

**Draft Minutes**  
SELECTBOARD, TOWN OF PAWLET  
January 23, 2024  
7:00 pm  
Pawlet Town Hall  
122 School Street, Pawlet, VT  
& Virtually via Zoom

Members in Attendance:

Mike Beecher  
Bob Jones  
Jessica Van Oort  
Perry Brown  
Rich Hulett

Others in Attendance:

Kristin Powers  
PEG-TV  
Donald Campbell  
Sue Laporte  
Ruth Lampi  
Lyndsi Barnes  
John & Val Davis  
Anne Hadeka  
Nancy Morlino  
Michelle & Paul Tilander  
Harley Cudney  
Frank Nelson  
Martin & Monica Kravitt  
Bob Morlino  
Julie Mach  
Jennifer Sullivan  
Lisa Wright  
Gary Baierlein  
Mason  
Robin Pomerance  
Mark Frost  
John Vickery  
Linda Lynton  
Carol Schoenwetter

Hulett's Landing (zoom)  
Harry Van Meter  
Cori Rail  
Dave Ricard

## **EVENT**

1. Call to order at 7:04pm by Chairman, Mike Beecher, with the Pledge of Allegiance and a review of the Rules of Procedure.
2. Introduction of those present, virtually and in person.
3. Addition or Deletion of Agenda Items.
  - a. Additions:
    - Executive Session to discuss confidential attorney-client communications made for the purpose of providing professional legal services to the body.
    - Sidewalk Grant – Old Business
    - Phase 2 environmental study at old Dutchies site – Old Business
    - Authorize renewal for village center designations – New Business
  - b. Deletions: None.
4. Approval of minutes from previous meeting.
  - Motion made to approve the minutes of January 9, 2024 as printed.
    - Mover: Jessica Van Oort
    - 2<sup>nd</sup>: Perry Brown
    - Discussion: None.
    - Result: Approved.
5. Pre-Requested Appearances by Local Citizens and Visitors:
  - Donald Campbell – Jessica Van Oort introduced Donald Campbell of the VT Land Trust, continuing previous discussion regarding the Mettowee Community Park. At this time, the park no longer meets several requirements to maintain its park status. Due to this, Mr. Campbell inquired about whether Pawlet has an appetite for maintaining the status of a park, potentially alongside Dorset and Rupert. The allocation for these funds appears on the Town Meeting

Ballot. Previously allocated funds that Pawlet dedicated to this park have been 100% utilized for park maintenance.

6. Announcements: None.

7. Reports:

A. Zoning Administrator's (ZA) Report:

- Short-term rental ordinance has been sent for legal review (to VLCT).
- There is a DRB hearing on 1/24 for a variance at 7:00pm.
- Nancy Morlino commented about a misconception about taxes as they relate to permits issued by the zoning office. Regardless of whether a building on one's property is permitted; it will still affect the property's tax rate. This is because taxes are established by the assessors when they assess a property.

B. Planning Commission's Report:

- Chair of the PPC, Jessica Van Oort, provided a report to the Board:
  - The PPC met on 1/22/24, and spent most of their meeting discussing the bylaw repeal petition. Jessica continued to review the process, outlined by the VLCT, of which the repeal petition will need to follow, as well as a series of concerns expressed by members of the PPC as well as members of the public who were in attendance.
    - Please note: the statement read at the Selectboard meeting has been distributed electronically by the Town Clerk. A physical copy is available at the Town Hall.
  - Nancy Morlino read aloud a public comment submitted by Jonathan Weiss regarding the repeal petition.
  - Michelle Tilander sought clarification regarding the potential ramifications of having zoning regulations handled through the state rather than on the local level.
  - Bob Morlino stated, by losing the local zoning the town would lose 17.5% of state funding for disaster relief. Eliminating local zoning bylaws may also disqualify the town from applying for some grant opportunities.

- Deb Hawkins clarified that the repeal petition is no longer in the Town Clerk's office, and is now with the Planning Commission.
- Martin Kravitt spoke to the necessity of zoning boards – more advantageous to a community to have zoning and to keep those zoning boards close. Spoke to the impact on community if we were take away local zoning.
- Frank Nelson spoke further on behalf of the Planning Commission, acknowledging that the current efforts of the PPC are focused on updating the zoning bylaws to make them more tailored to the needs of our community.
- Harry Van Meter inquired as to whether we knew the author of the petition was, and at this time it is unknown.
- Michelle inquired about how many signatures were on the petition. Answer: 68 total authorized signatures.

#### C. Road Foreman's Report:

- Highway Foreman, Rick Lawrence, provided a report to the Board:
  - The Highway Department has been cleaning up debris following the recent wind and snowstorms.
    - The Highway Dept. has expressed the need for the Town to establish a plan for tree removal for larger trees that may impair the roadways.
  - The team continues to respond to and prepare for winter maintenance.
  - The Board acknowledged an idea from a highway department team member, which is to establish a planning coordinator role within the town. The Board discussed this, acknowledging that this position aligns with some ideas that the Board has discussed for the upcoming fiscal year.
  - Rich Hulett discussed the idea of coordinating a group to assist in the research needed to begin construction of a new Town Garage.
    - The consensus of the Board was to authorize Mr. Hulett to continue pursuing this concept.

