

**Town of Wheelock
Select Board Minutes**

Tuesday, September 6, 2022, 6pm
Draft for distribution

In person and vi Zoom at Town Hall

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

Several guests are present, including: Mark Buonanno (highway supervisor), Enid Ellis, Eileen Boland, Bobbi Jo Norcross, Richard Norcross, Allen Quimby, Kim Hathaway, Tanya Brewer, Bradley Brewer; via Zoom: Ryan Edwards (architect) and Christa Shute (Director, NEK Broadband).

6:03 pm: AL, chair, called the meeting to order.

Changes or additions to the agenda: Add:

3.A Alan Quimby, class 4 road request; Correspondence: VLCT request to designate a voting delegate; Administrative: Request to amend 8/2 minutes from Karen Geraghty

Roads:

1. Mark Buonanno states the road crew has begun the planned projects with the excavator, trying to get as much work done as possible while they have the equipment. The road crew plans to possibly work five ten-hour days in the coming weeks, to make the most of the equipment rental. Mark is pleased with the crew's efforts so far, noting several town members have complimented their results. The road crew will be trading work with the Sheffield Road crew, ditching on Vertical Mile for setting a culvert on Allard Hill. AL asks about time constraints on grant work. Mark confirms the work has been completed before the 9/15 deadline, which allowed them to not have to hydroseed. He is in hopes to be able to grade several roads one more time before winter.

AQ asks the SB to address the condition of his class 4 road (Blakely), he states his class 4 road is unsafe. AL apologizes that his initial request in May did not make the SB meeting agenda. AQ states the road has deteriorated tremendously, to the degree it is causing damage to vehicles. He states the road is impassable for his motorcycle and some vehicles. He has noticed other towns nearby maintain their class 4 roads much nicer; ditches are done, surfaces are smoother. JB asks which towns and class 4 roads, AQ mentions Victory and Newark. JB states the town's responsibility on class 4 roads is maintaining bridges and culverts. Several individuals join in on the debate of state statue – AL reminds everyone to please raise their hand to get the Chair's attention, and direct questions/comments to the SB. KH states it is to the best of her knowledge that it is not a state regulation but a decision the town make for themselves based on a recommendation by the League of Villages and Towns, which a non-government organization. AL states this is incorrect – JB is correct regarding the town's responsibility for roads; a town can change the status of a road either up or down. KH

states in years past the roads were graded at least once a year. MR states if the SB were to want to change a road's grade, they would want to bring it to the voters, due to the cost. AL agrees. JB states the town can't afford the cost of upgrading the class 4 roads. AQ asks if the culvert could be replaced on his road. MR states once the grant work is completed, they hope to have the time to get to some ditching of culverts, including that on Blakely, before they must return the equipment. KH asks about the damaged culvert on Kenniston Hill; MR assures her this is also on the docket by the end of September. RN asks if improving the town roads might raise the property value, thus the tax base. JB states this would be very expensive and not recouped with potential increase in property value. TB gives a brief explanation of the property values/grading process; JB responds that the increase in value wouldn't offset the cost for the town. KH expresses her frustration in being a class 4 taxpayer and getting no services, she agrees with AQ that the issues on the class 4 roads is matter of safety. AL thanks everyone for their comments but is not sure what the SB can do at this point to improve the situation; she feels it time to move on to the next item on the agenda. EE asks has the town's policy changed over the years in regards to class 4 roads. JB clarifies this is a state statute that hasn't been changed, and most likely will not be changed.

2. Update – no action needed - VTrans FY23GA agreement (\$130,516) is signed. Project (total \$163,145) is ditching, drainage, guardrails on S Wheelock Rd between Ballfield & Tim's sled shop. This has to be completed by 12/25/2024; though the current plan is the project will be done next summer.

