

TOWN OF PEACHAM  
Wednesday, July 19, 2023  
Selectboard Meeting

Hybrid meeting in the Peacham Library Community Room and via Zoom

Attendance

In-person: Richard Browne, Selectboard, Alfred Dedam, Selectboard, Jeremy Withers, Road Foreman, Anna Carvalho, Selectboard Clerk, Rebecca Washington, Town Clerk, Ron Craig, Jeff Berwick, John Reis, Anna Rubin

Via Zoom: Peter Craig, Selectboard, David Stauffer, Jennifer Surat, Allison Webster, Neil Monteith

Minutes

1. Call to order by Richard at 6:30pm, Wednesday, July 19, 2023
2. Additions to the agenda - None
3. Highway Department Update – Jeremy Withers, Road Foreman
  - a. Flooding –
    - i. Macks Mountain culverts got overwhelmed by debris and washed out near Lanesboro Road and at the Cabot town line. Cabot side was affected significantly. The road was made passable as directed by FEMA. Hollow woods Rd was closed due to high water on the south end by the bridge. Hookerville cutoff (class 4), was not passable as of Wednesday. They will get there soon. The Old Cemetery Road culvert by Willow Brook Rd plugged up with logs, but they didn't see it at first. Jeremy hopes it will be a FEMA site because they had to take 12 loads of logs out of it. They got it open Sunday. There were a lot of smaller washouts all over town. Most main roads (except Macks Mountain) held really well. He doesn't think FEMA will help with smaller stuff, but he's documenting larger washouts. He will take pictures of smaller stuff too, just in case. He is keeping track of every load of gravel.
    - ii. Richard asked about an estimate to get Macks Mtn back to standard. Jeremy isn't sure if FEMA will help put it back to what it was or if they would support putting it back with improvements. Jeremy will put together an estimate. Staff is shorthanded, so Jeremy has been focusing on helping on equipment, so he plans to catch up on communications. He is still waiting to hear back from FEMA about when they plan to come.
    - iii. Jeremy expressed his gratitude to all who helped out, noting the selectboard members for their help, Rebecca and Jen at the office, chief Berwick and the fire department, Shane Stevenson for excavation, Scott Abare, Zach Emerson, Rob Cochran, Andrea Kane and Neil Monteith, all farmers who took equipment out to help get water off the road, Allen

Thresher for helping out on Hollow Woods, everyone for being patient and helping out, and lastly, to the highway guys for working so hard and so late. Richard commented that the response by the highway department, fire department, and emergency management coordinators did a great job. Alfred commented that he appreciated how the higher standard of maintenance as prevention helped us out a lot.

- iv. Neil Monteith reported that he has been getting many emails that he shares with the Selectboard. He originally reported that town was unaffected, but then sent an update after he became aware of issues. He has only heard from NVDA, and reported that we did repairs to get by.
  - b. Walt was back this week doing the roadside mowing, so it's done for this year.
  - c. Jeremy received another proposal for underground power on Baley-Hazen Rd. Another resident on Lanesboro asked as well. Jeremy asked for feedback from the Selectboard because of possible issues with underground utilities, for example while ditching. He gave the residents some specifications, including a 5ft depth and/or encased. Jeremy feels that if it has to go under the town's road, it has to be up to the town's specs. Selectboard supports Jeremy enforcing these specifications.
  - d. A resident on The Lane wants to upgrade it to a Class 3. Jeremy invited them to a selectboard meeting to request it.
  - e. Jeremy contacted Allegiance. New truck supposed to arrive in August, but Jeremy is hoping to get it by November. Asked if Selectboard would entertain bids. Peter thinks it's appropriate to get bids from other companies as well. Aiming for second meeting in August for bids.
  - f. Jeremy graded Slack St, then a resident put in their own speedbumps with a tractor. Jeremy passed over with a rake again. Peter and Jeremy will have a conversation with the resident. Alfred feels it's important to prevent this kind of issue. Richard will draft a message to share on the town website.
  - g. John Reis asked about the access to Fosters Pond – Jeremy said it's already done.
4. Town Clerk/Treasurer Update
- a. FEMA contact coordinator - Rebecca feels the Town Clerk's office can handle it. Selectboard only asked that they track their hours to see if FEMA will cover it.
  - b. Budget status
    - i. Main checking account is \$28,453. Will probably have to borrow due to upcoming bills to get through AP.
    - ii. Final grand list not ready, so no tax rate just yet, but hopefully next week. The Selectboard can plan to set the tax rate next meeting, so the tax bills can be sent out.
      - 1. Selectboard can consider option to penalize for filing homesteads late. Town can charge up to 8%, but in the past, we have only

charged 4%. Not done it since before Covid. Rebecca will ask listers how many people this would affect.

