

Meeting of the Waterbury Select Board
November 2, 2020
28 North Main Street
Minutes

Present: C. Viens, M. Bard, N. Fish, K. Martin, M. Frier, Select Board; W. Shepeluk, Municipal Manager; K. Petrovic, Secretary.

Public: ORCA Media, M. & T. Baldor, C. Lawrence, S. Currier, C. Ummel, J. Reichert, K. McCracken, D. Green, C. Casey, L. Viens, J. Lumbra, T. Murphy, B. Hartshorn, K. Angelo, P. Pelkey, G. & S. Dillon, L. Gilpin, L. Hardie, S. Fishman, P. Hack, J. Bauer, V. Dwire, T. Gloor, D. Allen, F. Blood, J. Cavalear, M. Frank, A. & C. Backman, T. Drake, M. Minter, L. Scagliotti, E. Hurley, D. Kehlmann, L. Gleason, C. Lewis, E. Ajanma, M. Pelkey, R. Cadwallader-Staub, B. Nicholson, N. Fishman, Roger B, M. Monley, L. LeGeros, Krista, and 5 unidentified callers.

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m.

APPROVE AGENDA

M. Bard requested time on the agenda to discuss the Town's needs for a Health Officer. M. Frier requested time on the agenda to discuss sensitivity and anti-racism training.

M. Bard made a motion to approve the agenda as amended to include additional items. K. Martin seconded the motion; a vote was held and passed unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

K. Martin made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda including the minutes of the October 19th meeting, a liquor license for Farmhouse Flowers LLC operating at 2007 Guptil Road, and the appointment of DRB member Andrew Strinste as alternate for a term ending April 30, 2021 and the appointment of DRB alternate Harry Shepard to a member position for a term ending April 30, 2022. M. Frier seconded the motion; a vote was held and passed unanimously.

PUBLIC

C. Viens read a letter regarding recent comments he made in the media. Please see attached.

Several members of the public commented on the topic.

M. Minter

D. Kehlmann

D. Allen

M. Baldor

E. Hurley

R. Cadwallader-Staub

K. McCracken

M. Pelkey

B. Hartshorn – Duxbury resident

L. LeGeros – Duxbury resident

MANAGERS ITEMS

Capital Fire Mutual Aid – Dispatching Equipment

W. Shepeluk spoke to the Board regarding an opportunity to upgrade the dispatching equipment widely used by first responders in Central Vermont. The current equipment is outdated and a new

system is \$351,232. The proposal is for multiple communities that utilize this service to divide the cost over 10-years at \$2,500 per community. **M. Bard made a motion acknowledging receipt of information regarding Capital Mutual Aid and allow the Chief to act on the Town's behalf. N. Fish seconded the motion; a vote was held and passed unanimously.**

Borrowing to Finance Capital Purchases

W. Shepeluk spoke to the Board about refinancing and borrowing practices based on the current low interest rates. His recommendation to the board is to borrow \$1,366,800.00, the amount allowable based on recent purchase of firetrucks and a roadside mower and consider refinancing at a later date for a longer term. **C. Viens made a motion authorizing Municipal Manager W. Shepeluk to solicit borrowing options in the amount of \$1,366,800. M. Bard seconded the motion; a vote was held and passed unanimously.**

Preliminary 2021 Budget

W. Shepeluk asked the Board to consider their comfort going into 2021 as he works to prepare budgets for the coming year. Several members of the Board expressed a desire to keep the tax rate at .51 cents if possible. There are many variables for Shepeluk to consider in his work including the 2021 Grand List value, Pilot payments from the State, grants, cash on hand among other things.

Town Health Officer

M. Bard spoke to the Board regarding the need for a local Health Officer able to provide guidance regarding COVID related workplace issues. W. Shepeluk stated the State of Vermont regulates local Health Officers and there is nothing in their guidelines related to COVID. Without a local ordinance there is nothing an appointed Health Office can do to enforce or provide guidelines for enforcement. M. Frier, who operates local restaurants invited M. Bard to speak to him at a later date to discuss some of the guidance provided by the State.

Education Resources for Anti-Racism and Sensitivity Training

K. Martin expressed her agreement to explore and implement ongoing education from local partners to better educate the Board on this topic. M. Bard shares similar feelings and asked that Town Department heads also be included. Resources are available from the State and E. Hurley is willing to assist.

M. Bard made a motion to adjourn. C. Viens seconded; a vote was held and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Petrovic, Secretary

Approved on: _____

First, I want you to know my wife and I have been overwhelmed by all the support from our neighbors and even people that do not know us. We have received hundreds of kind and understanding emails, messages, text, phone calls and post. We apologize that we have not responded to all of them but know they have kept us going these last couple of weeks.

