

TOWN OF CASTLETON SELECT BOARD MINUTES
Monday, October 9, 2023 7:00 p.m.
Castleton Fire Station Community Room
273 Route 30N, Bomoseen
In-Person & Zoom Virtual Public Meeting

Zoom Meeting Recording Link:
https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/7BoRGUVAkqRI6KHZFPRATadneG2q-fc_F7sv2EbF1AtCmeb4MOZxwuybdfcRIN8.QGaqn_0JI3pVQ0Cg

PRESENT: James Leamy, Chair, Joseph Mark, Parliamentarian, Richard Combs, Michael Jones, Town Manager, See Attached List

PRESENT VIA ZOOM: Bo Elliott Ramos, Mary Droege, Robert Spaulding, Allison Harvey, Recording Secretary

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Select Board Chair J. Leamy at 7:08 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by J. Leamy. J. Mark asked for a moment of silence in honor of Honoree Fleming who was the victim of a homicide recently and was a very prominent figure on the Castleton University Campus.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

R. Combs made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. J. Mark seconded. All voted in favor. Motion carried 3-0.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – September 25, 2023

R. Combs made a motion to approve the minutes of September 25, 2023 as presented. J. Mark seconded.

Page 1 – middle of the second line of the second paragraph of Citizen’s Comments & Concerns, *being made* should be deleted.

Page 2 – first line of the second paragraph, *Mettowee-Poultney* should be hyphenated and *Natural Resources Conservation District* be added after it.

Page 3 – second motion on the page, *R. Combs seconded*. Should be added after *Tahoe*.

Page 4 – middle of the second line of the second paragraph under Selectboard Comments, *providence* should be changed to *provenance*.

All voted in favor. Motion carried 4-0.

CITIZENS COMMENTS & CONCERNS - ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA:

Steve Dechen of Connelly Road stated he wrote a letter to the Board to bring their attention to a situation that exists. Every spring on Belgo Road there are serious heaving issues with freeze and thaw, as well as a sink hole at the meeting of Grandpa’s Knob and Belgo Road. Every year they dump gravel in it but continues to be a hole. The ditches and culverts have been worked on a lot, but the road is covered by trees, so the surface of the road doesn’t get much sun. When they put large stones in the ruts and holes, it is 4-6 weeks of the road being impassable by an ordinary passenger car. Discussion on what could be used to treat the road differently during the mud season, an oil and chip solution was suggested, as well as a cap on the road allowing the snow and water to run off the sides of the road rather than permeate it and get down into the base of the road.

P. Mantello gave the Board an update on the recent homicide that occurred in Town. State Police have just left the Public Service building and they did a news media today. They have had a search and rescue team out on the trail and nearby grounds, but he has not heard of any new details yet. They are also working on other investigative tools, they have no suspects yet. They do not know at this point if it was random or targeted. The University will be opening tomorrow, and the chief stated everyone needs to be attentive and aware of their surroundings. They have taken over 200 tips and are trying to

get out as much information as they can.

TIM MUNKS: OCCUD UPDATE

T. Munks stated to the Board OCCUD is working on getting better internet to the rural areas. They have received a grant for Act 71, they have the funding to build out to the underserved and not served areas. The grant is a little over 9 million dollars, no taxpayers funds are used but from the infrastructure funds. They will start the project in 2024 and it will be completed in 2025. They are partnering with Consolidated as a public private partnership. They will be one of the first online in the State of Vermont. R. Combs asked if this was a service to the last mile for residents type of thing. T. Munks stated it is actually doing the fiber optic and offering connection to those it will be available to. They are going up Route 30, Float Bridge and Johnson Spooner Road, up North Road, Pencil Mill, Black Pond Road and Moscow Road. J. Mark questioned the press releases he has seen some reference to hunting camps and if they affected the development. T. Munks didn't believe they would be required to connect.

