Ann called the meeting to order at 6:00. Ann introduced Valerie Desmarais as interim selectboard minutes clerk. Ann asked for changes to the agenda: Ann added changes to the Executive Session, to also appoint a minutes clerk.

Ann asked for public comment:
Jason Bora had concerns about the ditch on Burroughs Road, and also on Flagg Pond Road; the beavers are plugging up the culvert. Bean Pond Road still needs attention. There is also a big washout by Pete and Barbara Miller’s that needs attention. Brent Messier had comments, in early January 2023 (5th to 18th) the pot holes on S. Wheelock Road were so bad that he chose not to attend Town Meeting. He feels that the road conditions are “uncalled for”. Richard Norcross asked where the money is coming from for the Welch Road repairs. Jim reported that this is an application for FEMA money. In an emergency situation with occupants on a Class IV road, FEMA will fund repairs. Mr. Norcross also asked about who is supervising the repair of the roads. Some discussion ensued about the issues of a road commissioner or road supervisor, and the roles and responsibilities of these positions. This discussion was ended when Jim pointed out that the individuals mentioned (road crew) are no longer working for the town.

Mr. Norcross asked about the need for medical cards for the operators that are running town equipment. He wondered if someone got hurt, who is liable? It was noted that Workman's Comp takes care of this. Mr. Norcross also asked about the drainage around the town building, Ann reported that there was a FEMA meeting last Friday, 09. 15.23 and there are 6 weeks to get through a list of what might need to be done around the town. Carol Rossi noted that there is a sump pump connected to the old drainage system around the town hall but the discharge line was broken. There are plans to repair this. Mr. Norcross also asked about the new grader, he stated that the grader was purchased without a town vote. Ann replied that the grader was necessary to repair the roads from the July flooding and to be in good shape for the winter. Ann noted that the grader money came from ARPA monies. The town’s equipment maintenance schedule generated much discussion; Mr. Bora stated that there should be maintenance plans and records indicating the equipment care is being done on a regular basis. He also noted that driving of the big equipment back and forth across town is inefficient. Bobbie Jo Norcross asked about the ARPA monies, are the taxpayers still footing the bill for these equipment expenses? Ann noted that “ARPA money is a gift”, but ultimately it is the town’s money. Ms. Norcross asked if the Selectboard’s intention to use the ARPA money for town hall ADA work had been changed? Ms. Norcross asked about police coverage recently voted. Ann noted they are patrolling S Wheelock Rd. and Wheelock village from the last week in August through October and speeding tickets issued generate fees to the town. It was noted that there is a sheriff’s presence in town now. Ms. Norcross expressed her opinion that the ARPA funds should go to town hall. Ann noted that the expenditure on the new grader could be replenished to the ARPA fund and this will be in the 2024 budget.

Andy noted issues with the town equipment: the equipment expenses: $110K budgeted, $104K has been spent. He enumerated the various repairs; he presented a quote to fix the grader at $9,000 It needs a new steering column, AC is broken and the manifold is cracked and has broken bolts. The town garage was in disarray. Mr. Norcross asked about basic pre-trip maintenance. This has not been being done. Andy noted that there are issues with how things had been being done in the past, but he asserts that the SB are doing their due diligence and are working towards taking better
care of the equipment and the town garage going forward. Glenn Cole wondered about the current Volvo grader being gone for 3 months, why not have the 2nd grader as a backup? Bobbie Jo stressed that we need to take care of what is already in place. Mr. Messier asserted that maintenance is a priority. Jim noted that the maintenance books were very sparsely recorded in the last 2-3 years. It was further noted that the roads have been deteriorating over the last several years. Ann noted that really important issues have been brought up in this discussion and the board is grappling with them. She thanked those present for their questions and concerns and asked stated it was necessary to move forward with the rest of the agenda items.

Exceptions to the Open Meeting Laws: Can a notice be put on the SB meeting agendas to address SB work sessions? The VLCT does not recommend work sessions; Ann noted that there is a “fine line” and that due to the multiple crisis facing the town there have been work sessions and the SB will report back to the townspeople on what the work sessions entail. Andy motioned, Jim seconded, a motion to add to SB agendas that there are selectboard work sessions and that the SB will apprise the citizens of the content, so moved.

Revise Job Description for Road Commissioner, a voluntary position, amended 4/13/2020. Equipment maintenance and guidance to the crew are priority. Road Commissioner should be stopping at the garage and making sure it is in good order, as well as recording the maintenance. There should be time allotted every week for preventative maintenance. Changing filters etc., should be written on the filter, and in the notebook. Duties: pass along road complaints to crew and Selectboard, check and supervise maintenance, supervise and guide crew. Ann motioned, Jim seconded, so moved.

Vote to Appoint a Road Commissioner: Jim made a motion to appoint Glenn Cole, second by Andy. Ann asked if Mr. Cole was able and willing and he replied that he is. Ann wondered about a “work around “ for the dual positions of road commissioner and road worker, since Mr. Cole has been hired as a temp. How can a conflict of interest situation be avoided? Bobbie Jo wondered about this being a position to volunteer, since previously it had also been part of the Road Supervisor’s responsibilities; this is not a steady job. Ann suggested that as long as Mr. Cole did not sign his own check or evaluate his work as a temporary employee; it should be fine. Carol Rossi noted that Mr. Cole has served the town for decades, and that ultimately the conversation is about ethics, which is not an issue for Mr. Cole. Mr. Cole reiterated that he is able and willing to oversee the maintenance; Bobbie Jo asked if the SB would be there to “back up” Mr. Cole as he provided guidance and supervision to the town road crew; the SB agreed that they will support Mr. Cole. Bobbie Jo also wondered if there needs to be a line item on the budget to compensate Mr. Cole; Ann noted that there are only a few months until the budget is worked on, and Mr. Cole can see how things work out.

