

Town of Ferrisburgh
Selectboard Minutes – Approved
May 5, 2020

Members present: Jim Benoit, Chris Campbell, Clark Hinsdale, Jessica James, Michael “Red” Muir. All members participated electronically using Zoom.

Town officials present: Pam Cousino, town clerk; Laurie Curler, assistant town clerk; Jean Silveira, selectboard minute taker, assistant town clerk, office clerk. All town officials participated electronically using Zoom.

Visitors present: See roll call

1. 6:30 p.m. Call regular meeting to order. Jessica James called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m. by requesting a **roll call** attendance of all participants in the meeting: Pam Cousino, Laurie Curler, Jim Benoit, Red Muir, Chris Campbell, Jessica James, Clark Hinsdale, Andy Kirkaldy, Bill Clark, Chris Kayhart, Jean Richardson, Molly Goodyear.

2. Approve minutes — April 7, 2020, regular meeting.

Jim Benoit made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 21, 2020, regular meeting, as submitted. Red Muir seconded. Jim Benoit, Chris Campbell, Jessica James, and Red Muir voted in favor. Clark Hinsdale was not on the call for this vote. MOTION PASSED.

3. Selectboard new business

(a) Addison Northwest Supervisory District (ANWSD) School Director discussion. Bill Clark, a Ferrisburgh director to the ANWSD, began to address the selectboard when Chris Kayhart, another director asked to speak. He stressed that he and Bill are representatives of the town of Ferrisburgh to the school board, and they would be giving information based on their perceptions of information given to them from the school board, not a report from the board. Bill said this was an important clarification, and the reason for this is the board has not yet developed a public communication for selectboards and the city council in Vergennes. He stated significant shortfalls in state revenues have been forecasted, and the agency of education may have to “claw back” some of the funding anticipated to go to the town for the budget already passed. He noted this would accelerate discussion of what the district structure would look like, including closing schools or significantly reconfiguring how those buildings are used. He said at the last school board meeting they explored a few options with the business manager to save money, without selecting a preferable scenario, which was a different approach from when restructuring was considered earlier.

Chris Kayhart stated the board would be looking at several scenarios very objectively and engaging a consultant to give more scientific feedback on the best use of space in the buildings. He added there would be a real effort to engage with the community. Chris stated there was some talk at the end of the board retreat meeting of doing a straw poll in November, floating some ideas in front of voters to see what preferences people might have, if we can narrow down a couple of ideas; this was his perception of the school board meetings that he has attended, and he has attended all of them. He expressed his opinion by saying he hopes there will be a real discussion on where we are going in the next five years. Again, he stressed his comments are his perception after attending all school board meetings and reading all handouts.

Clark Hinsdale said he could not be more grateful to Bill and Chris for continuing to serve in this capacity because we are in the process of reshaping our region for the next generation. Clark said we need to come up with a post-COVID-19 vision for how we provide quality education and other social benefits such as school lunch. Bill said he and Chris would come back to report to the selectboard as often as they can, and John Stroup, chair of ANWSD, is coming up with strategies for the school board to communicate with selectboards. Chris reiterated that there is communication coming from the board.

4. Selectboard old business

(a) Vergennes–Ferrisburgh Study Committee update. Jessica James said she and Clark Hinsdale had a brief conference call last week with Richard Morin, Jeff Fritz [mayor of Vergennes], and Matt Birong [state representative]. Clark said they talked about Vergennes-Ferrisburgh cooperation opportunities with the plan to move forward to include the municipal and school side sewer, land-use planning as related to the border, and a development plan across community lines. He said Ferrisburgh-Vergennes is a desirable growth area for Vermont, with Vergennes being the “downtown” for the five-town region. Clark said it was a very positive meeting, which included discussion about an economic development corridor. He reached out to Mark Koenig, an alderman who is also a school board member, as requested by Jessica. He talked to him about creating an economic vision for our region. Clark commented that Mark Koenig would join the conference call tomorrow to continue the conversation. Jessica said they also discussed creating a task force and making a plan, channeling the positive energy. She talked about the property at Route 7 and 22A, with the train station, and extra land, saying the committee needs to be united and have the same outlook on what we want the “Gateway to Vergennes” to look like.

