

**Waterville Valley Selectboard
Minutes of Selectboard Meeting
Thursday, March 7, 2024 @ 3:00 pm
Downstairs Meeting Room – Town Offices**

DATE: March 7, 2024

MEMBERS PRESENT: Richard Rita, Chairman; Bob Fries, Vice-Chair; and Wendi Rathgeber, Member.

MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

OTHERS PRESENT: Mark Decoteau (Town Manager), Megan Boobar (Public Works Director), Dylan Tucker (Municipal Services Manager), Dave Noyes (Public Safety Director), Brooke Wakefield (Recreation Department Director), Patty Furgal (Town/School Moderator), John Recine, Irit Levy, Kim Rawson (Community Power Committee), and Sharon Charron (Executive Assistant).

1. Call to Order – Rich Rita, Chair of the Selectboard, states that this is an in-person meeting, and YouTube LIVE is also being used. The public may call 603-236-4730 or email scharron@watervillevalleynh.gov to ask questions or if they have problems accessing the video services. The Chair called the meeting to order at 3:00 pm.

1. Public Hearing

Trash Fees • 00:01:01.

- Wendi Rathgeber made a motion to open the Public Hearings at 3:01 pm. The motion was seconded by Rich Rita and was followed by a unanimous voice vote of the Board.
- Megan Boobar presented and discussed the proposed changes in trash fees. The last update to these rates was in 2019.
- The fees for solid waste disposal for recyclable items were also reviewed.
- Contractors are charged a new fee for the disposal of wood chips at \$20/ton.
- There is a possibility of allowing the public to take wood chips for mulching/landscaping use.

Water and Sewer Fees. • 00:06:34.

- Mark Decoteau presents the proposed 20% increase in water rates and a 10% increase in sewer rates to the Board, stating that the increases are beyond the three-year planned adjustment cycle for these rates.
- Mark provided a multi-year report on the financial performance of the water and sewer departments, anticipated additional properties, and the impact of debt service payments from project enhancement to both systems.
- The increases can be attributed to increased debt services on projects and the general operation of both systems.
- The new rates will be effective for the first quarter of water/sewer billing 2024.
- It was noted that costs to property owners shift from property taxes to water/sewer quarterly charges as the operating budget subsidizes the water/sewer costs.
- There were no questions from the public, and Rich Rita closed the Public Hearing at 3:10 pm.

- Bob Fries motioned to increase the water, sewer, and trash rates as proposed. The motion was seconded by Wendi Rathgeber and was followed by a unanimous voice vote of the Board.

2. Public Hearing

Pole License Amendment • 00:11:30

- Wendi Rathgeber made a motion to open the Public Hearings at 3:10 pm. The motion was seconded by Bob Fries and was followed by a unanimous voice vote of the Board.
- Mark Decoteau explained that the Selectboard periodically has to renew the pole license for utility poles and accessories. The resolution presented to the Board meets the State's statutory requirement for the Town to tax utilities and their assets in the Town.
- Taxing utilities on their poles and accessories was explained, and the minimal impact on the tax base was mentioned.
- There were no questions from the public, and Rich Rita closed the Public Hearing at 3:13 pm.
- Wendi Rathgeber motioned to accept the Pole License Amendment as proposed. The motion was seconded by Bob Fries and was followed by a unanimous voice vote of the Board.

4. Privilege of the Floor

Town Meeting Logistics • 00:13:41

- Moderator Patty Furgal speaks about the potential adjournment of the town meeting if needed due to the length of the meeting, the need to make a plan to reconvene the next day, and the availability of AV equipment and the time to reconvene.
- If needed, the Board and the Moderator agreed to reconvene the Town Meeting at 6:00pm the following day.
- Patty Furgal informed the Board that the Planning Board will staff an information table during polling hours for voters to ask questions about the Zoning Amendments. The Conservation Commission and the Community Power Committee were also offered to have information tables if they wanted.
- The Selectboard members' coverage of election-day hours was set as Bob 11 am-1pm, Rich 1-3pm, and Wendi 3-5 pm.

Community Power Program Update • 00:17:55.

- Community Power Committee Chair Kim Rawson provides the Board with an update on the community power program, highlighting the anticipation of lower electricity costs due to a mild winter and the goal to lock in rates two cents below the NHEC offer.
- Once the program launches, if electric rates drop beyond what the program offers, users can opt-out (and back in) of the program at any point in time.
- Kim will have a few minutes at the Town Meeting to provide an update on the Community Power Program and answer any questions.
- Kim explained the difference between energy brokers and energy providers and their respective roles.

5. Approval of Meeting Minutes. • 00:26:33.

- Rich Rita shared his observations on the new AI program that is being used to generate minutes, which sometimes seems to have repetitions, sentence fragments and uses a passive

voice. He suggested that careful review is essential in clarifying the minutes and the public record.

