

Worcester Selectboard Regular Meeting Minutes

August 5, 2024 at 6:30 pm

Selectboard members present: Roger Stobridge, Carter Stowell, John Kaeding

Guests present: Jennifer LeStat, Katie Miller, Mike Utton, Brian Powers, Tyler Billingsly, Toni Kaeding, Lincoln Frasca (CVRPC), Chani Waterhouse, Walt Bador, Carly Humke, Ryan Humke

Housekeeping

John called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm

John moved to accept the draft minutes of July 15, 2024 as written with copyedit corrections for clarity, seconded by Carter and unanimously approved.

John moved to accept the draft minutes of the Emergency Selectboard meeting of July 25, 2024 as written, seconded by Roger and unanimously approved.

Additions/Deletions to the agenda - none

Public Input - none

Department Reviews

Town Clerk report

- Jennifer continues work on upcoming elections
- Work continues on the LHMP (Local Hazard Mitigation Plan)

Town Treasurer report

- Katie reported that the town anticipates needing a new line of credit due to the timing and scale of flood repair costs. Estimated damages total approximately \$4.5 Million based on initial engineering estimates.
- John moved that the Town Treasurer move forward with gathering information and options to inform a future decision to secure a line of credit to meet expected obligations due to 2024 flood impacts; seconded by Roger and unanimously approved.
- Town tax bills to be sent tomorrow.

Highway Department report

- Repairs to the town's backhoe were fixed, all under warranty
- Coordinated recovery efforts are yielding road improvements as quickly as possible with all necessary tracking and documentation of labor and materials utilization per location.
- John moved to post a road repairs update to Front Porch Forum following review by Mike and Tyler; seconded by Roger and unanimously approved.

Town Engineer report

- Estimates of damages are subject to change where additional assessments including survey designs and hydraulic studies may be required to move forward.
- Calais Rd permanent repairs to resume by next week
- Upper Hancock - culvert, rock armoring and road rebuild expected to be completed

by end of week

- Hampshire Hill Rd - in the short-term, temporary "band-aid" repairs are underway; a larger culvert is a long-term replacement item
- Eagle Ledge - a culvert that was smashed and filled-in will get a permanent replacement tomorrow with a new 8-foot culvert
- Norton Rd. - plugged, damaged culvert with cracked headwalls will need to be sized/resized and rebuilt in 2025
- West Hill Rd. - sustained significant damage; numerous culverts being worked and 3-foot rock armor added; addition of guardrails will be needed alongside some ditches due to their depth
- Minister Brook Rd. - spot repairs from town garage to about 1/4 mile past Hampshire Hill Rd
- Downs Rd - culverts, rock armoring

New Business

Set Town tax rate

- The Town Tax Rate is \$0.9487
- No change to Veterans exemption
- John moved to accept the Worcester tax rate of \$0.9487; seconded by Roger and unanimously accepted.

Selectboard to review draft Local Hazard Mitigation Plan

- John recapped key dates of the process leading to the current LHMP draft including the first public meeting that was held in-person at Town Hall, and on zoom, on July 18th, 2024. Those minutes are available on the town website.
- As of this meeting the selectboard has seen the draft and had the opportunity to review it.
- Following this meeting, the town of Worcester with the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission will release the Draft 2024 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, available via the town office and posted on the town website.
- Lincoln (CVRPC) responded to a question from Chani about what strategies the plan identifies to mitigate fluvial erosion within the town and how it relates to broader scale planning throughout the region.
- The public comment period for the plan runs from 8/6/24 – 8/19/24

Humke driveway questions

- Ryan described driveway damages that occurred on his and Carly's private property and expressed concerns about costs of repairs and access to emergency services with questions about potential technical and/or financial assistance from local, state or federal programs
- Ryan asked about the state's Municipal Roads Program and the Municipal Roads Grant Permit (MRGP); the USDA's Watershed Flood and Prevention Operation (WFPO); and USDA's Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP)
- John addressed that town policy does not permit the town to perform work on private property and offered information about FEMA grants for people in Washington County via FEMA Individual Assistance as an option for private property owners to explore

- Katie addressed the town's actions taken annually in compliance with MRGP and the Municipal Roads Program, unrelated to private property assistance or repairs
- Ryan reported that while researching WFPO, he'd learned there were no WFPO projects in Vermont. The selectboard and town staff were not familiar with the program.
- John recapped the town's experience with the EWP program from Sept. 2023 through Feb. 2024 at the request of private property owners following July 2023 flooding in Worcester. John explained that the process ended with the town's decision to opt out of the program relating to a variety of factors including administrative burden. Carter mentioned the finding that funding offered through the program, in at least one case, was substantially lower than actual expected costs following due diligence efforts by the town while considering participation, also noted in selectboard meeting minutes at that time.
- Ryan raised two further questions: Would the Town of Worcester consider starting a recovery fund to provide assistance to private property owners? Would the town consider driveway work to the property to improve 911 access?
- John described the means by which the property is currently accessible to fire and medical services with respect to the reach of fire hoses and medical personnel and the condition of roads.

Old Business

- none

Correspondence

- none

Announcements

- The next regularly scheduled Selectboard meeting will be held at the Office Complex on Monday, August 19, 2024 at 6:30 p.m. The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Bills

- Signed as presented

Attest,

Carter Stowell