As you can imagine LeeAnne did not want me to run for office anytime I have, except that first year as select board. Why? because she figured something would happen like this, I guess she was right. Of course, neither of us ever thought some of our neighbors would ever become the kind of bullies you see in other places, but I guess we should have. It was kind of obvious from that infamous meeting about the banner and again, the bad choice of words on my part but you kind of get distracted when there is someone at the meeting that is bouncing around in his chair with anger and shouting. There was clearly no room for any discussion so now I have the floor, I will tell you in simple words what I was not able to say then. Knowing how things are going everywhere else and knowing this town fairly good I thought; *maybe it might be better to try to include everyone to avoid possible graffiti, destruction and the division that has erupted everywhere else. Why can't this be the town that does not point at differences and we instead include everyone equally?*

If I am not mistaken, there was graffiti, something happened with the banner and there is now big division in our community, imagine that, the three things I was hoping to avoid which is why I tried to make a couple of suggestions. I really find it interesting that when the news report about this vandalism came out there was no mention about how the Select board chair had expressed concerns that this could happen and made suggestions about somehow including everyone equally to avoid it. It makes me worry that perhaps unrest was the goal, well all I will say is that unrest was not cause by me and maybe it could have been avoided.

I know that you have made up your mind about who I am and I get the feeling that was already cast in stone before that “banner” meeting but I want to share something with you. Yes I can build a house from the excavation of the ground up to the roof, I can come exceptionally close on figuring what it will cost for a construction project but I can’t read very good, clearly don’t express myself well, spelling is not perfect and sometimes my handwriting is rough. So why would someone who probably if he went to school now would have been classified as having a learning disability think he was able to run for any kind of public office. The answer is that I really do care about the people of this town and state and think if I stick my neck out I can do some good for those who don’t seem to have a voice now. Any other time, even only a few years ago I probably could have made these same mistakes and people, especially people from this community, would have understood or would have simply asked me, is that what you really meant to say? We would have discussed it and we would have all moved on with our life whether we agreed or not.

I’m sorry that you think that the fact my wife and I were raised in this area and taught by our families that you should treat everyone equally no matter who they are makes us racist and ignorant. If that really is the case thank you for your input, but we prefer to stay that way because we would never ever want to act as judgmental, hurtful or cruel to any other person just because they didn’t completely agree or understand us no matter who they are.

I hope it was worth it because LeeAnne and I can carry on either way after this knowing full well it was not us that did that to this community. We also will feel quite comfortable walking the straight line down the middle and believing that every person matters no matter who they are. There is no need to carry signs, hold rally's, paint things, hang banners, preach to or fight with your neighbors if you just simply practice being a good person to everyone again no matter who they are.

I will not step down from my position as a selectboard member. I have had overwhelming support and been told don't give up, don't give in and don't step down, which has shown me that my work while serving on this board has been valued by those who understandably don't dare to speak out. I feel it is only right to let you all know there are a lot of them out there and they are also watching and hearing what is going on. Those people are the ones I am working for and I have no intention of letting them down. Someone must be their voice and not be afraid to speak for them, even if I have to be the one to take the beating for it. The people behind this movement to get this "dangerous Viens guy" out, are and have been, well represented and it is obvious they know how to use their own voices they don't need me.

I have spent a lot of time thinking about my options, talking and listening to family, friends and all of my supporters out there. I obviously have also listened to you out there that don't support me but there has never been any talking with you, it is obvious you have no interest in that. I have thought about all the hours I have put in at these meetings. I thought about the times I would drive 8 hours back from my camp in Maine to attend a meeting because it was about budgets and turn around to go back the next day. I thought about all of things that have been accomplished during my time on the board. I sure hope that someday someone could take the time and put those things in headlines so when my grandkids google grampa's name they won't think all I am is an ignorant racist. Maybe they will understand that grampa is an old fashioned redneck that accomplished some things. After thinking about how this has affected this community, this board, my family, friends and myself I have decided to step down as Chair. I don't take this step lightly and I hope that my supporters out there understand and I hope the non-supporters will try in the future to be a little kinder to their neighbors. Take the time to ask if you don't understand what someone is saying. Don't just think us people who talk like rednecks are always against you, we just have our own way of talking too.

And for those who will be quick to judge my words AGAIN the word redneck used here means - Working-class person from a rural area AND IT MEANS NOTHING ELSE!

This will be attached to the minutes because no one is going to twist my words again.