(b) Tree cutting in ROW on Button Bay Road. Jessica James announced this agenda item would be tabled until the next regular selectboard meeting on May 19, 2020.

(c) Building maintenance updates.

i. Union Meeting Hall update. Jean Richardson began by saying that at the last selectboard meeting it was mutually agreed that the Friends of the Union Meeting Hall would not do the major grant applications for this year but put them off until next year. Jean read comments from Ashley LaFlam, president of the Friends of the Union Meeting Hall. Jean said she sent out an email letter to the three main funders: Preservation Trust, The Vermont Arts Council Cultural Facilities Grant, and the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation. Then she read Ashley’s email to the selectboard to be entered into the record: “An email was sent out to our supporters as well as posted on Facebook in order to let everyone know about us needing to wait a year to apply for grants during this sensitive time. Our plan going forward is to form a fundraising committee, work on putting together a comprehensive construction plan with multiple estimates, and begin reaching out to individuals and organizations who may be interested in offering programming at the Meeting Hall. Ashley will work with the building and maintenance committee on the construction plan and estimates. Jean and Ashley will be attending a seminar put on by the Preservation Trust of Vermont on May 19th addressing how to fundraise during difficult financial times. We are looking at some fundraising events in the fall, but we will have to see how everything goes. Thank you for your support.” Jean ended by saying Ashley hopes to be at the next meeting.

i.i. Town office building — roof. Red Muir said he has no new information on the roof. He mentioned he would like to get the go ahead from the board to fix the leak in the bell tower when there is a good opportunity. He explained for social distancing, the repair crew would enter the building from the upstairs and not go down to the offices.

(d) Town Officers — review draft Situation Report form. Chris Campbell reviewed the need for the form, saying it is for town officials who take action so the board is not unaware. Discussion began when Clark Hinsdale suggested changing the word “accused” to “other involved parties.” After discussion, Jim Benoit made a motion to adopt the Situation Report as a working document. Clark Hinsdale seconded. All voted in favor. MOTION PASSED.

5. Selectboard general business

(a) Selectboard to appoint John Bull and Pam Cousino as On-site Health Officers for COVID-19.

Jessica James commented these appointments were part of the guidance received from Governor Scott for return to work. After discussion, Jim Benoit made a motion to appoint John Bull and Pam Cousino as On-site Health Officers to ensure compliance with the Executive Order and the Addenda thereto and applicable Agency of Commerce and Community Development Guidance. Red Muir seconded. All voted in favor. MOTION PASSED.

(b) COVID-19 updates. Jessica James said she and Pam Cousino would be on the weekly regional COVID-19 conference call on May 6, 2020.

Pam stated that by the end of the week a plexiglass sneeze guard would be installed on the counter window of the office; a six-inch hole at the bottom would be for people to pass through tax payments. She also said the door to the inner office would be closed, helping to keep employees and the public safe.

Jessica said there was a “Clang and Bang” parade on April 29 through West Ferrisburgh; part of the route included driving by a house to celebrate a birthday.

6. Public comment

There was no public comment.

7. Other business

There was no other business.

8. Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

9. Selectboard to approve or sign

(a) Sign letter requesting 2020 Grand List Abstract with Property Valuation and Review extension. Jessica James read the body of the draft letter, which stated, “Per statutory requirement 32 V.S.A. §4342, the Town of Ferrisburgh listers would like to request a 30 day extension of time (from June 4, 2020 deadline) for the completion and filing of the Ferrisburgh 2020 Grand List Abstract of Individual lists.” Following the reading, Jim Benoit made a motion for Jessica to sign said letter. Chris Campbell seconded. All voted in favor. MOTION PASSED.

(b) Selectboard warrant. Jim Benoit made a motion to approve the selectboard warrant, which details town expenditures, for a total of \$23,013.40. Red Muir seconded. All voted in favor. MOTION PASSED.

10. Adjourn

Jim Benoit made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:33 p.m. Chris Campbell seconded. All voted in favor. MOTION PASSED.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Silveira