RECREATION UPDATE: Bo Elliott Ramos

B. Ramos stated this is their last report they will be giving for the month of September. Adult Rec has changed a little, had a good program for indoor walking but was more like a class and community component. Pickle Ball continues and a room rental which they are looking to continue as well. Youth soccer is starting to pick up and yoga is continuing. B. Ramos stated they have been focusing on closing up the loops for the next director and thanked the leadership for their support during their tenure.

LOCAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN FOR APPROVAL: Steffanie Borque, RRPC

Steffanie Bourque stated the plan has reached a final version, the review tool and planning team approved version. S. Bourque reviewed the document and what is covered and how the plan will be approved from this point and how it affects any disasters and what percentage of coverage the Town will receive if a FEMA disaster is declared. The rating is currently 7.5%, once submitted that will go up to 17.5%. Further discussion on any minor changes that may need to be made, and how they can be put into the process of approval.

ON ROAD DIESEL (Canadian Blend) BID AWARD

The highway foreman did the research on this, M. Jones did not have a recommendation for the board. J. Mark asked if the timing of the award was critical for this evening. M. Jones stated if there's a timing on the bid it could affect it. **J. Mark made a motion to authorize the Town Manager to contract with Sam's U-Save Fuels for the next 6 months, being a combination of not blended in the fall and blended through the part of the winter at a rate of \$.14 over rack price.** R Spaulding stated it is currently \$4.29/gal at the pumps, but he did not know what the current rack price is. **R. Combs seconded.** After a brief discussion on what the rack price is and how it affects the bid, **R. Combs withdrew his second and J. Mark withdrew the motion.** It was felt they need to know what the rack price is before deciding. R. Spaulding will take care of getting that.

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT EQUIPMENT: Grader, Snowplow, Excavator

M. Jones stated he does not have a recommendation. He is sticking to his guns, he doesn't know where the numbers come from, they need to know where they are coming from. He feels the DPW people need to explain this to the board, as he does not have details that they have and the highway department provided no recommendation.

TAX SALE DISCUSSION

There is a list of properties that meet the criteria for tax sale, the Board needs to decide if they should go up for tax sale based on the criteria. If Christine has done all of the research, then they should go to tax sale to remedy the arrears. These are not just property taxes, but sewer charges as well. R. Combs felt that if the property owners have been made aware, there is no reason not to proceed. M. Jones stated they will have initial out of pocket cost to have an attorney research the properties, which will be recovered after the tax sale is completed. **R. Combs made a motion to authorize the Town Manager to proceed with the normal progression of the normal tax sale. J. Mark seconded.** R. Spaulding asked why some are 4-6 years old and questioned why nothing has been done before this point. M. Jones stated often times the property owners have a payment plan, they default, then are back on, then default again. **All voted in favor. Motion carried 4-0.**

2024 TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES GRANT

M. Jones stated this is a hybrid grant but includes storm water mitigation and a scoping study that was done with the Village, which the board received a copy of. This is an opportunity to apply for storm water mitigation for the Village, the only place they have evidence or information to get the grant. **R. Combs made a motion to authorize the Town Manager to proceed with applying for the VTrans Fall 2023 Transportation Alternatives and Municipal Highway and Stormwater Mitigation Grant. J. Mark seconded. All voted in favor. Motion carried 4-0.**

MANAGER'S REPORT

M. Jones stated they are working on highway complaints and have been out there grading now that the grader is back. It is a larger problem than a few minute conversation right now, as they have to consider strategy and budgets and he will have to come back with recommendations. J. Mark stated he was interested in Mr. Dechen's comments and would be interested in knowing if any Vermont towns have used that approach for road maintenance. M. Jones stated he did hear of it at a seminar, it seemed viable, but when it was looked into locally, no one is using it at that time, that was a year ago or so. It is not as expensive as paving, it doesn't last as long as paving but in some instances is a good application to try it.

