

Town of Whiting Selectboard Meeting

Unapproved Minutes

Date: Monday, November 28, 2022 @ 5:00 @Whiting Town Office

Attendance: Selectboard Members: Bob Wood, Steve Quenneville & Marcia King,

Asst. Town Clerk: Stacey Freeguard

Visitors: Walter Phelps (Orwell), State Rep. Joe Andriano, Elias Erwin, Jennifer Erwin, Ryan Balfe, Juliette Berry, Marie Berry, Steven Breed, Gary Freeguard, Michael Dame, Clinton Synder, Leslie Snyder, Kim Ehritt, Heather Bouchard

Meeting opened at 5:02 p.m.

Any additions or deletions from agenda: no

Public Comment/Unscheduled Appearances (limited to 15 minutes TOTAL)

Minutes Approved from meeting dated:

Old Business:

New Business: Discussion on the West Road trees.

Eli appreciates the opportunity for them to come to the meeting. Eli & Jen do not dispute the right of way & that the trees needed care. They would like to know why the Board decided to cut the trees down over limbing. The Board received 2 quotes. 1) that it would \$1,800 each time they come out to limb the trees 2) or \$3,600 to cut them down.

Eli compared cutting down the trees instead of limbing to cancer – would you cut out a tumor or end life? The tree company said the trees were dead or dying. Some of the trees were hollow and/or rotted in the middle. In July the Board and Jen discussed a limb that was hanging, and the board reached out to tree companies.

Question: what about other trees on the road? Why were they not removed? The Board decided to focus on that area at that time. They will be cut when they need to be.

Question: was Sunderland the only company contacted? No. They were the only ones to respond. None of the other companies responded.

Question: When allocating public funds, do you have to have multiple bids? No. Sunderland was the only that was contacted who put in a bid.

Question: Why was the bid not put on the agenda? It was only turned in the morning of the meeting to Stacey, so it was added at the meeting.

Eli – Did we talk about notifying the public about road closure? We did not. The Board did not know Sunderland was coming that Wednesday.

Eli – Do we have a tree warden? According to VT State Statute since 2020 towns are required to have one. The town could not find someone to fill the position. Bob said there are a lot of openings, but no one wants to volunteer.

Jen – Open meeting. VT League of Cities and Towns said in their opinion it should have been warned. Also, according to VLCT it can be added to the agenda at the meeting. The board was transparent. All Selectboard meetings are open to the public.

Jen – Feels there may be consequences for cutting their trees and that there was a lack of transparency. Bob - the Board was transparent. All Selectboard meetings are open to the public.

It was said the Selectboard should be compassionate, transparent. Cutting the trees affected the attraction.

Steve Q – The trees are too close to the road. It was noted that one of the damaged trees showed that the plow has hit it.

Leslie – said the town should have notified everyone. That they are being insulted. Don't call it a pissing match. There was no assessment by an arborist. The trees are in a public right of way, but that they are her trees.

Steve Q – plans were that Mike Bertrand was going to take the limbs and grind down the stumps so the town could fix the shoulder. Bob was under the impression Eli had talked to Mike about cleaning it up. Eli & Jen said not to do that at this point & that the tree was in the public right of way. If they had been notified, they would have helped with compensation.

Clinton – does the town plan on ditching his side of the road? Michael B. could put in a culvert to run into the other culvert. Bob said eventually. Leslie would like to see something in writing, they all want to be informed. They do not want their trees touched. They are there for a purpose.

Heather mentioned the State Study on the roads, culverts & ditches that we have to comply with.

Mike Dame – said if we know now, we can prevent this thing from happening again.

Jen- asked for the correct address for the board. 29 South Main St.

Walter – spoke on safety. The other things are beauty, aesthetics. The Selectboard has the responsibility to maintain the trees in the right of way. The right thing to do is in the middle & keeping safe. It's not fun to come home to surprises. Stop using the word transparency. They are being transparent.

Steven B. – Loved the way his property looked. That's why they bought it. He fell in love with the big old trees. He would like to be notified if changes need to be made in his right of way.

Kim – keeps the tree & stumps on her property because they protect it from cars driving across the lawn. She has lost 3-4 feet of her property because the center of the road has shifted since the removal of the triangle.

Leslie – Murray Rd. does not line up at the intersection. Vehicles don't stop at the stop sign & traffic is heavy. Trees need to be discussed because everyone has been here for a long time.

Clinton – Those trees were not rotted. Only one trees was rotted.

Leslie – She has pictures – there were leaves on some of those trees. They were not dead.

Bob – stated that Leslie got limbs trimmed on one of her trees. She firmly said “don't go down that road with me...you weren't there. I had that conversation with Steve”

Eli – They are public lands and should be treated as such.

Juliette – the trees create a tunnel & it still does.

Kim – has lost land because the road has shifted.

Leslie – Kim's property needs protection. Vehicles are using her property.

Steven B. – could there be a discussion with property owners next time?

Website Discussion:

Several residents at the meeting feel that the website needs to be kept.

The town does not have a person to keep up with it. We need someone to run it.

Heather – The town doesn't need to have to keep a website.

Leslie – we do need to keep it.

Stacey – we need to know the cost. People don't want their taxes to go up.

Heather – feels the website is a liability. She is afraid Eli and Jen will sue if there are any mistakes.

Leslie – We need a better website provider.

Jen – need to post for a person to keep up the website.

Jen – asked if voting at town meeting was by Australian ballot or floor vote.

Stacey – Town meeting we vote from the floor & can change the budget right then

Walter – you try to do the best you can, doesn't help to see 20 cars in the yard with pitchforks.

Bob – Selectboard meetings are open meeting, but no one shows up. No one comes unless there is an issue.

Website agenda will be tabled until we get more information.

Find out rates for a website. Jen & Eli might know of someone.

Everyone is offended because they were not notified. If they e-mail the town clerk, she will get the information to the Selectboard.

\$637 to maintain the website last year.

Executive Session: None

Review of mail/emails received: Yes

Orders Approved: Yes

Next scheduled meeting: Due to the Christmas Holiday the next meeting will be December 29, 2022 at the Whiting Town Office.

Bob/Steve – adjourned at 6:22 p.m.