

**TOWN OF STAMFORD
SELECTBOARD MEETING
July 16, 2020
(UNAPPROVED)**

Present: Selectboard: Nancy L. Bushika, Chair, Christopher Warren, Carol A. Fachini and Michael G. Denault.
Daniel J. Potvin was not present

Visitors: Theresa Denault.
William Levine, Emergency Management Director.
Lori Shepard, Selectboard Secretary.

Nancy Bushika called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. She led the Pledge of Allegiance and welcomed everyone. She read a statement with procedural rules for the meeting. Several correspondence items were added to the agenda. There were no changes to its order.

MINUTES

MOTION by Mike Denault to accept the regular meeting minutes of July 2, 2020 as written. SECONDED by Chris Warren. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

SELECTBOARD ORDERS

The Selectboard reviewed and approved the following orders:

WARRANT #29 \$ 7,857.90 payroll

WARRANT #30 \$61,811.96 accounts payable

ROAD CONDITIONS

1. Nancy Bushika spoke to Dave Tatro earlier today. Everything is going fine and the highway crew is doing their normal summer work.
2. Dave Tatro will wait until Davey Tree Service completes their tree trimming work and if there are problems that remain, the Selectboard can write a letter at that time.

RECYCLING

Nothing to report.

MEETING WITH SCHOOL DIRECTORS

1. Nancy Bushika felt the meeting went well. The townspeople should feel more comfortable knowing that the Selectboard passed a motion not to make any decisions concerning the ownership or authority of the school building and grounds until after the matter could be discussed with the townspeople at a town meeting.
2. Mike Denault mentioned that some schools that have closed are mandated by the state to return money that they have received.

DOG LICENSING DEADLINE

The Vermont League of Cities and Towns stated that the Governor's emergency declaration states that any license that expires during the declared state of emergency is automatically valid for 90 days after the declaration ends. The declaration was just extended to August 15th. The board will ask VLCT if the town's liability is also waived if there is a dog bite incident involving a dog without a rabies vaccination. It is in the best interests of our residents to have their dogs vaccinated and not let the rabies shots expire. A letter will be sent to all dog owners to encourage them to license their dogs with the town.

GOVERNOR'S STAY HOME/STAY SAFE ORDER

1. Nancy Bushika noted that the emergency declaration has allowed for many changes. The timetables normally in effect requiring public hearings to be held within 45 days have been temporarily lifted. This would allow the

Selectboard's public hearing of the town's proposed Zoning Bylaws to be postponed beyond the normal 45 day requirement until an open meeting can be held safely.

2. The Governor's extension also affects the closure of the town office. Lori Shepard and Theresa Denault are working on alternating days while the office continues to remain closed in compliance with the Governor's order. The increase in absentee ballot requests has set them back. Theresa Denault is willing to come in more often. Mike Denault acknowledged that the office is only closed because of the state mandate and the staff is still working hard. The town clerk shared the results of the Secretary of State's survey of the impact of the coronavirus on town offices: 36 town offices (15%) are open for regular service, 62 offices (27%) are closed to the public completely and are responding to requests only by phone, mail and email, and 135 offices (58%), like Stamford, are not open to the public but are scheduling appointments for attorneys and work that cannot be completed otherwise.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Bill Levine discussed reduced visibility at intersections with the board after a recent motor vehicle accident. They reviewed many areas in town where shrubs and overgrown brush could be obstructing the view of a vehicle pulling out of an intersection. The board will consult with Dave Tatro to consider all intersections with the hope of eliminating these potentially hazardous areas. The Selectboard will write letters to property owners who may not realize that trimming their shrubs could prevent motor vehicle accidents.

EDUCATION TAX RATES

The Selectboard received notice that the Agency of Education has set the school tax rates. The homestead rate is 1.4628. Last year's rate was 1.3106. The non-homestead rate is 1.7168. Last year's rate was 1.5678. The increase is significant and may have a large impact on this year's taxes.

2020 CENSUS

The census representative for Bennington County advised that Stamford's response rate to date is 65.7%, which is the highest in Bennington County. Anyone who has not yet responded is encouraged to get their survey completed and turned in.

TOWN HEALTH OFFICER

Eunice Rice was appointed Health Officer by the Vermont Department of Health as of April 1, 2020 for a three-year term.

OFFER TO DONATE PROPERTY

The Selectboard received a letter from a resident offering to donate their property to the town. The parcel is 0.91 acre and was discovered as part of the town-wide mapping project and added to the grand list this year. The board will contact the Road Commissioner and will consider whether this land could be useful to the town before making any decision.

BENNINGTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

1. Mike Denault has been busy and has not talked to the sheriff's office yet.
2. The sheriff's office suggested setting up a speed cart on Mill Road. The Selectboard felt it was a good idea.
3. Mike Denault indicated that another camp on Risky Ranch Road was broken into. Nancy Bushika suggested the sheriff could patrol the back roads. Mike Denault noted that Pownal allows ATVs on their back roads and have not had any problems. In Readsboro ATVs and side-by-sides are allowed on the blacktop roads; they can drive right to the gas station. Mike Denault thought Stamford could benefit from allowing more ATV use on our back roads. Their presence would deter vandalism and dumping and Stamford could make money by requiring a permit. Riders would need to register their vehicles and must have insurance. The clubs that support ATV riding do a great job mandating compliance and encouraging responsible driving.

OFFER TO PURCHASE THE TOWN'S INTEREST IN PROPERTY SOLD AT TAX SALE

The Selectboard received a letter offering to purchase the town's interest in the redemption period for a 5.5 acre parcel that went up for tax sale last October. Attorney Kevin O'Toole was contacted to calculate the appropriate fee of \$1,374.82 which was included with the letter.

MOTION by Nancy Bushika to accept the offer from Rev. Robert and Sarah Bellofatto to purchase the town's interest in the redemption period. SECONDED by Chris Warren. All in favor. Motion APPROVED.

SELECTBOARD MEETINGS

Rich Cristofolini talked Nico Dicristofaro about improving the sound quality for people calling in to meetings. He stated that technology can only do so much. A laptop with speakers would be a little better than the iPad which is currently used, but he felt a speaking station would have to be set up and everyone would have to walk up to the laptop to speak in order for callers to hear them. It is too late to pull together for the next joint meeting with School Directors and the classroom or gym might not be available for future meetings once school starts. The board feels they are doing the best they can under the circumstances.

MOTION by Mike Denault to adjourn. SECONDED by Carol Fachini. All in favor. Motion APPROVED. The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Carol A. Fachini
Clerk

CAF/las

REMINDERS

1. The primary election will be held on Tuesday, August 11, 2020 at the Stamford Elementary School Hall from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Voters are encouraged to vote by absentee ballot. There will be changes in how the election is run to accommodate the ACCD coronavirus safety guidelines such as a separate entrance and exit and six-foot distancing. Voting booths will be disinfected in between voters. More information will be available as the election draws nearer.
2. Applications for addition to the checklist will be accepted at the town office. Forms can be obtained by calling the town office at (802) 694-1361 and can be returned by mail or by appointment.
3. Absentee ballots will be available until 12:00 p.m. on Friday, August 7, 2020. Please call the town office at 802-694-1361.
4. Two free Home Hazardous Waste Collection Days will be held, the first on Saturday, August 8, 2020 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Mt. Anthony Union Middle School in Bennington, VT and the second on September 12, 2020 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Dorset School in Dorset, VT.
5. The town office continues to be closed in accordance with the Governor's order to slow the spread of COVID-19, but we are open by appointment and are willing to assist our residents by email, regular mail, or telephone.
6. Please visit the town's official website: townofstamfordvermont.org.