

Dorset Selectboard Regular Meeting Minutes
January 19, 2021

Members Present: Megan Thorn, Henry Chandler, Tom Smith, Jim Salsgiver

Members Absent: Liz Ruffa

Others Present: Rob Gaiotti (Town Manager), Sandy Pinsonault (Town Clerk), Tim Duclos, Luke Nathan (Bennington Banner)

Megan Thorn called the meeting to order at 7:01pm

Approve December 15, 2020 Minutes:

It was noted that there was a minor typo in the minutes; Tom Smith moved and Henry Chandler seconded to approve the December 15th Minutes as amended, motion passed 4-0.

Conservation Commission Interview:

Rob Gaiotti noted that Alan Calfee was stepping down from the Conservation Commission after many great years of service to Dorset. Tim Duclos has been nominated by the Conservation Commission to fill Alan's seat. Megan Thorn asked about his background and interests. Tim explained that he lives in Dorset and works at Merck Forest as Conservation Manager. This position puts him in charge of much of the property from Forest management to managing the winter cabin rentals etc. He explained that his education background was in wildlife biology and conservation. Over the years he worked in a bunch of different conservation related positions prior to settling down in Dorset. He is very interested in helping the Conservation Commission and would like to support the Town as much as he can with his skills and abilities. Henry Chandler moved and Tom Smith seconded to appoint Tim Duclos to the Conservation Commission, motion passed 4-0.

Town Budget Public Hearing:

Megan Thorn opened the public hearing on the FY22 Municipal Budget. Rob Gaiotti presented the budget summary for the FY22 town budget. He noted that the biggest items included in the budget were: Full time Recreation Director status, New Town Office design costs, wage and insurance changes etc. Overall the year to year budget expenses were up 3.8% and after non-property tax revenue was factored in the increase to taxes would be around 3.7%. This assumes little to no increase in the Grand List, and it is likely that the Grand List will be higher from year to year. Discussion ensued about paving projects and conditions of current roads. Rob Gaiotti mentioned the partnership with the Dorset Chamber of Commerce would continue and additional funding was included in the budget. Tom Smith noted that it would be great to have google analytic and website traffic information for the Chamber site so that the information could be presented to voters at Town Meeting. Rob Gaiotti noted that he will get this info and possibly show one of the short marketing videos created last fall as well. Jim Salsgiver moved and Henry Chandler seconded to approve the FY22 Budget as presented for Town Meeting, motion passed 4-0.

Town Meeting Planning/ Review:

Sandy Pinsonault explained the voting process for Town Meeting, noting that all voters will be mailed Town and School ballots and Dorset Fire District voters will receive a bond vote ballot as well. Voters can mail back the ballots in the envelope provided, the Town will cover the cost of mailing to and from, which comes out to about \$1.55 per voter. She noted that the State will likely have some funding available to reimburse Towns for the mailing expense. It was also noted that ballots could be dropped off at the Town Offices, and also brought for in person voting. Due to COVID restrictions only a few voters would be allowed in the Town Office at once for in person voting, and the lines would likely start outside. Megan Thorn reviewed the Town Meeting Warning; It was noted that there was a typo on article 19; it was also noted that article 20 for Shire Kids is the only new article. Shire kids is a local non-profit that is part of the Dolly Parton foundation and operates a reading program for kids from birth to age 5. Discussion ensued about the date of the informational meeting, Jim Salsgiver noted that many of the ballots will have been cast by the March 1st informational meeting and it might make sense to move up the informational meeting to an earlier date. Discussion ensued about expected participation and that voters might be expecting the informational meeting on the Monday night before as is the tradition. Tom Smith asked about including directions and a zoom tutorial for residents to become more familiar with the platform. Discussion ensued about the different ways to adapt the platform to a large meeting. It was the consensus of the Board to leave the informational meeting on March 1st at 7pm. Tom Smith moved and Henry Chandler seconded to approve the Town Meeting Warning as amended, motion passed 4-0.

New Town Offices Update:

Megan Thorn and Rob Gaiotti gave an update about the recent meetings with Maclay Architects about the design of a new Town Office space at Raptor Lane. It was noted that the kick off meeting was held and the Town has provided a lot of good information to the firm. There is a site visit and meeting on 1/21 with updates forthcoming. Rob Gaiotti presented information relating to the topic of what would be done with the current offices in East Dorset should the Office move to Raptor Lane. Discussion ensued about timing of process, conducting a survey of East Dorset Village residents as they are the most impacted by the move. It was noted that this information could be sought at a later date.

Old Business:

Route 7 & Mad Tom: still awaiting final grading around Wood & Signs spring of 2021, and still awaiting survey map of space behind the East Dorset Post Office for possible use as green space.

Read Farm Lane: Rob Gaiotti noted that the Town was going back and forth with FEMA about the two grant applications (moving Brookside Drive and buying out the Chantecleer). He noted that FEMA had recently stated at a meeting that because the flooding is caused by beaver activity it would not be eligible for hazard mitigation funding, as beaver activity is considered a maintenance issue to FEMA. Rob Gaiotti explained the complexities of the situation and that the Town had asked for a determination in writing, to respond to.

Raptor Lane: reviewing Town Office discussion, hiking access is moving over to Raptor, Town crew is plowing the road and use is up.

Finance Report:

Rob Gaiotti gave the monthly updates for Town finances. The Town is currently 58% through FY21 and the general fund sits at 57% expended, which is normal for this point in the year.

Henry Chandler moved and Jim Salsgiver seconded to approve the Finance Report as presented, motion passed 4-0.

Manager's Report:

Rob Gaiotti gave updates for Town activities over the past month. Items include: highway work, Dorset Fire District administrative work, Recreation Department updates.

2022 Highway Mileage Certificate:

Tom Smith moved and Jim Salsgiver seconded to approve the 2022 Highway Mileage Certificate for Dorset, motion passed 4-0.

It was noted that a few forms need to be signed by Board members and they should arranged to visit the Town Office to endorse the forms.

Jim Salsgiver noted that the Taconic & Green School District would be soliciting community members input on goal planning for the School District moving forward. He noted that they would make a survey available and Selectboard member input would be very valuable. He further explained that it is a chance to step back and review how education is provided in our communities and input was very important.

Tom Smith moved and Henry Chandler seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:20pm, motion passed 4-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rob Gaiotti Town Manager