

Vershire Selectboard Minutes for 10/27/20 approved

In attendance (via Zoom) Vernal Stone-Chair, Marc McKee, Alan Lyford-HW Foreman, Gene Craft-Admin. Asst., Debra Kingsbury-Sec'y, Guests: Erica Thurston-ACO, Steve Atwood-HO, Ethel Pike, Kathy Hooke, Tonya and Mike Gunn, Joan Waltermire, Naomi LaBarr-Collector of Delinquent Tax, Samantha Lefebvre, candidate for Orange County rep.

Vernal Stone called the meeting to order at 7:17pm. Stone, Craft, and Lyford reviewed a letter to be sent to T. Lewis. Craft stated he'd received an email from Lewis yesterday and Lyford added that Lewis had called him at the Highway Garage to review the progress on Mero Rd. Lyford stated that P. Ross from the State will have to inspect the completed work and it may be that guard rails are required over the bridges. It was agreed that Mr. Lewis will be invited to the next meeting to review any proposal that he liked to present.

Highway Foreman report: Lyford will call Rita Seto at TRORC about next year's grant funding and a review of ditching requirements. He added that Chelsea had received a portion of the 7 million grant based on mileage and that Vershire might see approximately 15K. Seto stated she'd forward the application info next week.

Truck #2 recently had an emission control repaired under warranty. The highway trucks have been undercoated and Lyford plans to mount the plows soon.

Waltermire came in to request 2 items be on the town warning in March: to establish a fund to deal with EAB tree concerns and then to request/approve money to that fund. Craft explained about collecting signatures for getting articles on the warning, but due to Covid it may be a problem this year. The Board might consider sponsoring the article. Everyone agreed that this year might be financially challenging. Craft wanted to clarify that the town has been setting aside funds for a new highway garage for the last few years and when the town is ready to build, the annual payment will be the same amount as previous years and thus will not increase taxes for building the garage. Waltermire asked what amount the Board suggested be established for the EAB start up fund. McKee stated "5K" perhaps. The Board asked her to write up a proposal for 2021 and perhaps address how to best use the downed wood. Waltermire asked in TMS might use the wood for their heat source and added that the town does need a tree warden to initiate the project. Stone stated that the wood beside the road, adjacent to private property, needs to be offered to the landowner first. Hooke added that municipal trees in the town forests and cemeteries are up to the town as how to best use. Time frame for any grant funding is fast approaching. Hooke stated that grants funds may be available next year and it would be better to have a more completed plan/application with a Tree Warden in place to monitor. Craft and Waltermire will work on writing up language for the warning proposal.

LaBarr was invited to the meeting to review the delinquent tax collection policy. She stated that she had started tax sale proceedings for taxes that were past due as of February 2020. She noted it is never an easy decision for her, but she treats everyone the same, and the policy spells out the tax sale procedure. LaBarr pointed out that property owners should have a plan in place knowing taxes are due each year. She sends monthly statements, adding that the property owners have one year to redeem should the property go to tax sale. Craft added that the Board of Abatement is where owners go to request abatement and explain their situation. LaBarr explained that the upcoming tax sale is for taxes due prior to the Covid-19 situation and that the Attorney has sent out the initial notices. Stone and McKee agreed that LaBarr should move forward as she has in the past.

Hooke and Pike came to discuss the idea of a children's winter clothing drive. Hooke stated that classes are being held outside as much as possible so outdoor winter clothing is in need. Gunn stated that VerShare and Helping Hands would assist as well. The question is where and how to distribute. The Town Center Building could be set up for Fridays when the food shelf is distributing. Gunn suggested that perhaps the clothes could be distributed from the Timber Homes facility initially and thereafter from the Town Center Building, or brought directly to Westshire Elementary. Atwood stated that hosting a winter clothing drive was a terrific idea and combining it with the food distribution would be good to get needs, sizes, etc., and prepare recipients for the following weeks. Craft suggested that a flyer be put in the food distribution bags. Stone made a motion to allow VerShare/Helping Hands organizers to host the winter clothing drive at the Town Center Building, using distancing and masks in the outside area during the coming weeks before winter. McKee seconded and all present were in favor.

Atwood is continuing to interact with local property owners on Parker Road and wanted to ask permission from the Board to assist with coordination and to help resolve a number of issues. The Board approved Atwood's request and also to move forward with his previous plan to get the property cleaned up.

Atwood stated that Covid-19 cases were on the rise locally and stressed the importance of people getting a flu shot to avoid filling area hospital beds. He added we can't let our guard down and must continue wearing masks and distancing.

Samantha Lefebvre thanks the Board for allowing her to zoom in and hear concerns.

The Board went into Executive session with Thurston-ACO, at 8:50 and returned at 9:40pm. The conclusion was that more information was needed before any decision could be made.

Minutes for 10/13/20 were approved as amended. Orders were similarly approved and the meeting adjourned at 9:48pm.