

TOWN OF PEACHAM
Wednesday, December 20, 2023
Selectboard Meeting
Hybrid meeting in the Peacham Library Community Room and via Zoom

Attendance

In-person: Richard Browne, Selectboard, Peter Craig, Selectboard, Alfred Dedam, Selectboard, Jeremy Withers, Road Foreman, Anna Carvalho, Selectboard Clerk, Rebecca Washington, Town Clerk, Ron Craig, Kalanani Gallas, Karen Lewis

Via Zoom: Tim McKay, David Stauffer, Dave Edwards,

Minutes

1. Call to order by Richard at 06:30pm, Wednesday, December 20, 2023.
2. Additions to the agenda
 - a. PCH invoice request – invoice was withdrawn. However, PCH also requested a new Selectboard appointed member because Alfred has resigned from the PCH board. Richard and Peter agree that this should be held off until it has been decided whether or not the selectboard expands, and then they can make the decision when all other committee appointees are decided on.
3. Highway Department Update – Jeremy Withers
 - a. Recent rain caused only minor washouts and mud spots, which have been mostly filled in. They will lay some more gravel out in the rough spots. Tree issues to be resolved with chipper.
 - b. On Wednesday Jeremy discovered there was a culvert washed out on Rake Factory Road, making it impassable. Policy states no winter maintenance on class 4 roads. Alfred asked if there is a difference between winter maintenance or repair. Peter suggested fixing it to the best of our ability for this time of year. Jeremy would like to make it passable because it affects residents. All agree that it isn't a normal winter cause and doesn't fall under the regular winter maintenance, such as plowing and sanding, so board agrees that this repair is an acceptable exception.
 - c. Crew went to school for lunch on Wednesday, which was absolutely wonderful.
 - d. Crew worked on truck and equipment maintenance on Wednesday. Everything is fixed.
 - e. New 6-wheeler is in the body shop to get plow equipment on. Jeremy will go over Thursday to make sure it's all set. He is uncertain if it will be here next week, but he's reached out to Dan.
4. Town Clerk/Treasurer Update – Rebecca Washington
 - a. Will wait to discuss in budget discussion
5. Article to increase Selectboard size and Democracy Committee update - Tim McKay
 - a. Tim asked about the draft article that was sent regarding expanding the selectboard members to 5 and staggering the two new members. It would work the same as the school board: three 3-year members and two 2-year members. The object is to make the proposal clear to the voters.
 - b. Members of the democracy committee are out surveying people one-on-one to discuss whether changing the time and/or day of town meeting would affect their attendance. They are not rushing with this proposal because they want to make sure to have enough data. The surveying will continue throughout the winter. Tim is working on a report summarizing the committee's work for the Town Report.
6. Cemetery Committee – updated cemetery rules and regulations
 - a. Board received a draft version of the rules rather than the updated ones.

