

approved: 05/20/13

**Townshend Select Board
Minutes
May 6, 2013**

Present: Select Board: Kit Martin; Hedy Harris; Chad Greenwood; David Dezendorf

In Attendance: Joe Daigneault; Kim Ellison; Kurt Bostrom; Anita Bean; Cynthia Davis; Janet Stowell; Kathy Hege; Annette Leigh; Amon DeWitt; Diana Lane; David Marazoff; Mike Bills; Richard Lucier; Robin O'Neill; Susanna Palmer; Robert Crego; Rich Melanson (BCTV); Craig Hunt

6:00 P.M. 1. Call to Order: Martin called the Meeting to Order at 6:00 P.M.

2. Approval of Minutes: Dezendorf made a motion: **To approve the Minutes of April 15, 2013**, seconded by Greenwood and carried by those present.

3. Additions and Deletions: None at this time.

4. Warrants: Dezendorf made the following motions to approve Warrants:

WARRANT 0506-1 Payroll \$7,956.73, seconded by Harris and carried by those present.

WARRANT 0506-2 Payroll Tax \$3,085.56, seconded by Greenwood and carried by those present.

WARRANT 0506-4 Highway \$388.04, seconded by Harris and carried by those present.

WARRANT 0506-5 Equipment \$1,906.48, seconded by Harris and carried by those present.

WARRANT 0506-6 General \$34,430.31, seconded by Greenwood and carried by those present.

WARRANT 0506-7 General \$10,000.00, (Future 2013 Fire Truck Appropriation) seconded by Greenwood and carried by those present.

5. Reports: Highway Department: Bostrom reported on seeking estimates for sidewalk repairs and will be seeking possible grants. He informed the Board of submitting an application for the High Risk Rural Roads grant to address issues on Windham Hill Road.

Dezendorf said that a Request for Proposals will be drafted and go out for paving and crack filling on East

Hill and Deer Valley Roads and that one would be forthcoming for cutting trees at the gravel pit prior to gravel crushing. In response to a question from Harris, he confirmed that the right-of-way behind Town Hall would be opened up.

Bostrom reported that most Class 3 roads have been graded and that he'll be preparing the trailer to hold the calcium chloride spray tank. The compactor is back in service, he said, after repairs to the hydraulic plunger.

Green-Up Day did not produce as much collected trash as in years past, but 1.4 tons of used tires were dropped off at the garage. Bostrom agreed to follow-up on crosswalk painting and detour signage for the Dam Road spillway bridge repair closing

6:30 P.M. Law Enforcement Report: Nothing at this time.

Town Clerk's Report: The Board reviewed the Town Clerk's cash-journal reports from the prior two weeks.

Bookkeeper's / Treasurer's Report: Ellison reported that the amount which FEMA will pay toward culvert upgrades on the Dam Road is still not known.

Of the four properties sold last week at the Delinquent Tax sale, one has been redeemed

Outstanding property taxes amount to about \$98,000 on the first three-quarters of this year.

Emergency Management Director's Report: Dezendorf updated members on the plans for traffic management for Grace Cottage Hospital's 5K run this Saturday, May 11th.

6. Correspondence: None at this time.

7. Municipal Officer Appointments: Harris nominated Carole Melis to be on the Howard Legacy Committee, approved by those present.

Harris nominated Barbara Bedortha and Ellie Lemire to be on the Social Services Screening Committee, approved by those present.

6:45 P.M. 8. Recess: Dezendorf made a motion: **To recess until 7:00 P.M.**, seconded by Harris and carried by those present.

7:02 P.M. 9. Members of the Public / Reappraisal: The Select Board welcomed Listers Bills, Lucier and O'Neill, reappraiser David Marazoff and members of the public.

Martin began by stating that he and other Select Board members had received numerous calls from upset property owners since a letter from the Listers office was mailed on April 28th. The letter appeared to be an official government communication, but was full of errors and omissions. It provided revised property assessments, but did not indicate whether there was an increase or decrease in valuation. The parcel identification numbers printed in the letter were all wrong, acreage wasn't listed or was listed incorrectly and multiple owners were abbreviated to just one.

The Select Board, Martin said, was not prepared to answer questions from citizens who were confused as to whether the hearing suggested in the letter was to be the formal grievance.

The Select Board is very concerned, Martin continued, about whether these problems can be remedied, whether the Listers can meet the statutory deadlines and whether this reappraisal itself will have the integrity it needs to have. The hope of this meeting here, he said, is to straighten out any misunderstandings.

Marazoff explained to the Board that he was certified by the State of Vermont to conduct town-wide reappraisals and has bent over backwards to inspect all of Townshend's properties, verify and update the Listers data cards and answer any concerns. He explained, also, that the letters sent to property owner's on April 28th from the Listers office were accurate in presenting his new property valuations. The errors in the property identification numbers were the result of a software malfunction, but were immaterial. The letter was not intended to be an official notice of change in appraisal and the invitation to property owners to meet with him for a hearing on the change in appraisal was not intended to be a formal grievance hearing. It was, for property owners, an informal opportunity to ask questions and receive answers about changes in their assessments.

