

**TOWN OF CASTLETON
SELECT BOARD MINUTES
Monday, January 25, 2021 at 7:15 p.m.
Castleton Town Office
263 VT – 30
Bomoseen, VT 05732**

PRESENT: Jim Leamy (Board Chairman); Zack Holzworth (Secretary); Robert Spaulding (Member); Michael Jones (Town Manager) were present at the Town Office. Richard Combs (Vice Chair); Joseph Mark (Select Board Parliamentarian); Police Chief Mantello; Mr. Ed Savage (Public Works Director); Mrs. Martha Molnar (Castleton Bridge Initiative spokesperson), Mr. Michael Holden (Resident) all participated virtually via Zoom.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Select Board Chair, Mr. Leamy at 7:15 p.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Mr. Holzworth made a motion approve the agenda. Mr. Spaulding seconded, all were in favor and the motion passed.

MINUTES FOR APPROVAL:

Mr. Mark made a motion to accept the minutes of 12.28.2020. Mr. Spaulding seconded the motion.

Discussion

Mr. Mark noted on page #1 in the minutes for approval section, the sixth line should read, “the amount the University pays”. On page #3, third paragraph, Mr. Mark expressed his appreciation.”

Mr. Spaulding advised that on page #4 in the Manager’s Report, the word “Road” was missing after the word “Drake” regarding the concrete barriers. No other corrections were recommended.

Mr. Leamy called a vote, and all were in favor with above corrections and the motion passed (4-0). Mr. Holzworth abstained because he was not at the meeting.

Mr. Holzworth made a motion to accept the minutes of the Special Meeting on 01.18.2020 and Mr. Spaulding seconded the motion. Mr. Mark abstained as he did not have a copy of those minutes. There were no corrections or comments. **Mr. Leamy called a vote, and the motion passed 4-0.**

CITIZENS COMMENTS AND CONCERNS (Not on the agenda): None

LIQUOR LICENSE FOR APPROVAL: THIRD PLACE PIZZERIA FIRST CLASS, THIRD CLASS & OUTSIDE CONSUMPTION

Mr. Holzworth made a motion to approve the First- and Third-Class liquor license, as well as the outside consumption permit and Mr. Spaulding seconded the motion. There was no discussion. **Mr. Leamy called a vote, and the motion passed 5-0.**

PROPOSED VERMONT COLLEGES MERGER:

Mr. Leamy addressed Mrs. Molnar advising that Mr. Mark Brown had addressed the Select Board two weeks earlier about a proposed name change to Castleton University under a restructuring of the Vermont State College System. Mr. Leamy shared that Mr. Brown advised that in his research he did not find anything that would justify the Town getting involved in the naming or renaming of the University.

Mrs. Molnar addressed the Select Board as the chairperson of the Bridge Committee and advised she has read the materials about the proposed merger, but advised was not an expert of the subject, but wanted to update the board and the position of the Bridge Committee. Mrs. Molnar advised that the Vermont State Colleges faces a financial crisis because of declining number of college-aged students and decreased funding from the State of Vermont. Mrs. Molnar advised that the Bridge Committee is not opposed to a merger, but she stated the Bridge Committee does not believe a merger will solve the financial issues or benefit Castleton University. She stated the Bridge Committee felt a merger would be a detriment to the University. The merger means that Castleton University would simply become a branch of Vermont State University and would hurt the University's brand and recruiting. She explained that about 40% of Castleton students are from out of State and how they pay a higher tuition rate which subsidizes Vermont students.

Mrs. Molnar explained the merger will be presented to the Vermont Legislature and there is not much that can be done once that happens. It is unknown if the Legislature will approve the merger. The Bridge Committee believes Castleton should be able to preserve its name, logo, and athletic teams. She expressed that it is important that the University remains a residential college and keep signature academic programs such as nursing, business, education, communication, science, and resort management, advising these are important to our local economy. Other outstanding characteristics that draw students to Castleton University is the reputation and trust between students and faculty, and the personal involvement between students and faculty. If these are lost are things that could face-to-face services and personal aspects will become lost if CU becomes a campus in a larger system. Continue part of the negatively affect the University and by extension this community. Mrs. Molnar advised that letters of support can be sent as the entire board, individual board members, or as private citizens.

Mr. Mark advised he had read the materials and has his own concerns but wanted to thank Martha for her service on the Bridge Committee. He stated it was a desirable initiative she is engaged in and it was important for our town.

