinhour said there were safety concerns with how the highway crew hung Memorial Day banners. He would like to know how to hang them going forward. Selectman Fletcher asked how do other towns do it? Could the Fire Association use their ladder truck? Joey said there is a cage attachment for front-end loaders. That could be a potential solution. Selectman Steinhour asked would it meet safety requirements? Chair Pond said they have one at Blue Seal for changing their lights, and it is OSHA approved.

Chair Pond brought up the Ambulance Department needs approval on a contract for servicing their ambulance monitors. It ensures they are working properly. The cost is $ 620 a year.

Selectman Steinhour motioned to approve the contract to service the ambulance monitors. Selectwoman Sheperd seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

Chair Pond said they have to convene the Liquor Control Board to approve a liquor license. He asked for a motion to recess the selectboard meeting.

Selectman Steinhour motioned to recess the selectboard meeting. Selectman Fletcher seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

Selectman Steinhour motioned to convene the liquor control board. Selectman Fletcher seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

Selectman Steinhour motioned to approve the Pop-a-top liquor license. Selectwoman Sheperd seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

Selectman Steinhour motioned to exit the liquor control board. Selectman Fletcher seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

Selectman Steinhour motioned to re-enter the selectboard meeting. Selectman Fletcher seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

John asked what is the status of police coverage in Richford? Selectman Steinhour said based on emails from the Sheriff’s Office, we should have more coverage soon.

Selectman Steinhour motioned to go into executive session for personnel at 6:53 pm. Selectwoman Sheperd seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

Selectman Steinhour motioned to come out of executive session at 7:11 pm. Selectman Fletcher seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

As a result of the executive session, Selectman Steinhour motioned pending evaluations, the assistant road foreman has potential to get incremental raises. Selectman Fletcher seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

Meeting adjourned at 7:12 pm.

Submitted by

Michael Olio – Town Administrator

Attest: