

Vershire Selectboard minutes for 1/19/21 Approved

In attendance (via Zoom); Vernal Stone-Chair, Marc McKee, Gene Craft-Admin. Asst., Alan Lyford-HW Foreman, Debra Kingsbury-Sec'y, Steve Atwood-HO Guests: Sarah Thrasher, Ken Bushey, Tonya & Mike Gunn, Reva Seybolt, Rubi Gemmell, Devan Waters and Andy Dodge, Laura Craft, Ethel Pike, David Hooke, Aaron Hoopes, Earl Robinson, Diann Ward, Erica Thurston, Jean MacDonald

Craft stated that the meeting was being recorded and available upon request. He added that the agenda had modifications. Topic: Town Meeting time frame, VerShare Snowshoe-a-thon, Interim Board member.

Vernal Stone called the meeting to order at 7:08pm. Craft stated that the town audit was being completed just now and he needed to generate the reports and mail ballots to registered voters as there would be no in person Town Meeting this year. He then suggested Town Meeting, scheduled for March 2nd, 2021 be postponed until April 6th, 2021. McKee shared that Corinth's Town Meeting was scheduled for 5/25/21 to enable them to hold it outside. Craft stated that the State Legislature had signed an order to allow Town Meetings postponed. Hooke stated that the RISD meeting, which is always held two weeks after the Town Meetings was still slated for March 16th. Hooke was reaching out to the other two VT towns to see if they wanted to combine the ballots in the same mailings with the RISD ballots. It was decided that it might add a level of complication, and Craft stated that he was still required to have a polling place for walk-in votes.

The Vershire Selectboard voted:

1. To move all Articles normally voted from the floor of Town Meeting to Australian ballot (and, as a consequence, to not hold an in-person Town Meeting in the year 2021)
2. To direct the Town Clerk to mail all registered active voters in the Town of Vershire a mail-in Australian ballot, and
3. To postpone the Vershire Town Meeting election date (polling date) to April 6, 2021, the first Tuesday in April.

VerShare "Virtual Snowshoe-a-thon" discussed. Pike stated that the VerShare Board had met yesterday and wanted to set up two trails at the Town Center in the recreation field and offer a "do-it-yourself" event. They are also proposing to set up trails at Westshire Elementary School in West Fairlee to encourage students and others to raise money for children's activities/future camps/extracurricular activities. VerShare is still working out the details. The goal is to inspire local residents to use the trails for outdoor activity. Pike stated that participants are encouraged to document their "trail hike" by taking a "selfie" to share. The event will run from 2/15 through 3/15. The first two weeks at the TC and the remaining weeks sponsored at Westshire. Stone moved to approve

VerShare's use and make trails for the stated event at the TC recreation field. McKee seconded and all were in favor.

Highway foreman report: Lyford stated that the equipment holding up well and that he'd gotten new chains for the tires. The generators at both the garage and the Town Center had been serviced by Bushey Generator. Lyford stated that sand/salt use increased with the recent storm. McKee stated that he, Lyford, Bushey, Craft and Kingsbury had a zoom meeting with ANR and later interacted with an architect up at 815 VCR on 1/13. Bushey shared the revised plan from Krebs & Lansing reflecting the suggestions that ANR had made, including: moving the building closer to the street, directing water runoff, driveway culvert and swales to minimize the impact on the wetland area. Bushey will ask Dixson to revise the building size by taking 15 ft. off the east side and continue preparation for submission to ANR. Craft stated that he had reached out to Morton Buildings recently, too. Once the permit is approved and building costs estimated, information will go before the voters.

The open position on the Selectboard was reviewed. Bushey has sent a letter of interest for the position. It was noted that he has been involved with the garage project for over two years, and he serves on the Planning Commission. Craft stated that the Board has the power to appoint when there are open positions until the next Town Meeting is held. He added that there will be two Lister positions open at the next election as well. Seybolt stated that it would be nice to see more public postings or info at Zoom sessions. She was supportive of Bushey. Craft stated that the newsletter will go out with the Town Warning soon, indicating what positions are up for election. He added that both Selectperson and Lister resignations were recent decisions. McKee made the motion to appoint Bushey to fill the open Selectboard position until Town Meeting. Stone seconded and all present were in favor. Tonya Gunn stated she also had interest in the role. Craft offered space in the Town newsletter for candidates to post their interest with comments. It was noted that there is one seat on the Planning Commission due to be filled as well.

Steve Atwood-Health Officer suggested that any unused funds from this year's Covid emergency fund be put into a Health Fund for preventative care to assist the community. He added that he's been involved with establishing Health Fairs with information booths hosted by medical students who administered blood pressure and diabetes clinics, perhaps linking up with West Fairlee to hold this type of information event. Atwood would like to build the fund over time so it's in place when needed. Craft stated that they had moved the funds designated for a map cabinet for the vault to the Covid fund last year. Money from there went towards masks and cleansing products and \$3700 remained. The Health Officer's annual town salary went there as well. Atwood and Craft will work on an article to establish a perpetual emergency/health fund for the town warning. The Board supports this effort.

T. Gunn and Seybolt came to ask about storage in the TCB so that Willing Hands might contract with the VT Foodbank for monthly deliveries for the Friday food-shelf. Craft suggested that the large rear storage room under the historical wing might be finished better with a continuous dehumidifier unit so that could house both town office storage needs as well as food. Funds for improving the storage room would have to come after

July 1st (the next fiscal year), but the closet under the stairs at the rear of the kitchen may serve their purposes for now. The Willing Hands team will check on it. Pike suggested the kitchen cabinets might be better organized to hold some food, too.

R. Gemmell's son, Andy Dodge, and daughter-in-law, Devan Waters, asked to comment on statements that were made at the previous meeting. McKee and Lyford offered to meet at the property and review the road access/plowing conditions. Both offered McKee their contact info. Stone expressed his concern about the old sawdust shed being open and close to the road should someone fall into it. Gemmell and Waters stated that was on their list to remove as weather allowed.

The Board went into executive session for employee reviews at 8:55pm and returned at 9:16 with the following decisions: Bushey and McKee voted and approved highway crew member Fogarty to receive a \$0.50 cents per hour raise and crew member D. Stone would receive a 3% increase. Chairman Stone recused himself from the vote for D. Stone.

Minutes for 1/5/21 were approved as amended. Craft asked Kingsbury to provide the drafted minutes within 10 days and she agreed to comply. The meeting was adjourned to a date specific of 1/26/21 at 7pm to review the final budgets and the tax worksheet before the town warning can be issued, prior to Town Meeting.

The meeting ended at 9:25pm.