

Town of Readsboro
Board of Selectmen Special Meeting
The Jacksonville Municipal Center
November 6, 2019

Attendance:

Whitingham- Gig Zboray, Scott Reed, Craig Hammer, Wayne Wood, Wayne Corse, Stanley Janovsky Jr., Rodney Bemis, Richard Lemaire, Almira Aekus, Jenepher Burnell (Jacksonville)

Readsboro- Karen Boisvert, Raymond Eilers, David Marchegiani, Joseph Berard, Omar Smith, Bob Marechal

Wilmington- Scott Tucker, Sarah Fisher, Tom Fitzgerald, John Gannon, Vincent Rice, Ann Manwaring

Others- Jeanette White (Putney-Senate), Laura Sibilialia (Dover- State Representative), Mike Eldred (Deerfield Valley News)

The Readsboro Selectmen met with the Whitingham and Wilmington Selectboards to discuss various matters that impact the connecting towns.

A) Fiber optics, formation of CUD:

State representative Laura Sibilialia strongly advocates for the formation of CUD's. She feels there is greater strength in numbers. She also stated that there are grants available to help with the process of forming them. Omar Smith who is the Chair of the Broadband Communications Committee in Readsboro stated he is not quite sold on the CUD route at this time. He feels that unless the system is municipally owned there really is no benefit to the town to form one. Readsboro is active in the pursuit of broadband and is moving forward with an RFP for a pole survey with funds secured by a grant, Whitingham has been given a proposal from Matrix Design and Wilmington has been investigating the possibility of joining a CUD with adjoining towns. There was a great deal of discussion on working together but not necessarily forming an official CUD at this time. Ann Manwaring from Wilmington suggested forming a smaller committee with a Selectboard member from each town as well as a community member. Halifax and Stamford would be invited to join the group as well. They will be meeting Wednesday 11/20/19 at 5pm at the Municipal Center.

B) State Highways:

There was much discussion on the poor condition of state highways in Southern Vermont. All three towns feel that they are being abandoned by the state. John Gannon from Wilmington stated that the towns need to speak up collectively to get Montpelier to listen to us. There will be another joint meeting to discuss the best course of action to take. John will follow up with the state.

C) Grant Writing:

Gig Zboray from Whitingham stated the town was becoming frustrated with applying for grants and being turned down almost immediately. There was a brief discussion on the possibility of having a professional grant writer working for all the towns.

D) Policing:

Whitingham has reached out to both the State Police as well as Windham County Sheriffs' office and has had no luck securing a contract for patrolling. They are hoping to work out something with Wilmington to hire an officer in a limited capacity. State Representatives have been working on the situation for 3 years now. This is another area that the towns feel the state is abandoning them on.

E) The schools:

Wilmington and Whitingham boards discussed the problem of their combined school districts increasing costs and declining enrollment. Wilmington Chair Tom Fitzgerald asked about the current lawsuit Whitingham was involved in. Whitingham Chair Wayne Wood stated the town feels the state is dragging their feet in hopes that Whitingham will run out of money and give up. He assured Tom Fitzgerald that they would be staying the course and had no plans on dropping the lawsuit. Laura Sibilialia stated that she could not stress enough the importance of maintaining the schools and keeping them open as being critical.

F) State Representation:

There was a brief discussion concerning the Census. Vermont has seen a steady drop in census numbers. The states funding from the federal government depends on the population numbers and it is extremely important for the census to count every single person living in each community. There were suggestions on how to make sure everyone was accounted for from hiring local people to perform the census in individual towns to forming committees that combine various groups ie: churches, schools, etc.

Before adjourning Representative Sabilia announced that there would be a meeting of the Rural Economic Development Committee on 12/11 and suggested that the Towns compile a list of things that they had concerns over to be submitted beforehand.

Adjournment:

Raymond Eilers (Readsboro) made a motion to adjourn at 9:15pm, Craig Hammer (Whitingham) second. So voted.

Respectfully Submitted,
Karen Boisvert, Administrative Assistant
November 7, 2019