

TOWN OF CLARENDON BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING

REGULAR

March 28, 2022

Minutes

Attendees:

Select Board

Mike Klopchin, Chair
Bob Bixby, Clerk
Robert Congdon
Art Menard

Heidi Congdon, Treasurer
Katie Nop, Secretary
Gloria Menard, Clerk
William Chmielewski, PEG TV
Katherine Aicher
Mary Graham McDowell
Macy Rasco
MJ Rasco
Tom Miles
Ed Kelly
Fran Kelly
Alicia Wuesthoff
Norm Flanders
Matt Jakubowski, Fire Chief
John Browne
Jane Sarno
Sue Jepson
Marianne Stephans
Sonny Young
Carol Geary
John McKenna
Shanti McKenna
Madison Aiken

Call to Order

Chairman Klopchin called the meeting to order at 6PM.

Agenda additions/deletions

Selectman Congdon motioned to add Stone Hedge liquor license under New Business, a reappointment to the Planning Commission under Old Business, and add Norm Flanders under Guest. Norm Flanders wished to discuss a veteran's memorial in Clarendon and town entry signs. Selectman Bixby seconded, and all Board members approved.

Selectman Congdon motioned to go out of order on the agenda and jump to the inclusion statement under Old Business and then go back to the order of the agenda. Selectman Bixby seconded the motion and it passed unopposed.

Old Business

Inclusion Statement:

Approved April 11, 2022

John McKenna introduced himself to the board and public. He said a group in town would like Clarendon to adopt an inclusion statement. Ed Kelly read the inclusion declaration aloud. It stated:

“The Town of _____ condemns racism and welcomes all persons regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age or disability and wants everyone to feel safe and welcome in our community. As a town, we formally condemn discrimination in all its forms, commit to fair and equal treatment of everyone in our community, and will strive to ensure all our actions, policies and operating procedures reflect this commitment. The Town of _____ is and will continue to be a place where individuals can live freely and express their opinions. By the _____ Select Board on _____ 2022. Goal Statement: To have each Vermont municipality adopt and implement a Declaration of Inclusion. ADOPT means formal approval by the municipality's governing body. IMPLEMENT means the enactment and furtherance of plans, policies, programs, procedures, and relevant training which support and advance the intent and spirit of the Declaration.”

Chairman Klopchin asked if the State had any documentation on this subject. John thought the State had signed something similar but there's a movement that each municipality adopt something as well. John stated that VT digger had an article that noted a large percentage of people moving to Vermont are LGBTQ. He felt that if Clarendon adopted the inclusion declaration, more people would feel comfortable moving here. He explained Clarendon had a family that left town because they did not feel safe or included. Carol Geary stated that she has ran for school board twice and lost. She felt harassed during her campaign because of who she supported. She was called communist, anarchist, fascist, etc. There was a letter to the editor in the Rutland Herald about a negative sign that was placed in Clarendon that wasn't inclusive. She felt it was really important that the town approve the declaration of inclusion. One member of the public felt that Vermont has had a history of getting together and having open honest conversations. She said it's important to look beyond what the statement says, but also talk about what it means and how it reflects behavior. Her hope is that if there are any questions about what it means, then the Board would pause and engage with the community to understand. Tom Miles had some closing remarks. In short, he felt that an inclusion/welcome statement on the website stating that Clarendon is welcoming would increase population, vitality, and local business. He encourages the Board to take time to talk with family and friends about the inclusion declaration and this group will come back at the end of April to discuss.

Chairman Klopchin asked the Select Board members what their thoughts were on the matter. Selectman Menard said he would like to take time to look into it and ask questions. Carol Geary questioned why this subject was placed under Old Business. The Board responded it had been on the agenda before when an individual had given the Board a news article about the inclusion statement. Selectman Congdon agreed with Selectman Menard and what was previously suggested; to wait and discuss. He would like to do more digging into the document that the governor signed.

Chairman Klopchin stated that he has no real issues with it. He agrees with the Board about waiting till the second meeting in April to reconvene to discuss. Selectman Bixby would like to hear more feedback from the community because there are two sides to every situation. Selectman Congdon motioned to table this discussion till the April 25th meeting. Selectman Bixby seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. John McKenna said to feel free to reach out to him or anyone in the room if they have questions about the inclusion statement. The Board thanked them for their time.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Approved April 11, 2022

Selectman Congdon motioned to approve the Regular Meeting minutes from March 14, 2022, Selectman Menard seconded, and all Board members approved.