- b. Richard asked them to include a minute from committee that shows that the whole committee approves the new rules.
 - c. Karen explained that Annette Lorraine worked on the new rules and regulations according to the state and to make them clearer, then added on the natural burial rules, which are all new.
 - d. Richard requested that the new version come with the changes highlighted for clarity.
 - e. Alfred commented that he is not comfortable with general public accessing the Worcester cemetery through his property. As far as he knows, there is no deeded access. He does not think this is an appropriate discussion while he's on the Selectboard, but he'd like the town and cemetery committee to consider a public access to that cemetery, and he only brought it up because he wondered if it would affect the new rules and regulations under discussion. Ron Craig commented that it may be a state item, so there might be a state statute somewhere to address it. Discussion about other cemeteries and how access will need to be addressed. Other board members agree it is a legitimate concern and should be addressed in the future.
7. Town Health Officer Recommendations
- a. **Peter moved to approve and appoint Josh Kantrowitz as the Town Health Officer, seconded by Alfred, all in favor, so moved.**
 - b. Richard suggested that it the town should inquire about a new Deputy Health Officer. Rebecca will ask Josh for suggestions.
8. Continued Budget Discussion
- a. Agreement that we are in good shape for 2023. A few bills still need to be addressed.
 - b. Comparative budget report for 2024 currently shows a significant increase, even without including budgets for renovation. Richard said he found it difficult to find places we could save money. However, he suggested that since there will be a separate article for the new pickup truck to be raised by taxes, we could potentially skip the payment into capital equipment fund to help ease the budget increase. Peter confirmed that the article in 2019 for a new truck was funded by raising taxes.
 - c. Jeremy suggested some smaller cuts in the Highway Department, including adjustments to salary, dust control, chloride, and sand expenses. Payroll can be finalized at the meeting on December 29th, 2023.
 - d. Zoning legal expense has not been spent for this year, but it will likely come due next year.
 - e. The cost of goods, services, and doing business has increased significantly which is impacting the budget and making it challenging to cut costs because so much is out of our hands.
 - f. Final budget meeting is scheduled for Friday, December 29th, 2023 at 1:00pm at the town offices.
 - g. New state payroll tax, 0.44% to fund childcare in VT starting July 1st, 2024 – Rebecca asks whether to withhold up to 25% of this or whether the town should cover it all. Board agrees the town should pay it for the first year, but after 6 months of seeing how it affects the budget, they should revisit for the budget for 2025. Rest of the board agrees.
 - h. Renovation funding – Discussion of current renovation estimate (which does not include grant funding) versus available funding resources.
 - i. Discussion of including an article to bond the reminding funds needed because grant funding won't be certain until much later in the year. There are many grant avenues, but a bond could be used to guarantee the funding it the interim allowing the work to get done. Richard has been in contact with Alison Low, who thinks NVDA may be able to help with funds, including grant-writing support. Richard will try to set up a meeting.

- i. If the new 6-wheeler doesn't arrive in 2023, it will affect the budget for 2024. Peter asked if we should be ordering a 10-wheeler for 2025. Jeremy says it's the right idea to order soon, but orders are not being accepted yet. He suggested in 2024 we look into switching back to purchasing instead of leasing, or at least leasing for long. For comparison we should make sure to include multiple sales people. Originally the equipment repair line item was getting very high when we owned them, so we felt we would save on that by leasing to save money, but it hasn't proven to be the case. Discussion about repair costs on leases vs purchased vehicles. Agreement that some financial analysis should be done in 2024.
 - j. Transfer station
 - i. Pricing – Peter is still looking into price comparisons. It appears we will break even this year, despite removal price increases. Further discussion on December 29th, 2023.
 - ii. Composting and recycling pricing would increase too much if Casella took over with a zero-sort. The cost would force us to charge for it. Agreement that we should continue with NEK Waste Management, but they can only take what they have room for in their truck. Discussion on increase in recycling production.
 - iii. Regarding the snowblower and battery request from Amber at the transfer station, Peter felt the snowblower is not necessary, but a battery pack would be useful. Agreement that a battery pack can be included in the budget. Discussion about gas payment for compactor.
9. Annual Selectboard Report
- a. Richard drafted a report and asked for feedback. Peter had nothing to add or change. Alfred made some suggestions about wording and order.
10. Public comment - none
11. Approve minutes
- a. **Peter moved to approve minutes from December 5th, 2023 and December 6th, 2023, seconded by Alfred, all in favor, so moved.**
12. Review and approve bills
- a. **Richard moved to approve bills as presented, seconded by Peter, all in favor, so moved.**
13. Review correspondence
- a. Richard has been following up about the Old Red Store. Due to state officials being on vacation, we will not get new information for a few weeks.
 - b. Notice from NEK WMD notifying of hazardous waste day May 18th, 2024 at our Transfer Station.
 - c. Signature needed for TCA for the design for the technology in the new meeting room in the Town Hall.
 - i. **Peter moved to have Richard sign for TCA design, seconded by Alfred, all in favor, so moved.**
 - d. Communications with Laura Tobin regarding Windsong property – Richard requested documents about the property before they can make a final decision.
 - e. We are on the Environmental bulletin board regarding the stump dump process, so it's in motion. Peter may request that the transfer station temporarily limit resident use to allow capacity for the highway department needs.
14. Peter moved to adjourn at 7:48pm, 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.