3. Kim Hathaway, Old Welch Rd off Kenniston Hill, Class 4, requests loggers using this road get permits so town can prevent road damage. At 7:40 KH requests the SB return to her skipped item on the agenda. She communicates her frustration with what she feels to be the SB's lack of respect and disregard of her time and concerns. The SB apologizes for somehow skipping over her agenda item. KH states she called three weeks ago with her concern regarding log trucks on her road. She was told she would be added to the agenda. She stresses that this is a matter of safety – emergency vehicles need to be able to get to everyone. KH states the trucks and heavy equipment have started traveling her road this week, and the road is already a mess. She is requesting the town require these heavy trucks be bonded, so the damage caused by their travel is does not become the burden of those living on the class 4 roads. AL responds she had reviewed town policy, as well as researching on how other towns do things. The town does have a policy for granting approval for a fleet permit under VSA title 23, section 400A; it is essentially a municipal excess weight permit. The town doesn't require the permit, though some truckers sign it. JB states the town is at the mercy of the truckers. AL also contacted VLCT, they have an information sheet with a sample document for restricting the use of town highways. JB states the town used to make truckers put up bonds but stopped doing it. AQ asks if the SB could make a motion to require bonds for trucks or look into that. AL looks at other town's policies and doesn't see any other town having a policy, nor anything stating the town can't have a bonding policy. KH asks the SB to make a motion to require bonding, immediately, to protect the roads that the landowners pay for, and not make the decision wait until the next SB meeting. MR states this issue needs to

be brought to the town's attorney. AL makes a motion to contact the town's attorney about adopting a regulation to restrict the use of town's highways for very heavy vehicles and also requiring a bond from the vehicle owners. JB seconds the motion. KH points out the current trucking company is a landowner thus can't be restricted from using the road, she simply wants all heavy trucks to be bonded to cover damages to the road. Unanimously voted. AL to follow up with attorney.

4. Adopt revised Driveway Policy. SB opts to table the topic to allow for more discussion and consideration.

Business:

5. Error and Omissions from the Listers regarding Barb McCarty, to be signed by the SB. The listers request that the SB pass a motion to approve the following corrections be made to the grand list for 2022: Barb McCarty – parcel# 42005005 – change value from \$32,000 to \$32,100. Reason acreage is corrected to 10.1 acres based on survey. MR makes a motion to accept the report. JB 2nds the motion. Unanimously voted.

Visitors:

6. Ryan Edwards, architect, via Zoom. SB has invited Ryan to explain how this process works (memo in the meeting packet). Ryan explains there would two phases to the project: first phase being a feasibility study/schematic design – phase two being design development/construction. JB asks when something is going to happen. AL states at the last SB meeting discussion included SB reaching out to architects. JB was to follow up with one from Sheffield; JB states he hadn't done this. MR asks if there an estimate of how much phase one is going to cost the town. JB asks when there will be a site visit with the SB, Division of Historic Preservation and Fire Marshall, what must be done to get something started. RE responds he won't be available until sometime in November. However, the SB could meet with the others on their own sooner. He cautioned that it would be helpful for the architect to be at those meetings to hear specifics. RE states phase one would feasibly cost \$6,00 to \$8,000. BJN asks isn't it up to the SB to make a decision about moving forward with this project; even though the DOJ is not on the town's back anymore – they did not say we were good. JB believes so and understands about the frustration. TB states the DOJ did say we did what was required for immediate accessibility, so there are other concerns that need to be addressed and are more pressing like these road conditions. JB states the only concern we have right now is this building; the bathroom and the lift. That is where the ARPA money is to be spent first. TB says there is a porta-toilet available outside, and all individuals can access meetings via Zoom. JB reiterates that the project still needs to be finished. AL reminds the audience that progress has been made, albeit slow. MR is pleased RE has looked at many different aspects of the project. He makes a motion to enter into a contract with R. Edwards & Co. for phase one. JB seconds. Unanimously voted. RE suggests they all reconnect in early October. AL asks about a meeting with the fire marshal, RE says that could happen almost immediately.

