

TOWN OF PEACHAM
Wednesday, November 15, 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, Allen Freund, Jutta Scott, Dave Edwards, Karen Lewis, Sarah Lydon

Via Zoom: Janie Carle, Dave Stauffer, Doug Morton

Minutes

1. Call to order by Richard at 6:30pm, Wednesday, November 15, 2023.
2. Additions to the agenda - none
3. Highway Department Update from Jeremy Withers, Road Foreman
 - a. Newest member training went well.
 - b. Starting to sand, but waiting for roads to freeze.
 - c. Working with Rebecca and Jen on FEMA and grant work.
 - d. Following up on pricing for paving for shim and overlay: Pike Paving gave an approximate of \$148,675 for a consecutive mile.
 - e. Follow up on pick-up (with plow) pricing options: Ballpark from Chevy and Ford \$62,500 before trade-in. Salesmen said the age and milage of our truck made for a good trade-in time, but they could not provide a trade-in estimate because we would not be doing it until April. Jeremy estimates \$10,000-15,000 for a trade-in.
4. Town Clerk/Treasurer Update via email from Rebecca Washington
 - a. There is about \$94,000 in unpaid taxes, which is normal for this time of year.
 - b. She gave her availability for budget working meeting.
 - c. She provided prices to get parking lot lights at town offices fixed, which require an electrician. We need to replace both fixtures, either with similar or with newer, adjustable fixtures. Both options can be done within the budget of town hall maintenance. Discussion on specs and preferences. Selectboard agrees that LEDs are preferred. If both options are LEDs, they feel the lower price/watt option is best. Karen Lewis asked if it was possible to get lights that are directed downwards to avoid disruption of wildlife. Richard explained that they may not be able to stay in budget with that option. Selectboard will get clarification with Rebecca before making a decision.
5. Schedule budget review meeting
 - a. Working budget meeting scheduled for December 5th, 2023 at 8:00am at the town hall. Town committees are supposed to have budget requests in.
6. Semi-quincennial participation decision
 - a. Agreement not to participate. They feel it's meant for bigger towns.

7. Peacham Pond boat access action items
 - a. Richard summarized the meeting at Peacham Pond. Mike Wichrowsky is still looking for a survey that is sufficiently clear, but it appears the road is a 3-rod road. Richard explained the idea is to add fill on one side of the road to allow for more parking. Fish and Wildlife might be able to offer financial support and might be able to do a survey if necessary. It will be necessary to communicate with a landowner who has stones along their property. Plans will be in the works throughout the winter so that the project would be ready to go in the spring. In the meantime, the Selectboard asked Jeremy to go take a look, and to provide some signage indicating parking on one side only.
8. Windsong Property discussion
 - a. Northeast Kingdom Audobaun society is discussing possibility of donating land to the town. Their attorney is working on the language. Town will need an attorney to review it. As a donation, it would be no cost to the town, except for the loss of taxes. VLCT confirmed it does not need to go to the town meeting; the Selectboard can decide. But there is no decision at this time. There is an ongoing discussion about the school being involved in the signage and use. Karen Lewis gave some details about the uniqueness of the natural habitat and the educational opportunity it provides. Dave Stauffer, neighbor to the property, is in support of the town taking over the land. Speaking for the Conservation Commission, he feels it's great to acquire more natural, untouched property, and he feels the town should not worry about paying for any maintenance. He regularly checks for invasive species, but without any, it should be left to evolve as it would naturally. Doug Morton, neighbor to the property, commented that he supports the town taking over the property to preserve it as it is as well. He feels it's a well-used resource.
9. Public comment
 - a. Jutta Scott presented a petition concerning the abandoned Peacham Corner Store with approximately 100 signatures requesting that the Selectboard take action to contact the Vermont Fire Marshall to request an inspection and a report indicating all fire, health, and safety concerns. The petition includes a brief outline of what the legal action would look like. Richard explained that the Assistant State Fire Marshall has done an exterior inspection already, and provided the town a report. Richard spoke with him on the phone. He was not clear on the process of getting an inside inspection, but said he would speak with his boss, the State Fire Marshall. He has not gotten back to Richard yet. It would be the State taking the lead on this action. Jutta stated she felt the letter might emphasize the support for the action. Richard has asked the State if they need a formal request from the Selectboard, to which he has not gotten a response yet. Richard stated the petition is useful. The property-owner has not responded to the original inspection yet. Richard will check with VLCT about the definition of an

abandoned building. All agree it would be an expensive fix. It is a historically significant building for the town. Jutta will send the documents to the Town Clerk. Sarah Lydon, whose property abuts the corner store property, agrees about the significance of the building, but she is seriously concerned about the fire safety. There is no firewall between buildings connected to the corner store, which are important town businesses, and there are homes close to those buildings that are jeopardized too. She encouraged a letter request. Jutta stated that if there were to be a fire there, there is no way they could save the three buildings. She emphasized the urgency of the situation. Richard wondered whether the corner is a designated village center. Richard will continue to communicate with the Fire Marshall and VLCT. Dave Edwards asked if the Selectboard will take action on the petition. Richard explained that he needs more information from state officials to understand the proper way to take action, but that the petition will be included in the documents sent to the state. Dave Stauffer commented that in the past, the historical society has gone straight to Bernie Sanders, so it's possible to go straight to the state representative, so he advised doing this.

10. Approve minutes

- a. **Alfred moved to approve minutes from November 1st, 2023 and November 9th, 2023 seconded by Richard, all in favor, so moved.**

11. Review and approve bills

- a. **Richard moved to approve bills as presented, seconded by Alfred, all in favor, so moved.**

12. Review correspondence

- a. Email regarding town report from auditors. Richard's duty to write Selectboard report.
- b. Email about electrifying our fleet, but not feasible for us just yet.

13. Alfred moved to adjourn at 7:23pm, seconded by Richard, all in favor, so moved.

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