

TOWN OF CLARENDON BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING
REGULAR
March 8, 2021
Minutes

Attendees:

Select Board

Mike Klopchin, Chair
Bob Bixby, Clerk
Robert Congdon
Cash Ruane
Rick Wilbur

Heidi Congdon, Treasurer
Katie Nop, Secretary
William Chmelewski, PEG-TV
CJ Frankiewicz, First Constable, via Zoom
Jim Sabatano, Rutland Herald, via Zoom
Ken Fredette, via Zoom
Gloria Menard, Town Clerk, via Zoom
Jimmy Austin
Carol Austin

Call to Order

Chairman Klopchin called the meeting to order at 6:04PM.

Election of Board Officers

Selectman Bixby motioned to elect Mike Klopchin as chair, and Selectman Wilbur seconded. Selectman Congdon motioned to elect Bob Bixby as Board clerk; Selectman Wilbur seconded. The motions passed unopposed.

Agenda additions/deletions

N/A

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Selectman Congdon motioned to approve the Regular Meeting minutes from February 22 and Selectman Bixby seconded for discussion. The Board agreed they were acceptable and all members approved the motion.

Highway

Road Commissioner Report- Cash Ruane, Road Commissioner, reported that he's hopeful the new Mack will be here next week. The Road Crew has dressed a few roads due to the thawing and freezing that's occurred.

Plowing Route Concerns- Jim Austin was present to discuss his concerns. He reported that with the last several snowstorms the Road Crew has not plowed Quarterline Road until the afternoon. Jim commented that "roads getting done at 1pm for the first time is dead wrong." He felt that the roads should be getting plowed and treated faster than they have in the past because the Road Crew is made up of a 4-man crew with 4 trucks. Jim further explained that he's had to use 4x4 drive during the last 3 storms and he's gone off the road once. He also questioned why the Town isn't mixing more sand in with the salt (paved roads). The Road Commissioner addressed Jimmy's concerns. He explained that the Road Crew does their best to clear the paved roads first, allowing for safe travel to the schools and fire department. Cash

clarified the process they've been executing when it comes to plowing the dirt roads: the Road Crew does not immediately plow off the dirt as they become very slippery. There is more traction on the dirt roads when there is a bit of snow. Chairman Klopchin addressed Jimmy's question about mixing sand in with the salt. He pointed out that Towns have to be careful with what they treat the roads with due to water quality standards. Chairman Klopchin suggested as a solution, the dirt roads that are the most highly travelled, be priority. Cash confirmed that's what the Crew is currently doing. Chairman Klopchin proposed the Crew starting earlier. The Road Commissioner responded that they keep watch of the radar. Cash mentioned that the Highway Budget would have to increase if the Crew were to plow more often and put extra material down. Chairman Klopchin thanked Jimmy for coming in and voicing his concerns. Hopefully the Board and Road Commissioner can work together toward a solution. As mentioned, Jimmy said he would like to see the Crew start earlier so that Quarterline Road is plowed before afternoon.

Weight Limit Posting update- Board Secretary, Katie, confirmed from the last meeting that the Road Commissioner has decided not to post the roads this year. Ultimately, most of the vehicles that cause damage to the roads are exempt because they are ag-related. Road Commissioner Cash, also received news that vehicles making a delivery to an established business are exempt from overweight limits. Additionally, the Town's ordinance is out of date. Selectman Congdon suggested working to update the ordinance this summer, so that in the future, they can post the roads without the added hassle of revising it. Fortunately, this year, there isn't much frost in the ground so the Road Crew can anticipate less damage to the roads. Selectman Congdon said, a year where there could be deep frost, it would be nice to have an enforceable ordinance to pull out. To be blunt, Selectman Congdon said "we're leaving money on the table if we're not charging overweight permits." Carol Austin questioned how much money Carrara use to charge for the use of their scales. The Board said that they traded services.

Article 4 discussion- CJ Frankiewicz was on Zoom to discuss Article 4, from this year's ballot. CJ previously sent a letter to the Board asking for clarification about the need for Article 4's separation from the rest of the budget. His letter also addressed his concern about a Road Commissioner being a Selectman as well; which will be discussed at a later meeting. Chairman Klopchin explained that the article has been listed separate from the budget for some time, in cases if the budget did not pass, and the article did, then there would be funds to hire contractors for the summer resurfacing/repair projects. CJ also had questions on how the surplus of funds was handled. Treasurer, Heidi expounded on the process. Highway funds must be accounted for and used by/for the highway alone. If there is a surplus from the highway budget, it must be added to the highway fund balance. The past couple of years the voters have voted to move a surplus (if any) to the highway equipment fund at the end of the year. They have not had to do that as there has not been a surplus.

The Board and CJ went on to discuss where those Article 4 funds will be used this year. Selectman Congdon shared that the Town has been playing "catch up" for years- meaning they've been trying to bring the roads up to standard. In the near future, all the roads should be up to par and the resurfacing money will hopefully go to just maintenance of the roads. Road Commissioner, Cash, told CJ what paving projects would be getting done this year, depending on the VTrans grant. A large majority of Walker Mountain Road is slated to get redone as well as a section on Creek Road, near the Alfrecha intersection. The delay in paving Walker Mtn has been due to the pandemic, and the State's delay in awarding grants. Because of the extensive amount of work to be done on that road, the grants were necessary to keep the Highway budget as closely level funded as possible.