7. Christa Shute, Director, NEK Broadband, regarding Wheelock ARPA request, via Zoom. Request submitted by Eileen Boland, Wheelock alternate, NEK Broadband Board. EB provides an introduction. This is not the first proposal for early broadband implementation for Wheelock. The SB had appointed a citizen ARPA committee to evaluate possible ARPA projects for the town. One of the projects considered was a swathe of broadband, for certain parts of the town, if the town would make a contribution of approximately \$28,000. This would have brought broadband for some in 2023 instead of sometime in 2026. That proposal was not responded to by the town as the committee disbanded (by their choice – clarified by TB). EB went to a recent NEK Broadband meeting; she was informed by CS that currently there is a time-sensitive opportunity for the town to accelerate installation of broadband for a swathe of Wheelock (details are in the packet) by contributing \$41,000 (with the potential to get matching grant monies) with a deadline of 9/15/22. JB reminds everyone that the SB voted in May to spend ARPA on the completion of the town hall project before spending on other projects. AL reminds everyone that in recent meetings the SB has voted to spend ARPA money on both the fire department and the town garage doors. CS offers that the town could put a contingency into the contract that the matching funds from the town would be based on money left after the completion of the town hall project. EE asks about the proposed matching – EB reads the details from the packet. AL asks about the grant money; she thought all the grant money had been acquired for broadband project. CS states in the last few years the legislature has allocated money to this project. However, revenue bonds will need to be acquired to finish funding this project. To accomplish this there needs to be proof of committed customers. MR raises the concern that this project does not benefit the community at large, just an isolated area. MR makes a motion to see what we have for funds when we are finished with the building. AL seconds. SB discussion clarifies that the opportunity is beneficial, yet the town hall is the priority. MR makes a motion to contribute to the broadband project after the town hall project costs are more clear. AL seconds. AL asks for clarification on the contingency clause in the contract. CS states the contract would only move forward if there were available ARPA funds after the town hall project was complete. Unanimously voted (with contingency clause).

Business, continued:

8. Efficiency Vermont LED conversion of 10 streetlights: incentive - \$1000. Estimated town cost \$750; the project will be paid for in 28 months, with a savings each month due to the use of new technology. MR makes a motion to replace all the town's streetlights. JB seconds. Unanimously voted.

9. Update – no action needed - Snow Roller donated & transported to Caledonia County Fair Association, Deed of Gift in place.

10. Front steps contractors. AL contacted Joe Hallowell of Danville (railings) and Shane Lampher (for a list of contractor and hasn't heard back from him), Joe sent a proposal with pictures and railing options with ADA specs; she hasn't heard from Shane. JB has a proposal from Northern Ridgeline Builders for removal and replacement of front steps for \$4500 –

includes a simple drawing. Install 2 porch piers roadside of deck, new front deck to be 2x10 framing pressure treated, 8 foot long and 6 foot wide with 5/4 x 6 decking boards, tisson (sp) railings (metal railings with vinyl coating). Steps both sides 6' wide with railings, with lattice on roadside of deck. AL notices there is no detail regarding the rise and run of the steps, or whether there is enough room for the doors to open: she is recalling a detail in the past about the doors opening. JB states the doors are 6 feet wide, and the proposal will be done with ADA compliance. The stairs will have open rise for easier snow removal. MR makes a motion to accept the bid from Northern Ridgeline Builders for the stair project. JB seconds. Unanimously voted.

As an aside – JB brings to the attention of the SB that someone has backed into the garage causing damage, less than the deductible. Repair has been scheduled.

11. JB makes a motion to approve monthly financial reports. AL seconds the motion. Unanimously voted.

Administrative:

12. JB makes a motion to adopt minutes of prior meetings; 8/2 Selectboard. MR seconds the motion. Karen Geraghty has requested two changes to the minutes of 8/2. In item 3 stated KG had emailed during the email to cancel – she clarified that she had also reached out to AL earlier in the day. In item 3A mention is made of KG suggesting a particular architect, she would not have done this as it is not within her authority to make recommendations of that kind. JB makes a motion the SB signs the revised version of the minutes of 8/2. MR seconds the motion. Unanimously voted.

Correspondence:

Vanessa has forwarded a letter from the VLCT requests that the town's selectboard members designate a voting delegate by 9/15 for VLCT Town Fair annual meeting on 10/6. AL is planning to attend. MR makes a motion to designate AL as the delegate. JB seconds. Unanimously voted, AL abstained.

Adjourn:

8:20 pm JB makes a motion to adjourn. MR seconds. Unanimously voted.

Respectfully submitted,
Lucy Greenwood

Signatures:

