

Final Minutes
SELECTBOARD, TOWN OF PAWLET
December 12, 2023
7:00 pm
Pawlet Town Hall
122 School Street, Pawlet, VT
& Virtually via Zoom

Members in Attendance:

Mike Beecher
Bob Jones
Jessica Van Oort
Rich Hulett

Others in Attendance:

Harley Cudney
Ruth Lampi
Julie Mach
Sue Laporte
PegTv
Elliott Freeman
Joe Clark
Molly Beverage
Deb Hawkins
Lyndsi Barnes
Aaron Levine
Nancy Morlino
Frank Nelson
Grace Larson
Tom Covino
Cori Rail
Martha Schoenemann
Martin Kravitz
Steve Williams
Barb O'Connor
Olga Arnold
Fred Cooper
Eve Schaub
Jennifer Sullivan
Lisa Wright

Pawlet Resident
Unidentified Zoom Participant

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:
 - Approved application from cannabis control board to be reviewed by the local cannabis control commission – New Business
 - Housing Navigator Program
 - Executive Session for personnel matters
 - Mettowee Community Park – Old Business
 - b. Deletions: None.
4. Approval of minutes from previous meeting.
 - Motion made to approve the minutes of November 28, 2023 as printed.
 - Mover: Jessica Van Oort
 - 2nd: Rich Hulett
 - Discussion: None.
 - Result: Approved.
5. Pre-Requested Appearances by Local Citizens and Visitors:
 - Lisa Wright
 - Spoke on 2 issues which are very much connected. New legislation H480 now known as Act 68 of 2023. Is law now but has changed quite a bit. Still contains some rather concerning implementation of schedule that the tax department has developed. The Vermont Listers Association has asked to that we present to the boards. Concern being that this will be an assault on local control. There is a \$50K appropriation to conduct a study to remove local control and transfer control to the VT Dept. of Taxes. Wording is of concern. How

can we defend values at local tax appeal if we do not have local sign off of those values. VALA in cooperation with VLCT and VMCTA wrote joint letters to both the sponsor of the bill and to the Chair of the Vermont Department of Taxes. These letters are insisting on meaningful stakeholder involvement. We are a municipal based form of government in Vermont. Urged the board to take a look at the information and write a letter in support of VALA and VMCTA with regard to how this bill is implemented.

- Likely that any statewide appraisal system will take years to take effect. Likely 3 or 4 years at least. Pawlet is slated to have a reappraisal as ordered by the state. We have discussed the very limited availability of contractors to do the work. She has been in communication with John Valente at Tyler Technologies and Vision Government Solutions. With Tyler there may be a completion date of 2026. Looking at doing a conversion to a different assessor's program. The program we have is currently not acceptable due to lack of support. Should be looking in a different direction.
- A discussion was held with regard to the bid process and recommendations from the assessors.

Motion made for the town to issue RFP for our reappraisal

Mover: Jessica Van Oort

2nd: Rich Hulett

Discussion: None

Result: Motion carried

6. Announcements:

PEG-TV has received approval for Pawlet to receive permanent installation of equipment in 2024.

7. Reports:

A. Zoning Administrator's (ZA) Report:

Nancy Morlino mentioned that she had provided information for the board to review with regard to short term rentals. Once approved, there would need to be a public hearing.

B. Planning Commission's Report:

Corrected the report of the date of the hearing. It will be 12/28 not in January as reported at the last meeting.

C. Road Foreman's Report:

- In process of getting pricing of crusher run out of Hartford.
- New road signs are being installed.
- Summer project list is being worked on.
- Dodge is getting some work done
- 2013 truck went to Earl's to get some brake work and the 2017 is scheduled to go there next week to address some of the codes that have popped up.
- Winter work and roadside cleanup is being done.

D. Assessor Report: None

E. Town Clerk's Memo:

- Motion to approve Tobacco and 2nd Class License for Mach's Market LLC
- Mover: Jessica Van Oort
- 2nd: Rich Hulett
- Discussion: None
- Result: Approved

- Motion to approve Tobacco and 2nd Class License for Sheldon's Market Corporation
- Mover: Jessica Van Oort
- 2nd: Rich Hulett
- Discussion: None
- Result: Approved

Some discussion with regard to notifications being received with regard to election mail.