Highway

Road Commissioner Report:

Road Commissioner Ruane was not present to discuss.

Comp Time discussion:

Selectman Congdon motioned that the Town of Clarendon does not engage in implementing a comp time policy. Selectman Bixby seconded. Chairman Klopchin asked if there was any discussion about it. Selectman Menard said if they were to implement this policy, the town is not losing anything monetarily, but they would lose man hours. With Tim Kennedy's passing, the road crew is already down a guy. Selectman Bixby mentioned that it does appear to create unnecessary tracking issues on the Treasurer side of things. Selectman Congdon said he struggles with the idea because it's only legal for government entities and he does not like the double standard. The Bord asked Heidi what her thoughts were. She said she supports them in whatever they decide. The motion passed 3-0.

White stop bars:

Because the Road Commissioner was not present to discuss the Board decided to move that discussion to the next meeting's agenda.

Katie figured the Road Commissioner will want to discuss painting white stop bars at the Walker Mtn Road/ Creek Road intersection since he's had several calls of individuals blowing through that stop sign. Selectman Bixby agreed and added that the intersection of Cold River Road/N. Shrewsbury Road could use them as well.

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

Norm Flanders:

Norm introduced himself and informed the Board that he has lived in Clarendon since 1980 and is a veteran. He's noted that the only thing that the town has for a veterans' memorial are the names on the town hall building. He feels the veterans deserve more. Matt Jakubowski, himself, Mike Klopchin, and the principal of Clarendon Elementary would like to have a memorial in the peace garden at the school. Norm is willing to set up a committee that will have representation from local veterans, the fire department, and a representative from the MRUSD board. He has spoken with Dave Potter who is retired Air Force and he 100% supports the idea. Art Peterson also supports it. Norm Flanders came before the Select Board to ask their blessing

A separate topic Norm discussed was that he would like to see Clarendon have town entry signs. He thinks it's a way to show community pride. He's sure there is a local artist that could create something to put at the town's borders.

Chairman Klopchin asked the rest of the Board if they supported the idea of a veteran's memorial. Selectman Menard had no problem with but he would like to see the committee do some fundraising so its not a burden to the tax payer. Selectman Congdon, Bixby, and Chairman Klopchin were in full support. Selectman Congdon motioned to form a Veterans Memorial Committee that would include Norm Flanders, Dave Potter, Art Peterson, Mike Klopchin, an additional representative from the Fire Department, and a representative from the School Board. Selectman Bixby seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

As for welcome/entry signs for the town, Selectman Congdon said the first step would be to reach out to the State to see about the process for putting up a sign on a state road (Route 7). He thinks there is permitting required. For the sign itself, he would like to see the schools hold an artistic design competition, and then the Select Board or a committee in charge of the sign project, pick their favorite for the town. Norm suggested approaching West Rutland, Shrewsbury, and Wallingford about how to get signs put up on Route 7, since they do. Katie will reach out to the state and the neighboring towns to start the process.

Old Business

Noise Ordinance discussion:

Katie explained this discussion is in response to the Moulton Ave noise issue, talked about at last meeting. The Board is considering adopting a noise ordinance to help resolve said issues. Sgt. Cross recommended looking over West Rutland's "objectionable noise ordinance." VLCT's comment was that it may be unenforceable. Selectman Menard thought it may offer as a deterrent. The Board asked Katie to send it to the Town's attorney for his review.

Planning Commission Reappointment:

Selectman Congdon motioned to reappoint Bryan Johnson to the Clarendon Planning Commission, Selectman Bixby seconded, all approved. Selectman Menard clarified that Bryan will serve on the Planning Commission while he is residing in Clarendon, when he moves, he will resign. The Board confirmed.

