

Minutes

Select Board Meeting Town of Coventry Monday August 7, 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
Israel Sanville, Planning Commission

Public Present

Sheriff Jennifer Harlow
Lieutenant Richard Wells
Lee, ATV club

1. Order

Matt called the meeting to order at 5:03 pm. Persons present introduced themselves.

2. Changes or Additions to the Agenda

Humidifier for the Meeting House and Play Every Town recap under Other Business

3. Allow for public comment

None

4. Orleans County Sheriff's Contract

Sheriff Jennifer Harlow and Lt. Richard Wells were present to explain the new contract. Sheriff Harlow explained that the town could pay \$13,000 for the year and receive 224 hours of service or \$13,630 for 235 hours of service. The Board and the Sheriff discussed past years contracts and the number of hours that Coventry was getting. Town Clerk Deb Tanguay mentioned that the billing from the Sheriff's Department had been inconsistent over the last year with hours and money amounts differing quite a bit from month to month. Sheriff Harlow explained that a couple of deputies were at the Police Academy over the past year, leaving the department short staffed at times. Sheriff Harlow anticipates being fully staffed going forward. Scott M stated he does not have an issue with the billing and would like to have a one-year contract for 235 hours of coverage. Sheriff Harlow will adjust the contract to reflect 235 hours for \$13,630. Scott M made the motion to accept the OCSD contract for 2023 – 2024 at 235 hours for \$13,630. Dan W made the second and the vote was unanimous. Lt. Wells spoke about concerns the department has with some of the new paved roads in town not being covered by the town's speed ordinance. Lt. Wells said it was important that the town have the proper signs in place to help enforce the speed limits. Lt. Wells mentioned that the OCSD has a county wide ordinance for class I, II, and III roads that if towns adopt will make enforcement of speed violations easier. Currently, there are speed violations that get thrown out from Coventry due to the ordinance being out of date. Scott M responded for the select board and said that they had discussed the OCSD speed ordinance changes in a previous meeting and had decided not to adopt them. Sheriff Harlow and Lt. Wells reminded the board that there is lost revenue to the town when a speeding ticket is thrown out and that minor changes in the town ordinance could prevent this. The select board agreed to take another look at the town speed ordinance. Lt. Wells will meet with the town administrator on what adjustments may be prudent. The Select Board thanked the Sheriff and Lieutenant for all their department does for the town.

5. Casella Tax Dispute

Select Board member Scott Morley will meet with a contingent from Casella on Thursday. Scott M expects a frank and honest discussion and will have a full report at the next board meeting.

6. ATV Right of Way

Lee from the local ATV club was present to explain that the local club is applying for state right of way for VT Rt. 5. As part of the application the club needs the approval of the municipality through which that section of State Road runs. Lee explained that the goal is to connect businesses that the ATV riders frequent and this is the easiest and shortest way to do it. Most of the ATV traffic would occur over the weekends in the spring and summer.

The select board examined the route and discussed other routes with Lee. Dan W thought it was unnecessary for the ATV's to turn off Rt. 5, enter the village, and then rejoin Rt. 5. Lee explained that the state did not want the ATV's using the whole stretch of Rt. 5 from Coventry Station Road. Scott M felt there would be some push back from the school over the ATV traffic. Scott B asked if the town could shut it down if we happen to receive a lot of complaints. Lee replied that the town can rescind approval at any time. Lee mentioned that the ATV club and himself personally has put a lot of money into the trails in Coventry over the years. In some of these cases land owners have stopped allowing ATV use, forcing the club to seek alternate routes. Matt M said there is very little ATV traffic in the village during the week. Dave B said that the traffic picks up over the weekend. Scott M made the motion to approve the right of way for the ATV club. Scott B made the second and the vote was unanimous. Scott B signed on behalf of the select board.

7. VLCT Town Fair

Matt M told the board that he attended the event last year and enjoyed the experience. Deb T and Dave B may also attend one day of the event. Deb explained that this year's town fair is on September 26 and 27 at the Double Tree in Burlington. Scott M made the motion to allow Matt to attend as the town's voting delegate for the VLCT Annual Meeting. Dan W made the second and the vote was unanimous.

8. Conflict of Interest Policy

The select board reviewed the town Conflict of Interest Policy and did not see any reasons to make changes to it. Scott M made the motion to approve the policy as written. Dan W made the second and the vote was unanimous.

9. Treasurer's Report

Dave Barlow presented the June Treasurer's report to the select board. Dave B stated it was a normal month for expenses with some money passing through the general fund and headed to CD's that are fully insured with Fidelity. Dave B explained the end of fiscal year investment report to the board. The report showed that investments are heading in the right direction. Dave B made some deposits based on actions that were taken at town meeting 2023. The Microsoft shares were removed from the vault and transferred to stock held at Fidelity. It will be used for media material for the school. Dave is speaking with John Henry on the next steps for the Microsoft shares. Dave B has closed out FY 2023 with the Roads Department close to budget and the municipal side under budget. Scott M asked when the audit would be taking place. Dave B was not sure as it is likely our new auditing firm was affected by the July floods. Scott M mentioned that he is not in favor of the special funds that the town uses and puts money into each year at town meeting. Scott M stated

that there is no specificity for the money that is put into the special funds and that select board could essentially spend the money, almost 3 million, on whatever they wanted. The select board and Dave B discussed how some of the other towns in Orleans County prepare their yearly budgets. Scott M feels that the budget should reflect specific items that the town plans on purchasing during the year and that all other money should be placed in long term investments and an emergency fund for unknowns and uncontrollable situations. There was some further discussion amongst the board about how the articles for town meeting would be phrased. Scott M said that a line-item specific budget would not affect people's taxes. Scott M would also like to see all of the Casella payments reflected in the same accounting FY. There was some discussion between Dave B and the board about whether this was feasible or necessary under our current accounting format. Dave B stated that Coventry currently uses modified accrual-based accounting, but the new auditors may suggest we switch to the cash-based model. Dave B asked the board if payments for recent road maintenance should come out of the Flood Recovery and Mitigation Fund. After some discussion the board agreed that it should as the damage to the roads was incurred during the July flood. There was some additional budget discussion between the board and Dave B and it was agreed to place town budgets on the select board agenda for the next meeting.

10. Other Business

Dave Barlow let the board know that the basement of the Elijah Cleveland Meeting House is damp and has accumulated some mold in places. Dave recommends buying a dehumidifier to be placed in the basement of the meeting house. There was some discussion on how to deal with water coming off the meeting house roof. Scott M made the motion to allow Matt to spend up to \$500 for a dehumidifier for the meeting house. Scott B made the second and the vote was unanimous. Dave B let the board know the meeting house hosted a concert on July 30th that was attended by 25 to 30 people and was very successful.

11. Approval of Minutes, 7-24-2023

Scott M made the motion to approve the minutes as written. Dan W made the second and the vote was unanimous.

12. Warrants

Deb T explained the two invoices from Fred's and why they were not paid. Matt will follow up and may look for a new propane provider. Scott M commented on outstanding checks to some town residents. He recommended contacting the people and issuing new checks. Scott M also commented that Deb T does an "A+" job on the Accounts Payable. Scott M made the motion to approve the warrants. Dan W made the second and the vote was unanimous.

13. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 6:46pm

DRAFT