

**Town of Wheelock  
Select Board Minutes**

Draft for distribution - Tuesday, June 7, 2022, 6pm  
In person at Town Hall

**Present:** Ann Lawless (chair), Jim Blackbird, Mike Richardson

Several guests are present including Mark Buonanno (highway supervisor), Bobbie Jo Norcross, Richard Norcross, Russell Poulin, Carol Rossi, Karen Geraghty (NCIC), Wendy Bora, Brian Greenwood, Vanessa Seguin (Town Clerk); Via Zoom Linda (?).

6:05 pm: Chair called the meeting to order.

**Changes or additions to the agenda:** After Carol's presentation, move #7 up to discuss ADA grant plans while Karen is here. Add to agenda: Review any architect bids. Move Town Meeting warning up.

Thank you to volunteers at the cemetery workday on May 21<sup>st</sup> at the Drown Cemetery who did an awesome job; Paul Tomasi, C.J. Scott, Liz Muckerman and two others (?). Also, thanks to those who set out flags for Memorial Day; Patti Baker and Liz Muckerman. Patti is also researching all of the gravestones in the Village Cemetery to determine all who should have markers. The Wheelock Community Initiative thanks the SB for the use of the town hall for the town yard sale.

**Roads:**

1. Report of Highway Supervisor Mark Buonanno. The road crew has been making more progress on the roads; ditching and clearing out culverts. MB raises the topic of the previously discussed pole shed to store the loader at the gravel pit. He anticipates the cost of this structure should be somewhere between \$5-\$10k. JB states they have the 8x8's from the pavilion – so the town won't have to purchase those. The anticipated cost would be for materials and an electrician to bring power over from the transfer station. AL agrees it is always a good idea to protect the investment of equipment. She also wonders where the money would come from. JB asks if ARPA money could be used; VS clarifies there is no restriction on ARPA money, at this time. MR agrees the building makes a lot of sense, saving wear and tear on the equipment. MB offers to make up 2 estimates of what the building will cost at current inflated prices – to include doors and retaining blocks to hold back erosion behind the structure. AL makes a motion in support of plans to develop a shed for the loader, near the sandpile. JB seconds the motion. Voted unanimously.

MB is wondering if the Municipal Roads Grant could be used to fund repairs to Minister Hill Road; this is currently a class 3 road. To make the road plowable/class 4 would require a lot of work/money. However, dealing with the erosion which is making the road impassable could be accomplished with the proposed grant money. MB will be meeting with Doug Morton on the 14th to discuss the qualifying projects for this grant. Wendy states the road doesn't need to be plowable in the winter as it drifts a lot. Until the past four years it had been maintained so it was passable during the non-winter months. MR makes a motion to maintain the road in the way MB has

suggested. JB seconds the motion. Voted unanimously. MB asks if Doug does not approve this project for the grant for that stretch of the road, does the town want to put time and effort into the road. JB says start with dense grade and see where we are at; something must be done. VS clarifies; if project is not grant funded, the dense grade will come out of the gravel budget? JB asks how much gravel is left. MB there is currently 17 loads in the gravel pit, and 24 remaining of the 30 additional loads waiting at Simpsons to be picked up. JB asks VS how much is left in the staymat budget: \$4,900 of the \$8200 has been used. JB suggests some of this could be used on this project. AL states there is also \$7,400 remaining from a road grant from last year which could be used for this project.

AL has checked with Shauna Clifford on the South Wheelock Road grant. It hasn't been awarded yet, but she is pretty sure it is going to happen; suggests they might want to move forward with planning. MB is wondering about availability of guardrail installation contractors.

MB states the Sulfur Spring Cemetery Rd. can be difficult and unsafe for the plow truck to turn around. He asks if the turnaround could be changed so truck was plowing straight up and then turning around, making it much safer. AL states the timing of this request is good as there is a bid out to have the cemeteries surveyed. 7:30 MB leaves.

2. Vote to submit letter of intent to apply to FY 2023 Municipal Roads Grant in Aid program. The initial offer is \$11,000, then our 20% match. \$2,750. So, we could plan for a \$13,750 project to address the neediest road sections in our Road Erosion Inventory. No vote was made.

