

Minutes of the March 23, 2009 Meeting of the Board of Selectmen.

Present: Neal Fox, Bill Richards, Joe DeFreitas, Delbert Cloud, Geneva Gaiko, Lucien Hinkle, Winslow Ayer, and Eric Benson.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by Chairman Neal Fox, the Board first reviewing and approving the weekly payroll and payables. The minutes of the March 9, 2009 meeting of the Board of Selectmen were approved by motion of Bill Richards, seconded by Joe DeFreitas and unanimously carried. As business of the Local Board of Liquor Control Commissioners, a Second Class Liquor License and a Tobacco License were approved on behalf of Wesco Inc., dba Champlain Farms; a First Class Cabaret License was approved on behalf of The Bethel Depot.

Amy Bergamo submitted a memo to advise that a conflict in her schedule has made it impossible to attend the meeting as originally scheduled. Various matters associated with the Town Hall Rehabilitation Project were nonetheless taken up for discussion. Lucien Hinkle offered the Board several suggestions pertaining to the bid procurement process and the methodology for evaluating bids and costs; these suggestions will be reviewed with the architect prior to requisition of bids. With respect to the kitchen lay-out, it was resolved that the space should be designed to accommodate a six-burner gas fired commercial range, but that a standard residential electric unit would be installed at this time. All enclosed areas would be made complete with venting ducts as would provide for convenient installation in the future of all hoods, filters and venting which would be required of a commercial kitchen. The architect will be asked to design plenty of electrical circuitry and to have a large refrigeration unit and a three-bay sink installed as a part of the project. The Board reviewed a format for pre-qualification of bidders which was supplied by the architect, and it was agreed that the procedure should be commenced as soon as practicable in order to be in readiness for bidding once the plans are ready. It was also agreed that the make-up of the committee and its current "charge" needs to be established. Amy Bergamo's letter of March 11, 2009 confirming her resignation as Chair was accepted with deep regret.

The Board then proceeded with the order of the agenda. The February 19, 2009 minutes of the Local Emergency Planning Committee, and the Regional Planning Commission minutes of February 11 and 29, 2009 were reviewed and placed on file.

The Board examined an invoice for portable water reservoir equipment which the Fire Department has asked to have paid through the Fire Department Safety and Equipment Fund. It was agreed that the acquisition is appropriate to charge to the subject fund, and the motion accordingly was made by Bill Richards, seconded by Joe DeFreitas and unanimously carried.

The Board accepted with regret a March 8, 2009 letter from Audrey Turk, advising that she would not be able to accept the voters' selection of her as Town Auditor for the term which became open as of the Annual Meeting. The Board asked that a letter be prepared to thank Ms. Turk for her work to date in that office. Several people were identified as potential for appointment to the resulting vacancy, and Delbert Cloud will discuss the matter with them and report to the Board.

The Board expressed pleasure in learning that Shelie Richardson has agreed to accept re-appointment as the Town Service Officer for the term commencing April 15, 2009. The motion to re-appoint Ms. Richardson was made by Bill Richards, seconded by Joe DeFreitas and unanimously carried.

Eric Benson arrived at 7:45 PM, he being the Town's representative to the regional Transportation Advisory Committee. He reported on the prioritization recommendations being provided to the Agency of Transportation, and clarified which project numbers applied to the three bridge projects being contemplated within the Town of Bethel. He noted that there seems to be some disparity in the status of the River Street Bridge replacement project which he will still seek further information on. He noted that there may be some funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act available for Enhancement Grants through Agency of Transportation programs, but the methodology for accessing such funds is still unclear. Mr. Benson departed at approximately 8:15 PM, and the Board returned to the order of the agenda.

Several matters associated with Public Works were taken up, the first being review and approval of the “Annual Financial Plan for Town Highways” which needs to be submitted to the Agency of Transportation each year in order to qualify the Town for receipt of State aid to highways. It was noted that the State Legislature has not yet restored the 15% reduction in the January payment to all Towns, and that the scheduled payment for April is still subject to the same 15% reduction. Such reductions in anticipated revenue make it very difficult to address transportation infrastructure needs without increasing local property taxes, particularly when the State Agency of Transportation is not directing “Economic Stimulus” funding to programs which might help off-set those revenue reductions; a particular case in point is the Class 1 highway paving program through which the State Agency of Transportation should be resurfacing highways like Church Street and Pleasant Street. Even though Main Street, Church Street, and Pleasant Street are all supposed to be resurfaced by the Vermont Agency of Transportation, it was agreed that a grant application should be submitted to see if money could be obtained through the Class 2 resurfacing program to do repair of these Class 1 highways; the Town would need to participate with a 20 % share. An application was also approved to request financial assistance under the same program for a “shim and overlay” of the upper portion of Camp Brook Road.

Delbert Cloud provided the Board with an update on the status of various applications for financial assistance which have been submitted to State and federal programs with the hope of obtaining favorable funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Much is still unknown about the procedures to be used in allocating funds, but applications have been submitted re. the River Street Bridge water main relocation, metering of the water system, upgrading of the River Street wastewater pump station, rehabilitation of the Town Hall, and replacement of the scales at the transfer station.

Rules applicable to the posting of Town highways for mud season were next reviewed. These were approved by motion of Bill Richards, seconded by Joe DeFreitas and unanimously carried.

An amendment to the Loan Agreement for design and permitting of the River Street Bridge water main relocation project was then reviewed. By motion of Joe DeFreitas, seconded by Bill Richards and unanimously carried, Neal Fox was authorized to sign the amendment on behalf of the Board.

A March 18, 2009 letter from Mary Floyd was then discussed, this being in part a request for permission to use areas of the downtown sidewalks for a flea market on one or two Sundays each month during the May through October interval. Proceeds after expenses from the fees for spaces would be donated to downtown betterment purposes. The Board members concurred that the request is approvable, subject to provision of an insurance certificate from the sponsoring entity to designate the Town as an “additional insured.”

Other matters associated with the downtown were then discussed, and methods of addressing various of them were identified. The issue of “animal control” was discussed both as it related to the downtown and the Town as a whole; information from First Constable James Bennett re. several dog management issues was reviewed, and it was agreed that a draft amendment of the Dog Control Ordinance should be taken up at the next meeting.

With no further business to attend, the motion to adjourn was made at 11:00 PM by Bill Richards, seconded by Joe DeFreitas and unanimously carried.

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Neal Fox

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Bill Richards

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Joe DeFreitas