The meetings he had this week, Marazoff said, went very well and everyone who had requested a hearing, he believed, was satisfied.

O'Neill concurred that any questions that citizens had when entering those hearings were answered before they left.

Marazoff apologized if the letter was misleading but said that the Listers would be sending out an official notice of change in appraisals soon and be holding grievance hearings as prescribed by law.

Members of the public were then invited to speak and Diana Lane indicated that though she had attended the informal hearing Marazoff had offered, she still didn't understand why her property increased in size by 10% and her appraisal increased by 50%.

Kathy Hege criticized a process that made unavailable to her any records by which she might check the validity or double-check the accuracy of the data accumulated about her property. The Listers, she had discovered, knew little about this reappraisal and had no detailed information to substantiate how it was being conducted or how its results were derived.

Mike Bills admitted that the Listers office did not hold any updated cards and that the Listers did not yet have access to the information on them. They would once the Grand List was lodged, but until then, the reappraisal was preliminary and the work product of Marazoff Assessing.

Annette Leigh relayed that she didn't understand why the value of her property dropped so substantially and was particularly upset that no one ever physically visited her property to assess it.

Anita Bean also said that no one ever visited the former Janos Technology building, where she runs a business, and that the owner was angered by the increase in its assessment. As Town Clerk, she said that she has received dozens of calls from people whose properties were not visited or inspected.

Janet Stowell complained that the name to whom the letter she received had been addressed was not an accurate reflection of who owned the property and that given the lack of real estate sales in Townshend recently, she doubted the validity of any fair market comparisons.

Amon DeWitt noted his disappointment that only three of Townshend's five elected Listers chose to attend this meeting with the public.

Martin emphasized that as the co-owner of multiple properties, the full name of the owners and the correct parcel numbers were critical details in any correspondence issuing as a professional and definitive document.

O'Neill countered that any errors or shortcomings contained in the letter were irrelevant, since the reappraisal figure was stated correctly, and that the letter sent was not misleading since it was clearly an invitation to an "informal hearing. Misunderstandings, she suggested, were due to poor reading comprehension skills.

Harris, on behalf of Townshend's citizens, expressed her resentment of O'Neill's insult.

Lucier then apologized for the letter, saying that it was presented to the Listers for review and he took responsibility for approving it.

Palmer asked who would conduct the official grievance and Marazoff responded that the Listers would, with his assistance.

Dezendorf then asked about Marazoff's review of municipal, commercial and tax-exempt properties, citing that he had listed Townshend's Highway Garage as appraised for only \$44,000 and omitted any of the Otis Health Care complex.

Marazoff explained that he had yet to appraise the municipal and tax-exempt parcels.

Martin again expressed his concern about approaching deadlines for completion of the re-appraisal and asked if there were any more questions or comments.

7:55 P.M. Hearing none, Dezendorf made a motion: **For the Select Board to enter Executive Session at 7:55 P.M. with the Listers and David Marazoff to discuss contractual matters.** Hunt was asked to attend. The motion was seconded by Greenwood and carried by those present.

At 8:25 P.M., Marazoff left the Executive Session.

At 8:38 P.M. Bills, Lucier and O'Neill left the Executive Session.

8:45 P.M. At 8:45 P.M. Dezendorf made a motion: **For the Select Board to leave Executive Session**, carried by those present.

As a result of Executive Session, no action was taken.

10. Old Business: Valley Cares Contract: Martin welcomed Bob Crego and asked if Board members had had an opportunity to review changes to the terms in the Community Development Grant Agreement with Valley Cares. Those present agreed that they had and Harris made a motion: **To authorize Harris to sign on behalf of the Town of Townshend the Vermont Community Development Program Grant Agreement with Valley Cares**, seconded by Greenwood and carried by those present. Harris then signed the Agreement and a copy was given to Bob Crego.

9:00 P.M. 11. Executive Session: Dezendorf made a motion: **For the Select Board to enter Executive Session at 9:00 P.M. with Ellison to discuss personnel matters**, seconded by Harris and carried by those present.

10:00 P.M. At 10:00 P.M., Dezendorf made a motion: **For the Select Board to leave Executive Session**, carried by those present.

As a result of Executive Session, Dezendorf made a motion: **To accept an end to Bob LeCours' probationary**

period and raise his rate of pay to \$16.50 per hour,
seconded by Harris and carried by those present.

12. Other Business: Dezendorf made a motion: **To approve WARRANT 0506-3 General Fund \$5,395.08**, seconded by Greenwood and carried by those present.

13. Meeting Schedules:

Regular Meeting: May 20th at 6:00 P.M.

14. Adjournment: Dezendorf made a motion: **To adjourn at 10:03 P.M.**, carried by those present.

Respectfully submitted,

Craig K. Hunt, assistant