

Minutes of the Westmoreland Selectmen's Meeting
Thursday, May 20, 2021

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Frank Reeder, Russ Austin, Clayton Stalker

1. The meeting was called to order at 10:00AM by Chairman Clayton Stalker.
2. Approval of Minutes: May 6, 2021. Motion was made by Russ Austin, second by Frank Reeder to accept the minutes as printed. Motion passed 3-0.
3. Guests:
 - A. County Administrator Chris Coates & State Representative Paul Berch:

Mr. Coates updated the Selectmen on the work being done at Maplewood Nursing Home. Work should be totally complete in the next month. They are still following CDC guidelines. 100% of the clients and 82% of the staff are vaccinated. Mr. Coates believes that now having single rooms and the pumping of fresh air into the building has saved lives. Future plans include renovating and using the current barn for office space to move the UNH Cooperative Extension into and to add a museum/gathering place.

Mr. Reeder asked if the increased costs in construction material affected the cost of the project. Mr. Coates explained that they had ordered most of the material before the increases occurred. Mr. Austin asked what the capacity with the addition is at the nursing home. Mr. Coates answered that the capacity is still at 150; there were 70 double rooms and 20 single rooms prior to the addition and there are now 20 double rooms and 80 single rooms. There are still 20 assisted living apartments. Staffing continues to be an issue in being able to fill all of the rooms.

Mr. Coates stated that due to the Federal Cares Act/American Rescue Plan, the County will be receiving \$14.8 million dollars and will have until 2024 to spend the funds. Items the funds can be used for include infrastructure, roads, bridges, water & sewer.

NOTE: While towns are expected to also receive funds, amounts have not been determined.

Discussion ensued regarding the River Road South Bridge. Mr. Stalker stated that the town would not be in a position to pay for the replacement/repair of the bridge with a potential cost of \$2-3 million dollars. With the recent bond for installing broadband and the potential for another bond for a new fire station, which is badly needed, our borrowing capability will be very limited. There is \$146,000 in a Bridge Capital Reserve Fund.

Mr. Coates discussed the possibility of having an engineering study done and in place. Mr. Stalker stated that the town will do whatever it can to move the work along, but does not see the townspeople voting for another large project at this point. The option of putting in a road on County property and avoiding the bridge was discussed and will be looked into further.
 - B. Tom Finnegan, Chair of the Fire Department Advisory Committee:

Tom distributed a letter to the Selectmen outlining what the committee believes are the main concerns regarding the new fire station: Location, Design, Cost, Need. They have a plan centering on ways to promote the needs of the fire department by having a dedicated website, doing mailings and having public presentations.

Russ Austin asked about the cost – will they be looking at making changes to lower the cost. Tom indicated that the committee did not want to make changes to the building. Frank Reeder stated that the ‘need’ is known and the location and design are minor issues. He added that the cost is what people are telling him is the issue; that for the size of our town, \$2+ million dollars is too high. The Selectmen agree that there is nothing extravagant in the building that is being

proposed and that the only option would be to decrease the size, possibly by deleting two of the bays. Another question asked by the public is why a town of our size has two pumpers and two tankers. Clayton Stalker added that being a part of mutual aid means that with any incident, another station would be available to assist and cover our station. Tom stated that the fire department has reasons why they have the number of vehicles that they do and the committee will need to educate the public as to why.

The Selectmen asked that the committee get a price on what the reduction of two bays would be. Possibly it will not be enough to make a big impact and if so, at least that information would be known.

Frank Reeder related to Tom that he (along with the other Selectmen) had received comments from people who attended an April informational meeting that the committee held that they were treated poorly when they asked questions about the project. Tom agreed that the meeting did not go well.

Clayton Stalker stated that the Selectmen want the fire station to succeed. Tom asked if the empty position on the committee could be filled. He was told to submit a name to the Selectmen for appointment approval. The NH Department of Environmental Services has approved the wetlands permit.

Bob Bartlett (committee member) stated that the issue of the number of pieces of equipment should be addressed and feels that the committee should look into the cost of a metal building to let people know that other options have been looked at.

4. Accounts Payable: A motion was made by Russ Austin, second by Frank Reeder to approve a manifest of \$8,327.00 for the highway department and \$11,063.14 for all other bills for a total of \$19,390.14. Motion passed 3-0.

5. Old Business:

A. Bids were opened for the Town Hall Septic System as follows:

COMPANY	BID
John P. Matthews, Jr., Westmoreland	\$47,390.00
MME Construction, Surry	\$57,294.50
O'Neil Construction, Marlborough	\$59,219.43

As he has been involved in the Fire Station/Town Hall project, Owner's Rep Steve Horton will be asked to review the bids for his recommendation.

B. Town Hall:

1. Mask mandate: A motion was made by Frank Reeder, second by Russ Austin to cancel the mask mandate in the Town Hall and for the employees at the Recycling Center. Motion passed 3-0. Mask are still encouraged to be worn. Committees/Boards will continue to meet in the dining room. Accommodations will be made for those who are not vaccinated due to medical reasons.
2. Rental: Rental of the Town Hall will be suspended until the new septic system is finished.

6. New Business:

Signature Approval was given for the following:

Payroll: 5/18/2021

PayrollTaxes: 5/18/2021

General Journal Entry: #756-Timber Warrants, #757-Tax Levy 2020

Veterans Credit (1)

Cemetery Deeds (3)

Current Use: R16-6

- A. A motion was made by Clayton Stalker, second by Frank Reeder, per RSA 31:19, to accept donations for the Westmoreland Veteran’s Memorial Fund in the amount of \$1,125. Motion passed 3-0. 122 bricks for the walkway have been sold to date.
- B. A motion was made by Frank Reeder, second by Clayton Stalker to waive the deed-taking of property located at R16-3 due to notification to an owner not being done in 2018. Motion passed 3-0.
- C. Property Tax Abatement: A motion was made by Frank Reeder, second by Clayton Stalker to refund \$734 to R. Herrmann at 169 London Rd. Motion passed 3-0. The assessor has visited the property and recommended lowering the value of the house.
- D. Planning Board: The Planning Board has requested that the Selectmen look again at the riding camp at 260 Poocham Road for possible permit violations. The Selectmen will stay with their decision that no permit is required as riding stables are allowed in the definition of Agricultural & Forestry Use, which is a permitted use on Poocham Rd.
- E. A wetlands application has been submitted to NHDES to clean out debris that has built up under the River Road North bridge. The highway department will do the work when approved. The Selectmen, as Agents, approved using some of the funds in the Bridge Capital Reserve Fund to rent an excavator and purchase what is needed to accomplish the clean-out.
- F. Cemetery Flags will be put in all town cemeteries prior to Memorial Day weekend.
- G. A job application has been received for the vacant highway position and another one is expected. Tabled until the next meeting.
- H. Melanson will be in the Town Hall in the coming week to begin the 2020 town audit.
- I. Railings or posts are being considered to replace the Jersey barriers now used in the parking lot shared with the Post Office. The cost will determine if it happens this year or will be put in the 2022 budget. The jersey barriers can be used until then.

- 7. Correspondence: *All correspondence is available for review in the Selectmen’s office.* None
- 8. The meeting was adjourned at 12:30PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jo Ann LaBarre
Town Administrator

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Clayton Stalker, Chairman

Russ Austin

Frank Reeder

NEXT MEETING –Thursday, June 3, 2021, 10:00AM

MINUTES ARE INITIALLY POSTED AS UNAPPROVED -
SIGNATURES BY SELECTMEN DENOTE APPROVAL OF
MINUTES