

SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, September 17, 2024, 5:30 p.m, Old Schoolhouse Common and Zoom

Present: Selectboard members Justin Campbell, Michele Gonzales and Christopher Whalen; Town Clerk Bobbi Brimblecombe; Assistant Town Clerk Brittany Chouinard; Shawn Moshinskie, Kathie Alyce, Andrea Stefani, Joalyn Harrelson, Caitlyn Bingham, Ginger Basa, Dillon Mears, Aliza Niquette, Tegan Trader, Brennen Nagle, Margaret Campbell, Nicole Frisby, Erin Barry, Jaquelyn Rieke (Onion River Campground owner), Thomas Howard (Vermont State Police); there were 100+ attendees via Zoom

At 6:30 p.m. the meeting was called to order by Justin

Changes or additions to the agenda: Onion River Campground

Review and approval of minutes: approved the minutes of the September 3, 2024 meeting.

Onion River Campground: Justin explained that the Selectboard did not have this on the agenda and the Selectboard does not have jurisdiction over zoning issues, but the Board wanted to give folks a chance to hear from the property owner and the State Police.

Jacquelyn Rieke said she is here because concerns have been raised about the wellbeing of our children. She assured people that Onion River Campground has never and will never hold a MAP meeting. She has not given her permission for this event. She has employed someone named Mythebe and they have shared their sexual preference with her in confidence, as a friend. She is concerned with the wellbeing of her customers. She understands that she has power but there is a limit to her power. She understands that this is a scary topic and she understands peoples' fears. She is interested in civil discourse. She is here to ask what it is that people want. She would like to invite folks to come to the campground on Thursday at 4:00 to continue civil discourse in case there is anything that she can do to help. She encouraged folks to call her.

Justin clarified that there is no event planned. She confirmed that there is no event and if there was, she would have to get permission from the Town.

Vermont State Police Station Commander Thomas Howard spoke to the group. This morning it was brought to their attention about what was circulating. The US Constitution allows people to meet, whether we agree with their motivations. They have spoken with Jacquelyn and the school. Their goal is to make sure people feel safe to gather, and make sure the community feels safe. It is important to feel passionate about kids' safety. He thanked people for bringing their concerns to their attention. He wants to be clear about the difference between peoples' feelings and beliefs, and their actions.

Justin reiterated that the Selectboard does not have any control over what happens at the school. He feels that everyone showing up has gotten the message out. He believes that everyone is in agreement that they do not support the event.

Jessamine Stone stated that she would like to stop referring to MAP as an orientation. It should be identified as pedophilia. Language matters, and identity is collectively shared. She would like to help further this conversation. Chris Whalen thanked her for her willingness to bring this up and welcomed her to come and talk to the Selectboard in the future.

Erin Barry asked Jacquelyn if the person is a resident of the campground (no). Asked if he has been there (no). Caitlyn Bingham stated that Jacquelyn told her he visits the campground.

Dillon Mears stated that MAP is a way to say pedophilia. He does not think this should be allowed this close to the school.

Caitlin Bingham read from the Zoning Regulations about the intent of the regulations – to promote public health and safety.

Another resident asked whether the Twinfield trails are public.

Shawn Moshinski stated that people don't want pedophiles on the property, like Jacquelyn's friend.

Leila Ludwig asked the difference between holding an event and people renting a campsite. Jacquelyn indicated that an event is something that she advertises.

Anne Allen asked, is this person a registered sex offender? Have they associated their name voluntarily with this? Caitlin explained that yes, they are on social media advertising their beliefs.

Caitlin asked whether their license could be revoked. Bobbi explained that zoning permits are permanent, but if they wanted an event, they would have to ask the town. No permit applications are in front of the town right now.

Jaquelyn stated that there were no reservations for groups right now. She explained that the campground is a safe place. Caitlin disagreed, stating that if this person frequents the campground, it is not safe for kindergarteners to visit the greenhouse.

Andrea Stefani suggested that if her space is used for school children, it should have the same safety rules that schools do, such as background checks.

