

Minutes

Select Board Meeting Town of Coventry Monday January 22, 2024

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
Scott Briere
Dan Webster

Town Officials Present

Matt Maxwell, Town Administrator
Deb Tanguay, Town Clerk
Israel Sanville, Planning Commission
David Barlow, Town Treasurer
Carver Maxwell, Planning Commission

Public Present

Tyler Billingsley, East Engineering
Carleen Leonhart, Property Owner

1. Order

Matt called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm. Persons present introduced themselves.

2. Changes or Additions to the Agenda

None

3. Allow for public comment

None

4. Planning Commission – Sidewalk Article

At a special select board meeting in May 2023, the Coventry Select Board agreed to place an article for Town Meeting asking voters to approve a sidewalk upgrade to the village. Since that meeting the village sustained significant flooding July of 2023. Scott B explained that many property owners in the village have requested buyouts of their homes and businesses. Once the properties are bought out, they will need to be demolished and no new construction can take place. These buyouts have the potential to drastically change the landscape of the village. The select board felt it would be best to delay the sidewalk work until we have a better understanding of what the village is going to look like after the buyouts. Carver Maxwell and Israel Sanville were present from the Planning Commission. Both Carver and Israel felt it would be in the best interest to put a pause on the sidewalk upgrade until we have a better understanding of what will happen with the buyouts. Scott M mentioned that the sidewalk upgrade was discussed before the July flooding, but that event changed the board's perspective. Scott M thanked Carver and Israel for attending and speaking with the board.

5. Coventry Station Road – Permanent Repairs

Tyler B from East Engineering talked the board through the permanent repair process for Coventry Station Road. Tyler has a bid package prepared to go out to prospective contractors, so that work on the project could begin in the Spring of 2024. Tyler explained to the board how FEMA funded projects work at that there is always some level of risk when dealing with FEMA, but Tyler feels 90% sure that this project will be funded almost fully. When all is completed, Tyler expects the town will have to pay approximately 10% of the total project cost. Scott B made the motion to approve the bid package prepared by East Engineering. Dan W made the second and the vote was unanimous.

6. Floodplain Buyouts

Matt M entered into record the addresses in the Coventry Floodplain that received a letter from the town with buyout process instructions. The addresses are attached to the minutes. Matt M also presented a document to the board that would name Vermont Emergency Management as a sub applicant for the buyout grants. This would allow VEM to streamline the process and expedite things for property owners. Carleen Leonhart shared her buyout experience and stated she would like updates from the Town and State as the process continues. Scott B made the motion to name VEM as a sub applicant on the buyout grants. Scott M made the second and the vote was unanimous.

7. Black River Dredging

Matt M told the board that he met with a State of Vermont River

Engineer to discuss dredging of excess sediment from the Black River in two spots underneath the Route 14 bridge. The board discussed what was accomplished the last time this was done and how it will need to continue on a 5-to-10-year cycle. The board would like the TA to find out what the cost was the last time the town did dredging in that spot.

8. Town Personnel Policy

Dave B made some updates to the Town Personnel Policy that was last updated in 2021. Dave B needed feedback from the select board on some of the proposed changes so that he may proceed with the update to the policy. One of the changes discussed would allow for benefits to some of the town's part time employees. The select board did not think that part time employees should receive benefits. This led to a discussion between David B and the select board about what constitutes a town employee and what would be considered an appointed official. Scott M said that he would seek clarification on the matter from the town attorney. Dave B also made adjustments to the holiday leave in the personnel policy and brought it in line with what the State of Vermont follows. Dave B would also like to see some carry over on vacation time for full time employees. Currently, it is a use it or lose it scenario for vacation days. Scott M mentioned that this is a lot of information to digest and he will need some time to review the proposed changes. Dave B said that he is not looking for any action, but was getting the information in front of the board so that progress can continue to be made on the policy.

9. FY 2025 Budget

Dave B felt a conservative estimate for Casella revenue for FY2025 would be 2.5 million. Dave B explained to the board the emergency services numbers as they had changed from the previous year. There was a discussion on how the payment to Coventry Town Foundation should appear in the budget. Dave B made the point that it has to show up somewhere if it is not under appropriations. Scott M said that the new plow truck, paving expenses, and the CTF appropriation should all be stand alone items, as they are based on voter approval. Dave B told the board that there is an approximate surplus of 1 million and there was a discussion on what to do with it. Dave reminded the board that some reserve funds are required by statute and cannot be eliminated. Dave B suggested an article for Town Meeting on where to distribute surplus funds. Dave B provided the board with the total for the General Fund and Road Budget. There was some further budget discussion around where to place the money transfers in the report. It was decided to list the transfers at the end of the budget report.

10. Liquor Licenses

Scott B made the motion to approve liquor licenses for Royer's, Martha's Diner, and Little John's. Dan W made the second and the vote was unanimous.

11. Other Business

The Board will meet on Monday, January 29 to approve the Warning for Town Meeting

12. Approval of Minutes – 1/8/2024

Scott M made the motion to approve the minutes of 1/8/2024. Dan W made the second and the vote was unanimous.

13. Warrants

Scott M made the motion to approve the Warrants. Dan W made the second and the vote was unanimous

14. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 7:20pm.