

SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, January 5, 2016, 5:30 p.m, Old Schoolhouse Common

Present: Selectboard members Laurie Colgan, Chris Martin and Andy Perchlik; Town Clerk Bobbi Brimblecombe; David Warshow; Peggy Bresee; Jenny Warshow; Ellie Blachly; Diana Batzel; Rich Phillips; Brett Engstrom; Michael Trupin; Joel Trupin; Kathryn Trupin; Janet Nielsen; Doug Malnati; James Arisman; Jules Rabin; Helen Rabin; Susan Arisman; Bob Popp; Will Walters (Hardwick Gazette)

Public Hearing, Zoning Regulations: Andy opened the hearing at 5:30 p.m. Planning Commission Chair Jon Groveman explained the minor changes that are being proposed. No one had any comment. Andy asked whether it would be worthwhile to hire a zoning consultant, even though we didn't get the planning grant. Jon explained that the grant was denied in part because we don't have a village designation. He explained that the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) could help with a project. He would also like to have someone from the Village Designation Program at the Department of Housing and Community Development come to a meeting to talk about getting a village designation. Jon agreed that \$5,000 would be an appropriate amount in the budget to work with CVRPC. The hearing was closed.

Andy called the Selectboard meeting to order at 5:50.

Changes to the agenda: Two items were added to the agenda: Trooper contract, tax anticipation note

Old Schoolhouse Common: There is currently a policy that kids are not supposed to be in the gym unless they are supervised by someone 18 or older. The Librarian has asked that the age be lowered. Ellie Blachly rents space adjacent to the gym and has asked that people not use the basketball hoop adjacent to her space during business hours, but she reported it is a problem almost every day. She also reported that in the summer there are problems with people idling their cars and smoking outside her window. The Board discussed a written policy regarding use; they did not think it would be a good idea to lower the age, given the current problems. Ellie will make something to drape over the hoop during business hours. They discussed using a curtain to block off the end of the room. They also decided to have a sign-out sheet for the key to the gym. Laurie will put a message on Front Porch Forum asking parents not to send their children to the building unsupervised.

Dog Hearing: Andy opened the dog hearing at 6:10 p.m. Health Officer/Constable James Arisman gave a verbal report of the complaint and his written report. He explained that the town has received a written complaint from Louanna Dutil. She was bitten by a dog at Twinfield Union School. Four dogs, owned by Vivian Davis, were not leashed at the time. Vivian reported that the dogs have never been aggressive before. James indicated that the dogs were friendly when he visited the home. Vivian said she didn't know why they attacked Louanna, except maybe because Louanna was near their truck. The leashes were in the truck. Andy asked what Vivian's plans are

to keep this from happening again. She indicated that she would leash the dogs when they come out of the woods. Andy stated that she needs to leash them when off their property, even in the woods. Chris asked that she reimburse Louanna for her medical expenses. Vivian said she as offered to help. Andy noted that there have been reported problems with her dogs being off her property when she is home. She indicated that the dogs that are often seen in the road live across the street; her dogs have an invisible fence and do not leave the yard.

The Board decided that the dogs must be leashed whenever they are off their property, and Vivian must offer to pay Louanna's medical expenses. Andy stated that the Board will consider this a warning, and no fine will be issued unless there are other issues.

Stranahan Town Forest Committee: Andy started off the discussion by saying that he had asked for this item to be on the agenda. He said there have been instances where the committee has been unable to come to a decision and he feels like the committee should be able to make decisions. Chris explained that the committee should be able to make small decisions but if a bigger decision needs to be made, they should make a recommendation to the Selectboard. Andy feels that whenever there is a disagreement, no decision is made so he is wondering if the Board should disband the committee or restructure it somehow. Chris feels that the Selectboard doesn't have time to deal with the forest and we need a committee.

Bobbi asked why this is being discussed if the entire committee is not here. Chris stated that he is also concerned about that.

Jenny said she was at the meeting to discuss the decision that was made to add acres to the logging job. She feels that the Stranahan Committee meeting where that decision was made was not properly warned and the group did not follow their agreement outlining the process that would be followed for making decisions regarding logging.

Bobbi explained why the meeting wasn't cancelled when Diana requested it; the other committee members did not get back to her about whether or not to cancel.