Ann asked about the highway supervisor position and road worker position; the highway supervisor is not going to be hired, so this is tabled. Job description for the road worker is in place, title of heavy equipment operator can be added. Bobbie Jo asked about having 2 road workers and no supervisor – who decides what the work plans for the week are? Mr. Cole suggested that we wait until we see who applies and what their skills are, and decide about the work flow and assignments based on the prospects’ qualifications.

Adopt Agreement for Depositing Excess Roadside Excavation: this is an agreement that citizens can sign if they want the fill from ditching. This is a “hold harmless” agreement relieving the town of liability. Andy motioned, Jim seconded, motion carried. Noting the draft agreement discussed at the 8/30 meeting will be used. Signature line should be Road Commissioner.

Create Bid for FEMA work: Andy noted that based on his visit with the FEMA site inspector (see below) more ditching is not applicable for the FEMA requests as the work needed is routine maintenance, and no ditching appears to be needed. Mr. Cole asked about FEMA paying for new culverts, Andy noted that this is an “in kind” expense, and not necessary.
Consider Revisions to Road Crew Job Ad: A draft was discussed, with the suggestion to add tanker endorsement. Carol asked about manual transmission. Do we want to add heavy equipment operator to the description? Bobbie Jo wondered if there had been any applications, Andy stated that there is interest; but no applications have been received. Revised job posting is to run in the Caledonia Record daily for a week, also to be posted on Front Porch Forum and the job board on VT Local Roads ASAP.

FEMA update: Ann summarized: Andy, Dean Davis (departing road crew member) and she met on 9/11 and reviewed photos to see what repair projects would fit the $3800 FEMA baseline per project; the project sites have very strict delineation including longitude and latitude information. On 9/15 Ann, Andy and Jim met with the FEMA staff and then Andy accompanied the FEMA site inspectors to see the areas where the projects have not been completed. There is a “Category Z” which is administrator work: the townspeople admin team’s times are valued and reimbursed at the Vermont volunteer rate of $28.14 per hour. Cat Z time is limited to a % of the Project Cost requests. It is requested of and comes back to the town from the State. The town can reimburse the Cat Z workers or apply the funds to the town's share of project costs.

FEMA writes the projects with information from the town. If approved by FEMA, FEMA pays 75% of the project costs. The remaining 25% is split between town and state (17.5% is Wheelock’s share of the expense). The deadline to complete the application is 11/14/23. FEMA staff will meet with the town every week or 2 to document progress and provide support. Re: Class IV Roads, Andy noted that since there is a town policy on these roads, FEMA will help. There is a distinction between emergency and “permanent fix” categories and the situation on Kenniston Hill/Welch was an emergency. FEMA needs more info on the GPS coordinates, Dean is willing to help the town in any way and will get this data for us. FEMA will need information on how culverts were cleaned out from the Fire Department.

Vote on moving SB mails and archiving SB emails: Ann explained TownWeb, our website host, currently charges $216.72 annually to provide domain name email addresses for 3 selectboard members and archiving the emails. This is helpful if there is a FOI request, it is easier to comply. Currently TownWeb outsources this service to Rackspace, but TownWeb is not pleased with their service. TownWeb offered a choice of moving the email hosting and archiving to Google ($648 annually), or only the email hosting, no archiving to Google ($324 annually), or inviting the town to explore another service with TownWeb not involved. Andy motioned, Ann seconded a motion to move to Google with archiving. Motion carried.

Cemetery Task Force: Patti Baker and Liz Muckerman: There is a bi-annual grant of $750 (now $1000) from VOCA (Vt Old cemetery Association), which requires a 2 to 1 match. With our previous grant gravel fill was brought in to level up sunken gravesites and re-set stones. There are hundreds of stones that need resetting. Over 100 of the smaller stones that can be managed by 1 person were taken care of over the last year. The Cemetery Task Force would like to get tools that make moving the heavier stones for upkeep easier, and more gravel and professional care, since so far the sexton has not expressed interest to do any of the work budgeted this year. There are good resources to use the tools properly and safely. Can the board approve the application? Andy made a motion to approve this request, second by Jim. Ann had a question about the timing and does the town need to submit the grant? Ms. Muckerman noted that there are efforts underway to make the transition to cemetery upkeep more self-sustaining through the town budget vs. relying on volunteers. Ms. Muckerman will send the grant draft to Ann for submission. All in favor – so moved. It was noted how helpful Jason Bora has been to the Cemetery Task Force efforts.

Jim made a motion to accept SB meeting minutes of 08/15 and 08/30; Andy seconded, so moved.

Jim made a motion to sign the monthly warrants, Andy seconded, so moved.

Regarding next meetings, the next ones will be Tues. Oct. 10 and Tuesday Oct. 17.

Andy made a motion to go into executive session for the purpose of appointing an interim town clerk / treasurer and a minutes clerk, Jim seconded, executive session commenced at 7:44.
Motion by Andy, second by Jim, SB voted unanimously to come out of Exec Session at 8:15pm. In open session, at 8:16pm, motion by Andy, seconded by Jim, SB voted unanimously to appoint Carol Rossi as town clerk/treasurer to serve until the next Town Meeting, and to appoint Valerie Desmarais as minutes clerk to the selectboard.

Jim made a motion, Andy seconded, to adjourn. Voted unanimously at 8:16pm.

Submitted by Valerie Desmarais, trial minutes clerk

Signatures

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