### **Visitors:**

Carol Rossi: Carol thanks the SB for letting her come. She is here to ask that the board take action on the town hall accessibility project based on the votes of the people on town meeting day. She wants to clear up what she feels is a terrible misinterpretation of the votes. On town meeting day 155 people voted on the articles related to the accessibility project there were 13 left blank, so that means only 142 voters. Of those, 56 indicated they preferred option 1; 56 indicated they preferred option 2. This means 112 cast a positive vote either option 1 or 2, leaving 30 no votes. Carol interprets this information as there is a majority of the voters who want a larger town hall project. Carol is asking the SB to pass a motion tonight. AL comments. She first thanks Carol for her comments. She states she herself voted yes for both article 1 and 2, because she didn't want either of them to go down. The SB spent a lot of time try to figure out how to write the articles for Australian Ballot, it was very challenging. All votes had to be yes/no, we could not ask for an either/or and we couldn't have any discussion. She worked hard on both town hall committees and is sad and disappointed. But also feels the ship has sailed. The listening session and public hearing demonstrated there is just not sufficient support for the larger projects. Carol states she is here to try to bring the SB back because there was a huge loud immediate outcry that this vote failed – and it did not. The SB got information that they did not have before, 112 votes positive votes; 85 people who wanted construction documents in. Carol has chosen the smaller option. BJN asks how many times we are going to go around about this. Carol says this is the first time the voters have demonstrated with positive votes for a larger project. Carol asks the SB to warn a special town meeting for August 9<sup>th</sup> to hold an Australian Ballot vote to authorize the issue of bonds for notes for the town of Wheelock in an amount not to exceed \$1,100,000, subject to reduction from and

federal grant-in-aid, for the purpose of rehabilitation of the Wheelock Town Hall, the estimated cost of such improvements being \$1,000,000. She focused on this smaller project because SB and listers have been working for years to prepare for this. We have had \$30,000 in the budget approved each year that can be used for the loan. Just this year during their annual reassessments the listers have added to the grand list property values which will cover an additional \$20,000 in additional loan payments, with no increase in the tax rate. Action on the request is time sensitive; if the vote fails on August 9<sup>th</sup> there can be another vote in November. AL thanks Carol for her request. AL suggest before the SB takes action on this request; they ask Karen G. about the Accessibility Modification Planning Grant.

Karen thanks the SB for inviting her back. The Accessibility Modification grant would be for up to \$100,000. Carol's request and the DOJ's accessibility requirements are on two different tracks. The grant proposal is due in September. She suggests; with the basic list of modifications suggested by the DOJ, that would bring the building into compliance, convene a group consisting of someone from Historic Preservation, an architect of the town's choosing, the Fire Marshal and someone from the DOJ. Have a meeting and go through and outline the basic requirements to bring the building up to accessibility modifications now. Essentially right now the town is operating illegally, against federal law. The DOJ has been very understanding, but there may come a time when the town loses control of the direction of the modification process. Karen feels there are two paths being discussed; one which requires a much more immediate solution – like within the next 9 months. The other speaks of the future to the town and needs more consideration, the voting bears more scrutiny and discussion for the town. Karen feels the town is not going to get to the solution the DOJ requires through Carol's plan, though accessibility modification would be achieved through a larger plan as it is required. She does not think that right now with where the community is in terms of its view of the larger picture, the town can't hold hostage the accessibility modifications that need to happen now in order to get to that larger plan. Karen suggests before even applying for the grant, convene the group of professionals and walk through the building with the DOJ and ask what is minimally needed to meet requirements and codes. Once all those modifications are in place the town can take time to look at and develop the larger picture for the future of Wheelock. However, right now the town is under a significant timeline to meet the DOJ's accessibility requirements. Carol asks for clarification – all the DOJ is requiring is a bond vote this year; so let's just plan a vote. Karen says her understanding was there was a checklist with a deadline, which has gone by. Requirements for a bond vote would be relative to voters approval of a larger project. VS reads the DOJ letter. MR asks if anyone is going to make a motion to have a bond vote. AL and JB state no they are not. MR thanks Carol for her efforts, he asks her to understand the SB needs to focus on the accessibility requirements. Carol asks if the SB has a report from Department of Public Safety as to the requirement to replace the door nearest the ramp. She also is asking for assurance there will be permits pulled for all aspects for the proposed modifications. The SB assures her permits are required by law. Carol states she is devastated the SB is throwing away 15 years of work.

AL asks if there were any bids for an architect; VS states there were none submitted. Karen feels the bid request was not specific enough. Also, the bid request was not sent to Bill Gallup (he was not interested in being the project manager). The concern is that an architect will need to also be the project manager. Richard states this is the responsibility of the inspectors; project managers get \$100,000+.

