

Minutes

Select Board Meeting Town of Coventry Monday July 10, 2023

This meeting was recorded on Zoom and then posted to YouTube. The link to the Town's YouTube channel is at www.coventryvt.org.

Board Members Present

Scott Morley
Daniel Webster
Scott Briere

Town Officials Present

Matt Maxwell, Town Administrator
Dave Barlow, Treasurer
Deb Tanguay, Town Clerk
Carver Maxwell, Planning Commission

Public Present

Kerry Keement
Karen Hack
Megan Hilson
Bob Hamish, DOI
Barbara Pulling, DOI

1. Order

Matt called the meeting to order at 5:02 pm. Persons present introduced themselves.

2. Changes or Additions to the Agenda

None

3. Allow for public comment

None

4. Declaration of Inclusion

Bob Hamish spoke on behalf of the Declaration of Inclusion and the history of it in the state of Vermont. Bob stated that it is the morally and economically correct thing to do for Vermont towns. Bob said that Franklin was the first town in Vermont to adopt the Declaration and since then many towns and cities have joined up to the point where the Declaration encompasses 70% of Vermont's population. Bob stated that as the world becomes more diverse the need becomes greater to ensure all people feel safe and welcome. Bob mentioned that the population in Vermont is stagnant and aging to the point that loss of revenue and the ability to maintain services and infrastructure is quite significant. Bob and his committee are asking each town in the state to adopt the Declaration of Inclusion individually. Bob then read a few key words and phrases included in the Declaration. Barbara Pulling added that they want everyone in Vermont to feel safe and welcome and that Gov. Phil Scott has spoken about the need for a more diverse population in the state in order to ensure our success going forward. Karen Hack spoke for the Coventry Diversity Committee stating that the committee supports the Declaration. Megan Hilson mentioned the changing demographics in the area and how adopting the Declaration would help a lot of people feel more included. Karen H also added that it would be a positive public statement for the community. Megan said that it seems like a common-sense decision to adopt the Declaration. Scott Morley stated that he feels that this is a political issue and is not something that that a three person select board should be deciding. Scott M believes that this is an issue that should be voted on by the town at large during Town Meeting Day. Karen H stated that some people may be uneasy about sharing their experiences of racism and bigotry in a public forum such as Town Meeting. Megan Hilson felt the board was making a bigger deal out of the issue than was necessary and that the Select Board was elected by the town to make these kinds of decisions. Scott Briere feels it would be better to have more people involved in the decision and should be decided at a Town Meeting level. Karen H said that many towns have voted on the Declaration through their select boards. Carver Maxwell asked if the template for the Declaration can be edited to better fit the Town of Coventry. Carver was given an affirmative. Kerry Keement asked what about the other 30% of the Vermont population that has not adopted the Declaration. Bob replied that they have not gotten to them yet and that they started with the higher population centers. Barbara mentioned that the committee worked very hard to make the Declaration non-partisan. Scott M said that partisanship is in the eye of the beholder and that he did not think that the Declaration had the votes needed to be adopted tonight. The select board thanked everyone for the discussion and no action was taken.

5. Health Insurance for Town Employees

Matt gave the board an update on what other towns in the area offer their full-time employees for family insurance policies.

The consensus was that every town offers a family insurance plan in some form. Scott M felt the town should pay 100% of any individual insurance plan for a full-time employee and 80% for any additional family members that are added to the policy. Scott M made the motion to adjust the town Personnel Policy to reflect 100% payment of individual insurance policies and 80% for any dependents they may wish to add. Scott B made the second and the vote was unanimous. Dave B asked for some clarification on the policy change as the town's insurance carrier, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, offers many different levels of coverage for both individuals and families. After some discussion Scott B made the motion to use the BCBS Gold plan across the board for all full-time town employees. Scott M made the second and the vote was unanimous.

6. Meeting House Update

Dave Barlow let the board know that there is a concert scheduled at the Cleveland Meeting House for July 30. It is put on by Play Every Town and will feature a pianist from UVM. Dave will handle all the preparation work himself and he does not expect a large turnout.

7. Salt Shed Bids

The Town received two bids for the construction of a new salt shed at the Town Garage. Scott B and former Road Foreman John Buchanan worked out the design of the building. The Board discussed the two bids one from Alex Giroux and one from Rick Roberge. Scott B made the motion to award the bid to Roberge at \$47,280 to paid with ARPA funds. Scott M made the second and the vote was unanimous.

8. Other Business

There was some discussion on payment to Stephanie Rondeau for her work as Planning Commission Clerk. Scott M thought the position had been eliminated at a previous meeting. He was informed that it was not and that only a discussion about the position took place. Scott M made the motion to pay Stephanie what she is owed for Planning Commission Clerk duties and then remove the position from the payroll. Dan W made the second and the vote was unanimous.

9. Approval of Minutes

Scott M made the motion to approve the Minutes of 6/26/2023. Dan W made the second and the vote was unanimous.

10. Warrants

Scott M made the motion to accept the warrants. Scott B made the second and the vote was unanimous.

11. Executive Session

Dan W made the motion to enter Executive Session for a legal discussion. Scott M made the second and the vote was unanimous. The

Select Board along with Matt M and town attorney Brain Monaghan entered executive session at 6:00pm. The board came out of Executive Session at 7:07 pm. No action taken. Scott B then made the motion to allow Scott M to contact representatives from Casella regarding their property value. Dan W made the second and the vote was unanimous.

12. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 7:08pm

DRAFT