The Board agreed that Ed Jalbert should not do the marking of the additional acres.

Laurie said that the town needs to revisit how the property is managed and come up with a process that is more effective and supports the goals of the forest and the Town of Marshfield.

Chris would like to see the committee remain intact and function as a committee should. He would like the chance to talk to the committee as a whole. He hasn't seen the committee disagree on any issues other than logging. Rich Phillips agreed, and he feels the logging issue needs to be resolved once and for all. He feels that the town needs a committee, and decisions either need to be made by consensus or by a vote. He said that the issue of raising funds from logging needs to be addressed; he remembers that the town meeting discussion included raising money through logging but he doesn't feel that logging has to be done just to raise money. When he saw this on the agenda he was hoping that the entire committee would have been invited.

Susan Arisman agreed that the town should go back to look at the original goals of the forest. She believes that the Land Trust would be willing to come and talk to the Town about those goals.

Brett Engstrom said that we have to go back and look at why the Land Trust gave the property to the Town. It's being used and enjoyed now by many people. He said that there is a common misconception that you have to log for the health of the forest, but that's not true – people log to harvest the resources, not for the forest health. He noted that Russ Barrett did a forest management plan but it doesn't have to be followed; there is timber that can be harvested but it needs to be balanced with the other uses.

James Arisman said he was concerned that nothing about the decision was on the Stanahan Committee agenda and there were no minutes that he could find. He explained that the open meeting law requires an agenda to be posted and minutes to be posted within 5 days. He feels that what happened at the Stanahan Committee meeting was in violation of the open meeting law.

Diana Batzel stated that many towns with town forests are having similar issues around logging. She said that what happened at the meeting was a breach of trust among members of the committee. She is looking forward to a meeting with the Committee and the Selectboard.

The Selectboard decided it will attend the Stranahan Town Forest Committee meeting on January 18. There will be an agenda posted on the website.

Bobbi asked for suggestions for how to communicate the open meeting law and public records law to the town committees. There was a brief discussion on this topic.

Other business: Jules Rabin asked the Selectboard to be very diligent about making sure people at Town Meeting use a microphone. He said he was not able to participate in Town Meeting last year because he could not hear what was being said.

Old Town Forest: Bobbi reported that Rich Cowart and Anne Winchester met with Bobbi to go over the maps and deed research surrounding the old town forest. Mr. Cowart sent an email stating that they would like to work with the town to determine the true boundaries. He agreed that the current tax map for the old town forest is incorrect but believes that our records of 115 acres are also incorrect. He said he is legally obliged to notify his title insurance company of the discrepancy. Bobbi said she will continue to research the title to the Drew Mountain parcel. Andy said he would send a response email to Rich and Anne.

Budget: The Board reviewed the budget. The town finished 2015 with a surplus of about \$120,000; the amount that FEMA paid for the road crew's work clearing up after the December 14 ice storm will be transferred to the highway equipment fund. The Board discussed whether it is appropriate to have such a surplus. The Board discussed the zoning regulations and the project that the Planning Commission wanted to accomplish when they applied for a grant (which was denied). The Board put \$5,000 in the budget to allow them to work with Regional Planning and the state

on the Village Center/downtown designation in addition to planning for future zoning changes. They added \$3,900 for three months' worth of Vermont State Police patrols, with further patrols to be discussed at town meeting.

In discussing the budget it was noted that the library budget included a decrease of \$825 in fundraising. Andy moved to lower the library's request by \$825 to encourage at least the same amount of fund raising as last year; The Selectboard agreed that it is important for the library to continue fundraising. Chris seconded; Laurie abstained. The overall town budget includes a tax increase of 0.34%. The Board hopes that there will be enough of an increase in the grand list that it will offset the additional expenses.

Personnel: Andy moved to give town employees a 1% raise as part of the 2016 budget. Chris seconded – all in favor.

Community Development Block Grant: Tabled

Sidewalks: It was reported that the sidewalks were cleared during the latest storm. The contractor is Larry Lakus.

Expenses, Permits & Payroll: Selectboard members read and signed reports for General Expenses and Payroll.

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Bobbi Brimblecombe, Town Clerk

The foregoing is a true copy of the Minutes of the January 5, 2016 Selectboard Meeting.
A True Record. Attest, _____, Town Clerk