M. Jones stated the Fire Department will meet with the public safety committee to move forward with the purchase of a vehicle. Highway is working on a long-range vehicle plan, which is not ready for the board yet.

M. Jones stated tomorrow they will submit the union proposal after he speaks with R. Combs and J. Leamy.

R. Spaulding asked where they are at with the roll off transfer truck. M. Jones stated as of Friday of last week, it has been in the shop, is being worked on, they found a few more things to address, nothing major but then back this week.

PURCHASE ORDERS FOR APPROVAL

None at this time.

WARRANTS FOR APPROVAL

R. Combs made a motion to approve check warrant #1009A in the amount of \$195,080.31, check warrant #1009R in the amount of \$650.00, check warrant #0919 in the amount of \$1,824,537.19, check warrant #0928 in the amount of \$6,790.25, check warrant #1005 in the amount of \$20,705.73, warrant #1009 in the amount of \$187,422.61, warrant #0928P in the amount of \$18,159.25 and warrant #1005P in the amount of \$16,549.09. J. Mark seconded. All voted in favor. Motion carried 4-0.

J. Mark made a motion to approve check warrant #0929P in the amount \$641.32, check warrant #1006P in the amount of \$641.32. R. Spaulding seconded. R. Combs recused himself. All remaining members voted in favor. Motion carried 4-0.

SELECTBOARD COMMENTS and/or CONCERNS:

J. Mark stated he knows many people near the college or village are rattled by the recent murder and the fact that it is unsolved, but those living further away know it is having that consequence on the community. R. Combs reiterated and stated it is not just those in the village, but others are also apprehensive and concerned.

R. Spaulding asked about the DRB meeting next Tuesday night, concerning the town plowing private roads has come up, and the Town has plowed Sheldon Road for 30 plus years. He questions why this is coming to light now. M. Jones stated it started with a letter the Town received from an attorney for the seller. There were some things that seemed to need clarification. The Zoning Administrator and consultant were going back and forth with the seller's attorney and at the end it was still unclear. He made a decision to get ahold of the town attorney and in that conversation was told that under no circumstance should the town be plowing private roads. They were talking about going beyond where the Town maintains as part of the subdivision.

J. Leamy asked board members in the next two weeks to submit their suggestions for the use of the remaining ARPA funds,

get them to M. Jones so he can put them together for their review. R. Spaulding asked for a list of what's been proposed, what's been asked for and what the town's thoughts are on spending the ARPA money. R. Combs asked if M. Jones is aware of any ARPA funds that are not on the spread sheet that they need to consider. M. Jones stated just the CVS property and maybe sewer extensions if they aren't already on there.

J. Mark brought up the matter of the plaque being returned to the property on South Street at the owner's request. He would like to make a decision on that but after it has been researched as best as possible who gave it to the town and the circumstances it was gifted. J. Mark also would like an update on the noise on Pine Street and requested that the Chief provide a draft provision of the noise policy in next two meetings. J. Leamy stated he believes regarding the plaque, when the school closed, Martha Towers was instrumental in having that plaque donated to the town. J. Leamy stated he feels it should stay within the town office. J. Mark feels it is a better way to honor the veterans. J. Mark made a request it be put on a future agenda.

BRIEF RECAP & ITEMS FOR FOLLOW UP:

None at this time.

ENTER EXECUTIVE SESSION – 8:30 PM

R. Combs made a motion to enter Executive Session to discuss Real Estate to include the Town Manager. J. Mark seconded. All voted in favor. Motion carried 4-0.

EXIT EXECUTIVE SESSION – 9:18 PM

R. Combs made a motion to exit Executive Session, no action taken. J. Mark seconded. All voted in favor. Motion carried 4-0.

ADJOURN – 9:18 pm

R. Combs made a motion to adjourn at 9:18 p.m. J. Mark seconded. All voted in favor. Motion carried 4-0.

Respectfully Submitted
Allison Harvey
Recording Secretary