Bids will include the oversight/supervision of each contractor, and each aspect of the project is inspected as this is a commercial building. MR is concerned if the town opts to apply for the accessibility grant the project will be pushed out another year, due to scheduling contractors. JB recalls that last meeting the SB voted to use ARPA money to pay for the ADA modifications. MR asks if the town can get construction bids before applying for the grant. Karen states construction bids can't be posted until the grant is approved. Karen states there is a waiver to recover preapproval costs. Next steps: Hire architect to draw design to meet DOJ requirements, using the \$16,500 set aside for construction documents. Convene meeting of professionals (architect, Fire Marshal, Division for Historic Preservation, someone from the DOJ). MR makes a motion to engage Mr. Gallup to develop a plan for the lift and the bathroom. JB seconds the motion. AL confirms with Karen that the architect should come up with a plan. Voted unanimously.

7:40 JB states it is late – can we just adjourn until next month? AL lets do the essential things.

**Business:**

3. Procedure for hiring temporary workers. VS states VLTC requires drug testing. If one has a medical card for their CDL, they have had drug testing. Tabled.
4. Vote to add Damon Smith to list of temp employees. He needs to fill out application paperwork. VS noted he has not done this.
5. VOCA grant; vote to apply for funds to assist with brush hogging and filling in sunken graves at W Wheelock Cemetery. MR makes a motion to apply for funds from VOCA to assist with the brush hogging and fill in sunken graves in West Wheelock Cemetery. JB seconds the motion. Voted unanimously.
6. Vote on draft bid request for W Wheelock Cemetery. Tabled.
7. Any other grants updates. None discussed.
8. Vote on signing Passumpsic Bank loan paperwork (to be provided at meeting). AL makes a motion to sign the Passumpsic Bank loan paperwork. JB seconds the motion. Voted unanimously.
9. Approve warning for special town meeting. AL clarifies the reason the special town meeting is needed is to repurpose the money in the GarageReserve Fund for the current garage reading the draft warning:

ARTICLE 1. Shall the voters of the Town of Wheelock repurpose the existing Town Garage Reserve Fund, which was originally established to address the needs for a town garage, to now be used for the broader purposes of both funding upgrades and repairs to the existing town garage and needs for a future garage?

OR

ARTICLE 1. Shall the voters of the Town of Wheelock re-appropriate an amount not to exceed \$55,000 from the Town Garage Reserve Fund to fund repairs and upgrades to the existing town garage?

ARTICLE 2. Shall the voters of the Town of Wheelock re-appropriate any remaining funds in the Town Garage Reserve Fund, thus closing this fund, by adding the such remaining funds to the Equipment Reserve Fund?

MR makes a motion that we utilize option number two for Article 1 and include Article 2 on a warrant for a special town meeting to be held on Monday July 11<sup>th</sup>. AL seconds the motion. Voted unanimously.

10. Discussion: National Flood Insurance Program - tabled

11. Accept unlicensed dogs list as required by 20 VSA Sec 3621. JB makes a motion to accept the unlicensed dog list. AL seconds the motion. Voted unanimously.

12. Appointments, if any, Communications Union District alternate, Planning Commission. JB makes a motion to appoint Eileen Boland as Communications Union District alternate. MR seconds the motion. Voted unanimously.

Richard raises the concern that the listers are just now adding to the grand list simply to support the town hall project agenda, wondering why these property upgrades weren't found previously. JB explains that is a normal occurrence as there is no zoning, thus no notification of improvements or building within the town.

**Administrative:**

13. Approve monthly financial reports. MR makes a motion to adopt the monthly financial reports. AL seconds. Voted unanimously.

14. Adopt minutes of prior meetings 4/21 ARPA Committee 5/3 Selectboard 5/19 Selectboard. MR makes a motion to adopt the minutes of prior meetings. AL seconds. Voted unanimously.

**Correspondence:**

VMERS (retirement program) rate increase notification

Carol Rossi letter of 6/3/2022

**Adjourn:**

8:07 pm JB makes a motion to adjourn. AL seconds. Voted unanimously.

The SB members decide unanimously to continue the meeting to open the cemetery survey bids. Cemetery survey bids: from Truline - \$3200 for Sulfur Springs and \$3000 for Village cemetery. Both surveys need to be done. AL makes a motion to accept both Truline bids. JB seconds. Voted unanimously.

8:09 pm JB makes a motion to adjourn. MR seconds. Voted unanimously.

Selectboard signatures:

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