Approval of Select Board Warrants

All new warrants and warrants previously signed by the designated Select Board Member were approved and signed by all Select Board Members.

Guests

N/A

Public Comments

N/A

Old Business

Approve Phone System bid- Selectman Congdon confirmed that this system is compatible with the fire panel so he motioned to approve the bid and have the Board chair sign. Selectman Ruane seconded for discussion. Selectman Wilbur said he would abstain from the vote due to conflict of interest. The motion passed 3-0.

New Business

RCSWD appointment- Selectman Bixby explained that Dave Potter is interested in being appointed as the Representative to the Rutland County Solid Waste District. Selectman Bixby will be the alternate. Selectman Congdon motioned to appoint Dave Potter as the regular representative, Selectman Bixby as the alternate, and have the chairman sign the paperwork effective April 1. Selectman Bixby seconded the motion and all approved.

Approve Liquor License- Selectman Congdon motioned to approve the liquor licenses for Stone Hedge and have the Board members sign. Selectman Wilbur seconded and the motion passed unopposed.

MRUUSD School Board discussion- George Ambrose announced his resignation from the MRUUSD, effective March 12. In the past, the Select Board has had the ability to appoint the next member. Andrea Hawkins had sent a letter previously, stating, that if there was an opening on the School Board, she would like to fill that vacancy. Since the last appointment the Select Board made, the legislation has changed. The School Board has the power to fill that position, with only recommendation from the Select Board. There have been rumors that a former School Board member that was running in the last election and lost, might be up for the appointment. Chairman Klopchin said that, he, as an individual would suggest petitioning the School Board to have a special election. Selectman Wilbur commented that Clarendon voters should have the sole right to choose the individual that fills the board vacancy. Selectman Congdon said that the Mill River school district has had a controversial year with lots of ups and downs. As one member of the Select Board, he firmly believes, that this selection should be in the hands of the voters. The Town of Clarendon deserves a say with what happens with their seat on the School Board. Selectman Ruane said seeing as how the recent election went down, a new voice is needed on the School Board. Selectman Bixby agreed with Robert 100%. He doesn't particularly like special elections due to the financial implications, but Town of Clarendon voters deserve to have a say who will fill their vacancy on the School Board. Chairman Klopchin said he spoke with the SOS's office and was told that the Town has to petition the School Board to have a special election. Selectman Congdon disagreed that they do not need to petition. The Select Board members have the right to call a special meeting to hold an election.

Andrea Hawkins, the possible candidate to fill the appointment, was present on Zoom to speak. She introduced herself to the Board, stating that she is a MRUHS alumni, her son attends Mill River, and she's a Clarendon resident. She has been involved in Mill River athletics and would like to further give back to her community by representing Clarendon on the School Board. She expressed her determination to get on the School Board whether that be with this appointment or running next March. Andrea would like to fight for the Clarendon children who deserve so much more than what they've received. For herself, as a tax payer, contributing to the school district, she has not seen a return. Especially, during this

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pandemic year, the children have not received the education they deserve, and that her tax dollars should reflect.

Diane Ingalls sent a letter to the Board and attached an email from John McKenna and asked that it be read aloud. She advised the Board to not consider Mr. McKenna for the School Board appointment based on how he feels about the community as portrayed in his email. Diane emailed him the night that he lost the School Board election, writing that, "if you would have listened to your constituents things may be different." She said that "the [School] Board did not want to hear anything different... at some point the Board needs the community." John replied that he did listen. "It was hard not to with several people all saying the same racist and homophobic things over and over." In the same email, John said that "the fact that two-thirds of the town agreed with the racists means I have a lot of work to do in other areas." In his email it says "feel free to share." The Select Board, having already reviewed this letter and email moved on and read an email from Dave Younce announcing George Ambrose's resignation.

The email explained the process for the School Board to appoint a new member. Individuals who are interested in filling that seat may submit letters no later than April 2 through the Superintendent. The Select Board may also submit their recommendation by April 2.

Selectman Bixby strongly advised that the Select Board as well as the public reach out to their representatives in the Legislature about these statutes regarding these School Board issues. Chairman Klopchin did speak with Representative Peterson about this. Selectman Congdon further expressed that local control needs to stay local. The taxpayers and voters of Clarendon will get to decide who fills the empty seat on the School Board. The Select Board earnestly agreed that this decision should be completely in the hands of the Clarendon voters, and a special election should be held.

Town Officer's Report

N/A

Select Board Member Concerns

N/A

Adjournment

Selectman Wilbur motioned to adjourn at 7:42PM, Selectman Bixby seconded, and all agreed.

SIGNED: Mike J. Klopchin Mike Klopchin, Chair

SIGNED: Robert Bixby Bob Bixby, Clerk