- Three sets of minutes were presented for approval:
 - January 18, 2024, Regular Meeting
 - February 6, 2024, Special Meeting
 - February 7, 2024, Budget & Bond Hearing
- Rich Rita motions to approve the three sets of minutes, as amended. The motion was seconded by Bob Fries and was followed by a unanimous voice vote of the Board.
- The minutes of 2/1/2024 were deferred for approval until the next meeting.

6. Financial Report. • 00:29:25.

- Mark Decoteau shared that the annual audit is underway and provided a current income and expense report for the Board. As always, the operating budget before the Town Meeting operates on a percentage of the 2023 budget until the Town Meeting approves the 2024 operating budget.

7. Department Head Updates

Municipal Services Department • 00:37:15.

- Dylan Tucker reports completing the NH-DES' 12-month compliance program for bacteria testing for Well #3.
- General spring maintenance and cleaning are occurring.
- A damaged fire hydrant by the Ice Arena was replaced.

Public Works Department • 00:32:24

- Megan Boobar reports that road conditions were assessed after the storm to ensure proper drainage to road-side culverts. She also noted that town roads have been posted for load limits of 6 tons.
- The Highway Department employees have attended training for Road Agent Certifications.
- FEMA status has been granted for the December storm, and reimbursements will be filed. FEMA will cover 75% of the costs to repair damages resulting from the December 2023 storm. It was noted that receiving funds from FEMA can be very lengthy.
- Megan shared plans for tree assessment, explaining that the trees in question will have orange ribbons tied to them. The opinion of experts will be sought to determine the health and safety of the trees.
- Megan provided samples of replacement delineators with reflectors for the Board to view. The Reflectors are not meant to replace the delineators, they will add additional demarcation for the multi-use path. The ground-flush reflectors will be installed along a section of Snows Brook Road for testing when weather conditions allow. The use of the reflectors may reduce the number of upright delineators used. The placement of the ground delineator reflectors was discussed, and the 2' section between the white lines was agreed upon, and white reflectors will be used. They will be installed by Memorial Day weekend.
- Piper Construction is working on numbers for the roadwork scheduled to begin in Spring 2024. A request was made to assess a section on Cascade Ridge where the road has sunk.
- Megan shared that pothole patching with cold-patch will occur once materials are available.
- Megan announced that the new employee, the CDL driver, AJ Boyce, has started working. The trash truck was out of operation for three days, but repairs were made in-house, and it is back in use now.

- The Permit-By-Notification was submitted to NH DES for the lower Transfer Station area. There is no response yet from DES. Some site improvements are under consideration.
- Megan explained that the new aerator in Corcoran Pond above the dam needs an outlet, and she is working with the Resort to connect the aerator. The lights on the bridge also use the same outlet, which cannot carry the load for both items. A separate electric outlet will need to be installed during the summer.
- Bob Fries asked about solutions for clearing the sidewalk on the Valley Rd bridge over Snows Brook. Megan offered that the snow removal equipment had been adjusted but was still ineffective in clearing the sidewalk area. Other solutions are being considered, which may include adjusting the granite curbing.

Administrative Services Department • 00:56:10

- Steve Royer reports the 2023 financial audit is complete, with no deficiencies noted.
- The preparation for the transition to new financial software (BSNA) is ongoing, and everything looks very good for the anticipated transition date in May 2024.

Recreation Department • 01:00:28

- Brooke Wakefield reports plans are on track for summer camp registrations, the hiring of additional summer staff, and facility rentals and programs have been busy.
- The Warrior Group has requested to use the boats at the beginning of May when they visit. Brooke is in discussions with the group and working with the Public Works Dept., but no decision has been made yet.
- Pickleball is very busy, and Brooke shared that the WV School Board is not interested in allowing gym use for recreation programs during school hours. The primary concern is that the students use the restroom near the gym, which allows for public access in an otherwise secured school building.. Rich Rita proposed that the two Boards meet and discuss plans in a joint meeting on April 17 at 2:00 pm.

Public Safety Department • 01:12:20

- Dave Noyes provided activity reports and asked if the Board had any questions.
- Special Olympics events went very well, and it was a busy week with volunteers and athletes.
- New per diem Public Safety Officer Eric Diaz has started employment and is getting field training.
- Dave shared that staff and equipment responded to a structure fire in Thornton and rescue on the Welch and Dickey trail loop in Thornton. Local search and rescue groups are very well staffed and handle most evacuations with backup provided by WV Public Safety, apart from medical concerns.

8. Calendar Review • 01:20:26

- School District Annual Meeting – March 11, 2024, 6 pm @ WVES
- Town Meeting – March 12, 2024, 6 pm @ WVES
- Next Planning Board Meeting – March 14, 2024, 8 am
- Next Regular Selectboard Meeting – March 21, 2024, 3 pm
- Contingency planning for potential continuation of the Town Meeting beyond the scheduled date.