New Business

Town Credit Card discussion:

Heidi, Treasurer, said that the town currently does not have a credit card. Any time there needs to be a purchase that the town does not have an account for, a town employee has to make the purchase themselves and then be reimbursed. Heidi does not think this is best practice. She's spoken with People's United Bank about it. She's reached out to other towns about their credit card policies. She thought it very important to have a credit card policy to govern the usage. She created a draft policy and had sent it out for the Board to look over. Heidi thought there should be a threshold of \$500. Anything above that would be pre-approved by the Board. The Board Clerk and the Town Treasurer were recommended to be the authorized officers on the account. Selectman Congdon thought that getting a town credit was long overdue. He's been on the Board for a while, and he has seen this happen several times with employees having to pay for things. The credit limit will be \$15,000 and it's a 55-day cycle. Selectman Menard said that the town does have to pay bills so if this makes it easier then he would be in agreeance. Selectman Congdon said that we are in the day and age of online shopping. Heidi gave the example of Harbor Freight and the inability to create a corporate account there. If the road crew needs a part, then they have to purchase it themselves and get reimbursed. Selectman Congdon reminisced on how a citizen in town a few years back put a truck motor on their credit card and were reimbursed for it. Selectman Menard asked if the credit card account could be viewed online. If so, it should be checked frequently to avoid fraudulent activity. Selectman Menard motioned to approve the credit card policy the way Heidi had presented, Selectman Bixby seconded, and all approved. Selectman Menard motioned that the Chairman sign the bank resolution on behalf of the Board; Selectman Bixby seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Zoning Administrator:

Selectman Congdon said his understanding was the Zoning Administrator term has lapsed. There is one applicant that the Planning Commission is going to review. The Planning Commission chair has offered to fill in as interim ZA to take care of permits until the Planning Commission has a recommendation. Selectman Congdon wondered if there was a legality issue with him filling both positions as interim ZA and Planning Commission chair. He is also chair of the Zoning Board. Selectman Congdon said the optics of the situation aren't good. There was much discussion about state statues surrounding the Zoning Administrator

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position and compatible offices. Selectman Bixby was unsure how to proceed because of legalities. Selectman Menard offered to be the interim ZA with the help of Brownson if the responsibility fell to the Select Board. However, Selectman Menard is on the Zoning Board as well. Chairman Klopchin asked Katie to reach out to the Secretary of State's office (SOS) to see if the planning commission chair would be able to serve as acting/interim ZA. Selectman Congdon motioned that pending clearance/approval from SOS, that Brownson Spencer act as interim ZA for three weeks to process permits or until the next Select Board's meeting where they appoint the long-term position. Selectman Menard seconded for discussion. Selectman Bixby questioned if a quick phone call to the town's attorney in the morning would be best. The Board decided to ask the SOS. The motion passed unopposed.

Stone Hedge Liquor License:

Gloria explained there is a liquor license for Stone Hedge golf course for their restaurant and outside carry permit. Selectman Congdon motioned that the Board sign both licenses for Stone Hedge, Selectman Menard seconded, and all members approved.

Public Comments

Matt Jakubowski asked that a Select Board member be on the Rec Committee until he can get more members. Currently he and Mike and Heather Robilotto are on the committee. Matt informed the Board that there is a group from Castleton interested in using the rec fields for football. Little League is talking about fixing up the back field. Selectman Menard offered to join the Rec Committee. Selectman Congdon motioned to appoint him to the Rec Committee, Selectman Bixby seconded, and the motion passed 2-0. Selectman Menard recused himself from the vote.

Town Officer's Report

Secretary, Katie, reported that the first ARPA reporting period closes March 31 and the first report is due April 30. Even though Clarendon has not expended funds, she believes the report is still required. She'll be working on that next month and reaching out to VLCT.

Select Board Member Concerns

Selectman Menard reported back that he did do some research about a new server for the Town Hall. He found that \$105/hour is reasonable and the backup tapes are 7 years old and Vincent from Vermont Digital would highly recommend replacing. Vermont Digital can quote the server when it gets closer to purchasing time.

Chairman Klopchin confirmed with Norm Flanders that the Veterans Memorial Committee will get back to the Board when the committee is established. Norm said they would.

Adjournment

Selectman Bixby motioned to adjourn at 7:21PM and Selectman Congdon seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

SIGNED:  Mike Klopchin, Chair

SIGNED:  Bob Bixby, Clerk