Mrs. Molnar stated she would send Mike (Jones) information on how people can get involved and how to send a letter so he can distribute it.

POLICE UPDATE:

Chief Mantello advised the police department remains consistent with service calls and had nothing to discuss about it.

Mr. Mark advised that in the Manager's Report that Mike referred any social gathering policy information and suggested to see the Police Chief update. There was noting to report. Chief Mantello advised there is nothing to report about outside social gatherings. He advised there were some inside parties, but nothing reported to the police department about outside gatherings.

Chief Mantello went through the calls for services and clarified some questions from Mr. Spaulding about backup for and from Castleton Police Department.

Mr. Holzworth inquired about the tow report and why it was no longer in the Chief's report. Mr. Mark stated he personally liked the towing reports and would like to see them continue because of some past concerns expressed about the equity of the distribution of these towing opportunities.

Mr. Spaulding asked about the category "attempt to locate" and Chief explained it is the stage before somebody is listed as a missing person. He explained that it increases around the holidays as people are attempting to locate family or friends.

Mr. Spaulding inquired about foot patrols. Chief Mantello advised that pertains to officers out on foot in the village checking businesses.

Mr. Spaulding stated he wanted it on record that he thought it wonderful news that Officer Hayes and Webster are enrolled in the EMT Course. He stated it thought it was really special. Chief Mantello advised they should be certified in April.

Chief Mantello advised that the Police Department is getting a ballistic shield at zero cost to the Town.

Chief Mantello advised that the Police Department continues to deliver food to needy families in Town.

Mr. Mark asked if our recent hires have completed the Vermont Police Academy. Chief Mantello advised that Officer Casey Morey completed the basic course on January 15th. Officer Morey is finishing up the post basic training requirements and should be starting his Field Officer Training (FTO) training in February. Office Morey is currently Level III certified.

Chief Mantello advised that two police officers have received both shots of the COVID-19 vaccine and the remainder of the Castleton police officer received their first shot of the COVID-19 vaccine. Mr. Spaulding asked where they were able to get the vaccine. Chief Mantello advised they received them at the Leahy Center at Rutland Regional Medical Center. Town Manager Mike Jones advised that several members on the fire department have also received the first shot of the COVID-19 vaccine.

MANAGER'S REPORT:

Mr. Jones stated that on page #1 that the Town was reimbursed approximately \$16,600 in COVID-19 expenses by FEMA PA Grant and the Vermont Local Government Expense Reimbursement program.

Mr. Jones advised that on Page #2, paragraph #3 (Solar Projects), Mark Courcelle will be at the Town Office to gather information for the survey of the property in question in the Town's gravel pit. He also advised that Mark is conducted research on the property in Hydeville (Hydeville Green) because we ran into a problem where tax maps do not match deeds. The Town may not own this property as believed.

Mr. Jones advised the shed at the Town Office has not been picked up yet and the new shed has not been delivered.

Mr. Jones advised that he is going to contact dispatch services in Washington County to see if they would be interested in dispatching for the fire department and if so, what would it cost.

Mr. Jones asked the board if they wanted him to engage Fire Chief Goyette about using a grant writer to apply for the Assistance to Firefighter Grant toward the purchase of new apparatus. **Mr. Mark made a motion and seconded by Mr. Spaulding, authorizing the Town Manager to pursue finding a grant writer to write a grant for replacement of an engine at the fire department.** Further discussion took place about the cost of a grant writer and the figure discussed was \$5,000. No commitment was made on how much to authorize the Town Manager to commit, but Mr. Jones advised if it were over \$5,000, he would advise the board. **A vote was called, and all were in favor. The motion passed.**

Mr. Jones discussed (page 6, Town lands) about the possibility of a recreation complex behind the Public Safety Building/Town Office. He advised that the Community Development and Economic Revitalization Advisory Committee is going to write a letter of support to the Select Board to explore a recreational complex. Mr. Jones explained to the board members some of the current challenges that the Recreation Commission has with the current facilities.

Mr. Mark advised he wanted to express his support for the idea of improving, if not expanding our recreational opportunities and facilities. He stated he learned through this process that the Town does not necessarily own what many people in town think of as the Town's recreational facilities. He stated that he believes the Town should have the resources to support youth and other recreational activities. If the first step is study and design and getting grants to do that, he is all in favor of it.