- In April, the Selectboard meetings will be on the first and third Wednesdays at 3:00 pm monthly

9. New Business

Cemetery Request • 01:22:49

- The Benson family requested to reserve two adjacent lots in the cemetery for the rest of the family. The request was unusual as it exceeded the usual reservation policy, and the Selectboard expressed concerns about bending the policy for generational aspects.
- The Selectboard, in adherence to the current Cemetery Regulations, did not grant the request.
- Mark Decoteau will draft a letter or an email for the Board Chair, Rich Rita, to sign.

Donation Clothing at Transfer Station • 01:26:10

- Rich Rita shared complaints about removing a donation clothing bin, of which proceeds supported the local Community Church. Mark Decoteau spoke with Pastor Corey and shared that the Loon Mountain Ministry, which owns the donation bins, confirmed the importance of the revenues for their operations.
- Megan Boobar had previously contacted the organization and was told different information, leading to finding another donation bin service leading to working with a more comprehensive textile and accessory recycling company to reduce waste sent to the landfill.
- The Selectboard discussed the possibility of relocating the bin, the differences between two organizations accepting clothing donations, and the items' condition. The Apparel Impact Group (new bin) will take all textiles regardless of condition. The Community Church (old bin) will accept items suitable for sale in a thrift shop. Staff was instructed to see if the Resort would agree to relocate the old bin to the Town Square area. The new bin would remain at the Transfer Station.

Public Works Department Logo Proposal • 01:31:52

- Megan Boobar proposed creating a logo for the Public Works Department and changing it from a square to a circular design for better representation. She explained that most towns use a circular logo rather than a square logo, which private contractors more commonly use.
- Dylan Tucker offered that if a new logo is generated, it should designate between departments on their respective vehicles, such as the Water/Sewer Department or Municipal Utilities.
- Megan also shared a proposal to engage community members with a "Name the Truck" program for all Public Works vehicles (trash truck, plow trucks, backhoe, etc).
- Brooke Wakefield suggested involving an expert for professional design input and the potential colorization of the logo.

Slide Review for Town Meeting • 01:39:17

- Mark Decoteau shared the proposed slide presentation for the Town Meeting and accepted suggestions from the Selectboard and Moderator.

10. Board Concerns and Directives

200th Anniversary Committee • 01:47:00

- Rich Rita proposed establishing a committee to plan for the Town's 200th anniversary, involving historical, business, and community organizations. The 200th anniversary will occur in 2029.

11. Correspondence

Road Design Concerns • 01:49:02

- The Selectboard received correspondence from Alan Berko expressing concerns about the safety of a road design. The Board acknowledged the objections but noted the ongoing implementation of the design.
- Some Selectboard members felt it was too late to reconsider the design. The Pedestrian Village Study was a comprehensive community-involved plan considering safety measures, multi-use paths, lane markings, and landscaping.
- Observations of pedestrian behavior on roads and multi-use paths were noted, citing that many people walk on the road during winter months to avoid sidewalks. Installing reflectors and delineators for the enhanced safety of pedestrians has provided a physical barrier between vehicles and the multi-use pathway. Signage was discussed to direct pedestrians towards the multi-use path in transition areas.
- The Board believes it will be best to continue with the roadway plan to avoid confusion. The implementation of on-street parking is planned for further discussion and may aid in reducing the average speed of traffic.

Legal and Engineering Updates. • 02:01:16.

- Mark Decoteau reported that attorneys from the engineering firm Black & Veatch were in town and toured the Wastewater Treatment Facility to gain reference and site familiarity for the project, as well as the complexities of federal regulations and EPA permitting.
- Mark also reported a separate meeting with engineers about the septic system planned at the Resort base area.

State Education Funding • 02:05:59.

- Mark Decoteau shared that the State continues to move forward with the education funding as planned, and its outcome is undetermined. There is still uncertainty regarding education funding and its impact on local taxation.

12. Non-Public Discussion. • 02:09:08.

- The Board goes into Non-Public Session under RSA 91-A: 3, II (a) The dismissal, promotion, or compensation of any public employee or the disciplining of such employee, or the investigation of any charges against him or her, **unless** the employee affected (1) has a right to a public meeting, and (2) requests that the meeting be open, in which case the request shall be granted, and (d) Consideration of the acquisition, sale or lease of real or personal property which, if discussed in public, would likely benefit a party or parties whose interests are adverse to those of the general community. Motion was made by Rich Rita and seconded by Bob Fries and followed by a roll call vote as follows: Select Board Chair Rita – aye, Select Board Vice-Chair Fries – aye, Select Board Member Rathgeber – aye and the Board went into Non-Public Session at 5:12 pm. The Board came out of the Non-Public Session at 5:30 pm.

- Upon return to the public session, Rich Rita motioned to seal the minutes, seconded by Wendi Rathgeber, because it was determined that divulgence of this information likely would adversely affect the reputation of any person other than a member of this Board. A unanimous voice vote passed the motion.

13. Adjourn

Wendi Rathgeber motions to adjourn the meeting at 5:35 pm.

Bob Fries: 2nds. A unanimous voice vote carried the motion.

Respectfully Submitted,
Sharon Charron, Executive Assistant