- iii. Spent 43% of budget, but we still have a lot of the bigger bills to pay.
  - iv. They will create accounts for FEMA.
  - v. Jen is in the office full force and doing awesome!
  - vi. BCA meeting – sent out the challenges notices to people on voter checklist who may have moved out of town.
  - vii. Town Clerk’s office and residents are having issues getting in touch with the 911 coordinator.
  - viii. Town Hall renovation funding- Rebecca asked about figuring out where the funding would come from. She can provide numbers when the Selectboard is ready. Richard says that maybe by next meeting we’ll get some estimates in. Richard explained that they expect that it will be a combination of funds including ARPA, capital building funds, and maybe other grants.
5. Tax Rate – not ready
  6. Maintenance Agreement – Peter approves of the language in the draft the selectboard has seen.
    - a. **Peter moved to adopt the maintenance agreement with the church regarding their driveway, seconded by Alfred, all in favor, so moved.**
  7. Planning Commission update and plans – Anna Rubin
    - a. Planning commission’s current mandate is to update the current bylaws. They received grant support from the state to hire experts, recommended by NVDA. Protocol of grant is that the advice will align Peacham’s bylaws with the state’s priorities: making bylaws more amenable to housing and to ensure consistency across the state. Reflects changes to statutes and need to update language. Hired Rod Francis and Brandy Saxton from Place Sense, who identify areas of zoning regulation with the goal of increasing housing choice, affordability and opportunity. They are also working with Danville and St. Johnsbury which helps the area as a whole, and supports collaboration. 1<sup>st</sup> meeting was in April which included an overview of regulations in place. Last week they produced an audit of current bylaws (technical review). Consultants noted places that bylaws could be revised to align with statutory regulations and language, to conform with the Better Place Guide, or to support Peacham town plan. Now the Planning Commission must decide what to do. It’s an advisory document, not a mandate. The goal of the work now is to ensure Peacham bylaws do not hinder the creation of housing. Anna brought some copies of information and documents, which will be available from the Town Clerk’s office and on the Planning Commission website. The audit is not a roadmap, but a guide to help us set our priorities.

- b. Richard asked for a proposed update timeline – Grant requires that work is accomplished in 12 months. The Planning Commission is meeting with them August 17<sup>th</sup>. Anyone is welcome to join. They will have draft language by September. Changes have to go through public hearing process, all of which is intended to be finalized before Town Meeting. It's the priority of the Planning Commission right now. Message from state is clear: Vermont has a housing problem. There is a new state law (Act 47 – the Home Act) and our local laws cannot contradict it. More announcements forthcoming. Anna encourages anyone with questions or concerns to participate. Discussion on impact these bylaws have had in the past, and how the Peacham landscape has changed.
8. Ongoing items updates
- a. Rescue vehicle – Jeff Berwick, fire chief
    - i. Still looking for a replacement or a new cab and chassis on existing body, or potentially a used vehicle. Come across a few, but needs to act quickly because units don't stay on the market long. If they find a unit, they bring it to the Selectboard to approve. There are potential funding solutions, including ARPA. A special meeting can be called if they come across something that needs to be acted on quickly. Members of the fire department are doing research to find options, but might decide on an option they are looking at in Texas.
  - b. Town Hall – Richard received an email from Rusty Barber saying he should have quotes for excavating and water proofing town hall foundation and have concepts for moorings for shed over HVAC units by next meeting.
  - c. Cow Hill – waiting to hear from Toby Balivet.
9. Public comment - none
10. Approve minutes
- a. **Peter moved to approve minutes from July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023, seconded by Alfred, all in favor, so moved.**
11. Review and approve bills
- a. Peter recused himself since he is not present at the library.
  - b. **Richard moved to approve payrolls and accounts payable as presented, seconded by Alfred, all in favor, so moved.**
12. Review correspondence
- a. Marilyn Magnus – Fall Foliage flyer. Asked if the town can cover it. Rebecca commented that the Fall Foliage festival is not a town sponsored events, so despite the small amount, she is concerned that it may not be appropriate, or might be a gray area. Alfred feels Selectboard should heed Rebecca's advice, so it doesn't set a precedent. It is not a budget item. The selectboard suggested posting a request for donations to the town website as a way to compromise and offer support, but not have funding go through town.

- b. Frank Miller regarding mini PamFest – requesting field and set up similar to past years, but not requesting funds. Needs to coordinate with Wesley for field, and Rachael for gym use. Selectboard ok with it.
  - c. Green Up Vermont – will cover next meeting if necessary.
  - d. John Reis – New town signs. He is concerned about signs stating that Peacham was settled in 1775. Peter asked John to communicate the information about settled versus established to Mr. Engle. Richard explained that there is a committee responsible for these signs, and so it would be appropriate for John to bring it to their attention. Selectboard said it is necessary to provide documentation.
  - e. John Reis – requested to recoup at least half the money spent on the survey for subdivision with PCH. Richard suggested he bring it up with the DRB if he feels strongly about it. John wants the Selectboard to take action, but Richard explained that the Selectboard has tabled the decisions for the moment.
  - f. MERP – Allison Webster- grants available for energy audits in town buildings. Encouraged Selectboard to apply for grants as soon as possible. The audits are free for all buildings, but they are required in order to apply for \$500,000 implementation grant. There is also a \$4,000 grant for education and awareness. Hopefully audits would happen in the fall.
    - i. **Peter moved sign up for energy audits for all municipal buildings, seconded by Alfred, all in favor, so moved.**
    - ii. Allie can work with Rebecca or a Selectboard member to sign up for audits and \$4000 grant.
  - g. Request from a non-profit to adopt Statement of Inclusion that has been accepted by many towns in Vermont. Richard read the statement, as it had not reached all board members.
    - i. Alfred is ambivalent. He 100% supports the principles, but he is uncomfortable with statements by the town that lay claim to a collective point of view all of its residents. Peter said he stands behinds the principles, but doesn't feel we need to sign a document. He feels Peacham is already inclusive. Selectboard will delay action until all board members have had a chance to read up on it.
13. Executive Session for personnel
- a. **Peter moved that they moved into executive session at 8:10pm seconded by Alfred, all in favor, so moved.**
  - b. Out at 8:18pm – no action taken
14. **Richard moved to adjourn at 8:18pm, seconded by Alfred, all in favor, so moved.**

Documents provided to the Selectboard and discussed at this meeting are available by request to the Town Office.