Mr. Mark made a motion authorize the Town Manager to work with the Recreation Commission and CDERAC and pursue grants that would help us plan for the next generations recreational facilities in the community and was seconded by Mr. Spaulding. Mr. Combs advised he is totally in favor of it, both as a member of the Select Board and CDERAC. He advised that, "somebody up the food chain higher than him" recently stated that "We don't need more taxes, we need more taxpayers." The way to attract more taxpayers to the town is to make the town more attractive to younger families as our demographics get older. He supports this motion because he thinks it will help attract more young families to the community. **Mr. Leamy called a vote, and all were in favor. Motion passed.**

Mr. Jones advised the Better Places Grant was received and we should know sometime in February if it is approved. Mr. Jones wanted to give credit to Zoning Administrator (Jonas Rosenthal), Martha Clifford (Rec Commission), and Susan Schreiber for the "leg work" they put into preparing this grant. Mr. Jones advised that recently he was informed that the Town does not own this property. The Town has been mowing this property and maintaining it with the understanding that the Town owned it. The Better Places grant application included plans to place a small gazebo, benches, shrubs/landscaping, WiFi hotspot, power, and lighting on this property to make it a more engaging and inviting community space. Mr. Jones advised that this is the only space within the Hydeville Designated Center to create a community space. Resident Michael Holden asked if the land was currently up for sale and he believed the largest portion of the "Hydeville Green" was owned by Ted Parisi. Mr. Holzworth questioned what property Mr. Parisi owned, and that he thought John Burke and Ted Parisi both co-owned it. Mr. Jones advised that he is not sure if it is up for sale but would inquire.

Mr. Mark inquired whether the private property on Sand Hill Road that the fire department is planning on flooding for skating would be open to the public, or just as a private skating area. Mr. Jones stated that the last word he received was this would be open to the public. Mr. Mark asked whether the fire department had any policies on such activity. Mr. Jones explained there are no written policies, however, the fire department does fill pools. Mr. Mark stated that if the fire department is already filling pools, that he has nothing further.

Mr. Spaulding asked where the water was coming from to fill pools. Mr. Jones stated it primarily comes from Lake Bomoseen, however, they can also draft from Castleton River or a hydrant. Mr. Jones advised it does not typically come from fire hydrants because that is drinkable water. Mr. Spaulding asked if the State was okay with it, and Mr. Jones stated he believes there is no issue. The fire department uses pool fillings as training events for members on how to draft from a static water source and driver training.

PURCHASE ORDERS FOR APPROVAL:

There were no purchase orders for approval.

WARRANTS FOR APPROVAL

Mr. Combs made a motion to approve the following warrants:

0121, \$5,765.46; 0114, \$19,556.09; 0121P, \$15,887.21; 0114P \$14,836.22.

Mr. Holzworth seconded the motion. There was no discussion or comments. **Mr. Leamy called a vote, and all were in favor. The motion passed.**

Mr. Combs made a motion to approve warrant # 0125 for \$49,407.44. Mr. Holzworth seconded the motion. Mr. Leamy called a vote, and the motion passed 4-0. Mr. Spaulding recused himself because one of the payments was to his employer.

Mr. Holzworth made a motion to approve warrants 0112P, \$694.28 and 0115P for \$694.30 and Mr. Spaulding second the motion. Mr. Combs recused himself. There was no discussion or comments. **Mr. Leamy called a vote, and all were in favor 4-0. The motion passed.**

SELECT BOARD COMMENTS AND CONCERNS:

Mr. Spaulding had a question asked about a letter that he found in his mailbox making a complaint about unregistered vehicles on private property. Mr. Jones explained that the letter was put in the drop box anonymously and because there was no complainant's name on it, it cannot be actioned. This was echoed by Mr. Combs.

Mr. Mark welcomed Mr. Michael Holden to the meeting and for his willingness to serve. Mr. Holden is running for a one-year open seat on the Select Board and is running unopposed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Mr. Holzworth made a motion to enter executive session with the board and Town Manager for possible litigation and Mr. Spaulding seconded the motion. Mr. Leamy called a vote, and all were in favor. The motion passed. The board entered executive session at 8:08 p.m. with the Town Manager.

Mr. Combs made a motion to come out of executive session at 8:25 p.m. with no action taken and Mr. Spaulding seconded the motion. There was no discussion. Mr. Leamy called a vote, and all were in favor. The motion passed.

ADJOURN:

Mr. Combs made a motion to adjourn at 8:35 p.m. which was seconded Mr. Spaulding. Mr. Leamy called the vote, and all were in favor. The board adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mike Jones, Town Manager