Also discussed adding maximum capacity to the Auditorium Rental Contract.

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 #24029 for \$8,590.51 and Accounts Payable Warrant #24030 for \$51,702.52.

- Mover: Rich Hulett
- 2nd: Jessica Van Oort
- Discussion: None.
- Result: Approved.

- Discussion on how to proceed with ARPA funds and finalizing the budget. Talked about financial policies to be working on in the future. ARPA started at 409K. After using some of the funds for WW offset, Owl (used for meetings) and WW offset, there is \$350,658 left. \$140K to be used for match for sidewalk. Discussion continued on how to appropriate remaining funds. Jessica Van Oort stated that \$100K-\$150K should be reserved for wastewater as per the survey results.

- Motion to approve \$503,011 for the General Fund Budget for FY 2025.
- Mover: Bob Jones
- 2nd: Jessica Van Oort
- Discussion: None
- Result: Approved

- Motion to approve \$961,850 for the Highway Fund Budget for FY 2025.
- Mover: Jessica Van Oort
- 2nd: Rich Hulett
- Discussion: None
- Result: Approved

G. Emergency Management Director's Report: None

H. Health Officer's Report:

- Nancy Morlino reported that the camper on Rte. 153 is gone

I. Waste Water Treatment Facility (WWTF):

- Mike read the report on regular updates on the WWTF including work that needed to be done and work currently being done.

J. Facilities Report:

- Jessica Van Oort reported that she and Frank Nelson were able to take photos for the energy inspection at the town hall and library. Grant funding that will be unlocked from those inspections will be available next fall, adding that we should be pretty high on the list. Frank Nelson mentioned a safety issue with the access to the attic space.

K. Mettawee School Board (MSB) Report:

- Julie Mach will have a report next meeting.

8. Old or unfinished business:

- Mettawee Community Park is currently being used as a dog park. Vermont Land Trust is asking the participating towns if they want to support this and, if not, the land should be turned back to the owners. The 501(c)3 that had been maintaining the community center has dissolved. The participating towns are encouraged to have a dialog on how to move forward. It was discussed to remove the \$500 appropriation from the ballot inasmuch as the original group is not in existence currently.

9. New Business:

- Cannabis Control Commission – Application for review:
 - Motion to approve application #S000003375 Indoor Cultivator Tier 1 Small Cultivation
 - Mover: Jessica Van Oort
 - 2nd: Bob Jones
 - Discussion: None
 - Result: Approved

Housing resource Navigator plan discussion. RRPC doing program to offer all housing help in one place at no cost to towns. It would help hook up people who want to develop their lot for housing or accessory dwelling units town needs to decide by early January in order to participate in this program.

10. Public Comment:

- Martin Kravitz made reference to a letter that he submitted to the board which the board reviewed. Mike Beecher reiterated that at this time, it is not a selectboard issue. Waiting on a statement from legal counsel.
- Discussion over who the library legal counsel is and how it is being funded. Concerns regarding library board standards and why no comment has been made on why librarian was dismissed.
- Mike Beecher stated that the board is working on it and making sure that it is handled in an appropriate way.
- Molly Beverage read a statement on the experience of Library Trustee members
- Martin Kravits spoke of his experience and concerns.
- Sue Laporte agreed with Martin
- Jessica Van Oort recognized how important this issue is to the town. A lot of people care a great deal. It has become a big deal in our town. I agree that the town does have an interest in this and there is dialog with town legal council and we are trying to come up with a resolve. There is no public statement that can be made at this time but there will be.
- Martha Schoenemann read a letter with regard to her attendance at the most recent library board meeting and shared her thoughts.
- Harley Cudney agreed that this is the most frustrating situation he has ever been involved in. Library board will be meeting with legal counsel in executive session tomorrow night (12/13). Understands the frustration.
- Martin Kravitz was concerned that only 5 minutes is set aside for public comment at that meeting.

11. Motion made to go into executive session to discuss labor relations agreements.

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

12. Motion of board to come out of executive session with no decision made.

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

13. Motion to appoint Rick Lawrence as interim road foreman.

- Mover: Jessica Van Oort
- 2nd: Rich Hulett
- Discussion: None
- Result: Approved

14. Motion made to adjourn at 9:02pm

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