#### D. Assessor Report:

- Lisa Wright and John Vickery, Tyler Technologies, addressed the Board regarding the request for proposals submitted for the Town-wide re-appraisal scheduled for 2026. Upon review of the two proposals received, Lisa recommended accepting and approving the proposal from Tyler Technologies to perform the re-appraisal.
  - John Vickery, Tyler Technologies, introduced himself to the Board, summarizing projects currently taking place in Vermont, and the firm's desire to expand through the state.
    - Jessica Van Oort inquired about the timeframe of the reappraisal process. The project is set to begin in April of 2026.
  - Motion made to accept the proposal from Tyler Technologies.
    - Mover: Jessica Van Oort
    - 2<sup>nd</sup>: Rich Hulett
    - Discussion: None
    - Result: Approved
- Lisa Wright shared that the equalization study has come in and the rates are much the same. The hope is that the reappraisal will continue to perpetuate this forward.

#### E. Town Clerk's Memo:

- Town Clerk, Deb Hawkins, shared a report with the Board.
  - Bob Jones signed the municipal excess weight permit.
  - Deb Hawkins discussed the Town Meeting warning with the Board, seeking clarification as to whether the Board wished for a hybrid meeting (zoom and in person), as well as whether the Board wished to include articles 5 and 9. Upon obtaining clarification.
    - Motion made to sign the Town Meeting warning, with hybrid option, as prepared by Deb Hawkins.
      - Mover: Rich Hulett
      - 2<sup>nd</sup>: Jessica Van Oort
      - Discussion: None
      - Result: Approved
    - Mike Beecher signed the facilities agreement to utilize the Mettowee Community School for Town Meeting.

F. Town Treasurer's Memo:

- Town Treasurer, Julie Mach, shared a memo with the Board, including: an overview of payroll, accounts payable, monies from the General Fund, Highway, Wastewater.
- Motion made to approve Payroll Warrant #24037 for \$11,140.59 and Accounts Payable Warrant #24038 for \$30,272.43.

- Mover: Perry Brown

- 2<sup>nd</sup>: Rich Hulett

- Discussion: None.

- Result: Approved.

- Pawlet has received the mini grant funding (to purchase the two infrared cameras) for \$4000.00.

G. Emergency Management Director's Report: No report at this meeting.

H. Health Officer's Report:

- Town Health Officer, Jennifer Sullivan, provided a report to the Board regarding new regulations pertaining to Rental Housing Health & Safety Code. Complaints from tenants are now to be addressed to the Department of Fire Safety. Any current inspections will be carried out on the local level.

I. Waste Water Treatment Facility (WWTF):

- The Waste Water Treatment Facility has a position open and is actively seeking applicants. Please visit the Town's website for more information.

J. Facilities Report: No report at this meeting.

K. Mettawee School Board (MSB) Report:

- At their regular meeting, the Board approved the FY25 budget of \$6,793,235.00, which is a 5.4% increase.
- Discussions took place with Sue Wilborn on possible impacts of possible legislative activity that may impact current projections for tax rates.
- Plans for the MSB February meeting have been finalized, and will include student voices as well as the completion of a survey that will be available in the annual report and the BRSU website.

8. Old or unfinished business:

- D&H Rail Trail Council – The Selectboard needs to appoint a delegate to the rail trail council as well as an alternate. Frank Nelson has volunteered as the primary delegate. There is no alternate assigned at this time.
  - Motion made to appoint Frank Nelson as the Pawlet delegate to the D&H Rail Trail Council.
    - Mover: Jessica Van Oort
    - 2<sup>nd</sup>: Rich Hulett
    - Discussion: None
    - Result: Approved
- Jessica Van Oort spoke to the phase 1 environmental study completed about a year ago at the old site of Dutchie’s Store in West Pawlet. Based on the findings, Rutland Regional Planning Commission would like to proceed with a free phase 2 study of the property.
  - Following some discussion, the Board determined that proceeding with phase 2 is unnecessary since the Town plans to maintain ownership of this property due to access to the WWTF.
- The ongoing discussion of the pedestrian accessibility grant, stating that the Board needs to decide on the most recent proposal for the project.
  - The Board unanimously supported the rejection of Fuss & O’Neill’s proposal since it was more than double their projected cost.
    - Mover: Jessica Van Oort
    - 2<sup>nd</sup>: Rich Hulett
    - Discussion: None
    - Result: Approved

9. New Business:

- The Town needs to reapply for village center designations for Pawlet and West Pawlet.
  - Motion made to approve the renewal application for village center designations for Pawlet and West Pawlet.
    - Mover: Jessica Van Oort
    - 2<sup>nd</sup>: Bob Jones
    - Discussion: None
    - Result: Approved

10. Public Comment:

- Jennifer Sullivan gave a shout out to the Highway Department for the wonderful job they've been doing with road maintenance.
- Cori Rail asked the Selectboard two questions regarding the ongoing personnel situation at the Library. First, inquiring about the personnel process of firing and hiring. Secondly, inquiring as to whether the Town has indemnity insurance for persons on the Library board, or if the Library board has individual coverage.
- Sue LaPorte inquired about the status of the Library budget, and wondered if the Library had provided a budget to the Selectboard.
  - Harley Cudney offered some clarification on which budgets were discussed and provided to the Board.

11. Motion made to enter executive session to discuss confidential attorney-client communications made for the purpose of providing professional legal services to the body at 8:36pm.

- Mover: Bob Jones
- 2nd: Rich Hulett
- Discussion: None
- Result: Approved

12. Motion to come out of executive session with no decisions made at 9:10pm.

- Mover: Bob Jones
- 2<sup>nd</sup>: Perry Brown
- Discussion: None
- Result: Approved

13. Motion made to adjourn at 9:10pm

- Mover: Jessica Van Oort
- 2<sup>nd</sup>: Perry Brown
- Discussion: None
- Result: Approved