Jaquelyn feels that he is not a dangerous person.

Dan Caddy feels that a simple first step should be that this person is banned from the campground. Jacquelyn agreed that he will be banned.

Nicole Frisby asked the state police if they could investigate the websites that were posted to see where they come from and if they are investigating. Commander Howard confirmed that they are investigating but he is not able to share the details of the investigation.

Rachel Young stated that she was at the campground with her toddler and Mythebe was there, and Jaquelyn referred to them as her best friend, and Jaquelyn did not tell her that this person is attracted to children. She is furious.

Kevin Driscoll asked when the VSP will issue a public statement.

Commander Howard indicated that someone expressing their thoughts or how they feel is not a crime. People should contact the school about their safety concerns.

Nicole doesn't feel that the students and student athletes should have to change their routines.

Shawn Moshinskie asked how close a sex offender can be to a school. He indicated that no one knows the person's real name so there is no way to know if they are on the sex offender registry.

Caitlin Bingham asked whether VSP is looking into the event.

Ginger Basa asked if the VSP would investigate a threat of a school shooting. Commander Howard indicated that they would investigate because threats are illegal. He explained that the public alarm statutes explicitly mention shooting, bomb threats, etc. but no crime has been committed here.

Nicole asked if the VSP will look into the website. He indicated that they are looking into it because it is causing alarm for a business, and they have talked with the school. He indicated that if parents have concerns about their children, they should bring them to the school.

Erin Barry asked how many campers are due to show up on Thursday. Jaquelyn said there are 6 reservations. Erin asked if Jaquelyn could refuse to let other campers come this weekend.

Justin feels that we need to acknowledge that Jaquelyn has not organized the meeting but is suffering repercussions. He doesn't want a local business to suffer if they did not organize this.

Shawna Brule knows that we have a business that welcomes children while knowing that they welcome pedophiles. She is going to talk to the school and not let her child on the property, and will no longer support the business.

Chris stated that people have sent the message that we do not want this, and there are action steps that people can take going forward.

Michele asked if there will be police presence on the property. Commander Howard will be working with the school to make sure people feel safe.

There was a question about why, if Jaquelyn knew about it Thursday, why did the police only find out today?

Stephanie (online) asked how people can be sure that she won't be allowing him on her property.

She would like to know the person's real name so that she can check the sex offender registry.

Dillon Mears feels that we should talk to the Legislature about the red flag laws, to be sure that our children can be protected. He doesn't feel that they are safe at Twinfield, especially if children have been at the campground with the person who wants to look at children.

Jaquelyn reiterated that she does not support abuse of children.

Justin stated that he knows that people are not satisfied with the answers they have received but we need to move on to the rest of our meeting.

Nicole asked for action steps. People are going to ask for changes to zoning, talk to legislators, and VSP is going to investigate the website.

Others suggested reaching out to the Superintendent's office to request that the school cut ties with the campground.

Better Roads Grant: Justin moved to hire CVRPC. Chris seconded – all in favor.

Buyouts: Bobbi asked if we could allow folks to salvage some of the building materials from the properties that have gone through the buyout. The Board suggested contacting non-profits to see if they want to salvage anything. They will also contact the Fire Department to see if they want to burn the houses for training.

Bobbi asked the Board to think about criteria we should consider when deciding future buyouts.

School St Bridge: Justin met with Winterset and Ben Mathews and developed a scope of work. He contacted Austin Construction and Darrell Matthews and they are too busy to do anything now.

FEMA: Bobbi discussed the other bridge projects. The Board agreed to have the two smaller bridge projects be for engineering only, with construction costs added later. It will mean a delay in funding but we will be sure to get enough funds to cover the replacement cost.

Emergency Watershed Protection: Bobbi forwarded the Board the landowner agreements that Middlesex is using. They will review the agreements and let her know if they have any issues.

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Bobbi Brimblecombe, Town Clerk

The foregoing is a true copy of the Minutes of the September 17, 2024 Selectboard Meeting.
A True Record. Attest, _____, Town Clerk

DRAFT