

Present

Selectboard:

David Jones (Chair)
Gwen Tanza
Bruce Mello
Shelby Brimmer
Joseph Dutton

Town Officers:

Guy Tanza (Town Clerk, videographer)
Mark Bills (Road Supervisor)

Members of the Public:

Chris Webb
Scott Tabachnick
FACTV

(Meeting transcribed from sound recording)

Call the meeting to order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM.
Everyone was introduced.

Review changes to agenda if any

Hate speech statement discussion.

Unscheduled members of the public

NewBrook Principal Scott Tabachnick

Approve Minutes for September 16, 2020

Mr. Jones moved to approve the minutes for September 16, 2020. Second by Mr. Mello. **With one abstaining, the Motion passed.**

Scheduled members of the public

Mr. Webb had brought an issue regarding hate speech before the Selectboard for discussion.

New Business

Statement condemning hate speech

A statement was brought before the board for possible adoption (see Appendix), and was read aloud.

Mr. Jones moved to adopt the statement as read. Second by Mr. Mello.

There was discussion. Mr. Webb had brought this to the Selectboard's attention. It was noted that Newfane had adopted a similar statement following some incidents of public racial harassment. Mr. Webb was recognized, and discussed two reasons for adopting the statement: first, to stand in solidarity with local communities that had dealt with this issue; and second, having heard people of color in the Newfane meeting who did not feel safe on the roads. Mr. Webb suggested that as Brookline is a tight community of neighbors standing in solidarity, hate speech is condemnable by the Selectboard.

Mr. Tabachnick was recognized and asked to read a prepared statement (see Appendix), and read it aloud. Ms. Tanza observed that she had at first thought it was a political issue, but now agreed with the sentiments expressed. Mr. Mello asked if other towns adopted this statement. It was noted that Newfane, Dover and Jamaica had done so; and that Newfane consulted the VLCT and legal counsel, who advised that it is within a town's rights to condemn certain kinds of speech; and called on Brookline to do the same, even though it had not experienced such an event. Mr. Dutton expressed agreement, noting some "appalling" incidents; and noted that nothing had happened directly within Brookline, but acknowledged that many community members of Newfane and Brookline were in support; that several people had written statements for the affected towns, and suggested adding to the statement that Brookline is standing with the other towns that were affected, even though nothing had happened in Brookline. Ms. Brimmer agreed with the statement as submitted, noting that it was broadly worded, and that there had been neighbors in Brookline who had not been nice to each other, and that it was best to leave the language broad. Mr. Jones approved of the language as presented and noted that specific amendments might be proposed. Mr. Dutton agreed that the general tone addressed the ideology more than a specific act, and suggested adding language to the effect that "everyone has the right to feel safe in our beautiful town." Mr. Jones explained that a motion "as read" was on the table, and a "friendly amendment" could be added to say "everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and feel safe in our beautiful town, and the community at large."

Mr. Jones seconded the friendly amendment.

By roll call, on the Amendment, **All in Favor.**

On the Motion, as Amended, **All in Favor.**

The Chair invited further comments.

Mr. Webb thanked the community, and thanked Mr. Dutton for his amendment. Mr. Tabachnick observed feeling lucky to work in these towns, efficient, smart, thoughtful, and thinking about kids and how it feels to be someone else; and offered continued support in the future.

Road Safety Enhancements

There was discussion about road safety equipment, radar signs such as deployed in Newfane and other towns, the mobile units deployed by the Sheriff; noting that Newfane had purchased portable units that can attach to a speed sign. Mr. Bills reported researching and consulting with Newfane's Road Forman, that in midsummer they had hired a person to place decals and a stop bar in the road near traffic signs, spending about two thousand dollars, and were very pleased with the work they got for the money; and had called the company, which inventoried the signs and estimated \$1,800 to \$2,000, with 25 MPH and 35 MPH decals on stock, 40MPH decals a separate order; noted state standards on class 2 roads, and could schedule this year or next. There was discussion of locations, markings in both directions, at speed transitions such as by the cemetery, bar decals at stop signs. It was noted that the installer was local resident in Townshend.

Draft Minutes
Town of Brookline Selectboard Meeting
Wednesday, October 7, 2020, 6:30 PM
(videoconference)

Mr. Bills had also spoken with the Newfane Road Foreman about electronic speed signs with GPS and speed transmission to the Town Offices, running on batteries or solar panels, available through Mark Gregory, an engineer in traffic sign design with website: TrafficLogics.com; One sign listed at \$2,560; and Newfane had paid \$3,100 in all. Mr. Bills reported that WRC had emailed information about grants for signage; and that Newfane said the sign helps slow traffic coming into town.

Mr. Jones polled the members about road decals, suggesting that the cost of \$1,800 to \$2,000 might be well spent; and that more specific locations should be determined. Questions and comments included transitions to a higher speed, such as after passing the school; whether appearance might detract from the rural character of the town; liking the stop bars; approving if the budget allowed. Mr. Dutton suggested that that paint on road would not deter willful speeders causing most problems, that trouble spots are not the ordinary locations, that some people do 80MPH around a 40MPH blind turn, that straight sections of Grassy Brook are raceways, and that the money might be better spent on digital signs, especially with data collection allowing better analysis. Ms. Brimmer agreed that the decals were not so clearly effective, and agreed that the problem speeders are not average commuters.

Mr. Jones asked Mr. Bills if more pricing detail could be obtained, and supported Mr. Dutton's point about prudent expenditures, also the stop bar idea; and will email WRC for signage grant information, noting that WRC does engage with towns on traffic and speed patterns, as was done with Ellen Ware and Putney Mountain roads; there was consensus in favor of further research in these areas.

There was further discussion; Mr. Dutton suggested law enforcement would be more effective use of funds. The issue will be on the next agenda

Remote/In-Person Meeting Structure

Mr. Jones acknowledged Ms. Brimmer's submission. Ms. Brimmer suggested framing policy around official guidance, and invited feedback. Mr. Jones polled members on the topic, noting that it had been discussed that meeting formats could change with changing health and safety concerns.

Ms. Tanza noted that the state had mandated requirements, and the town had been in compliance. Mr. Jones suggested that the hybrid structure and general concerns and procedures for people coming into the office could be made more explicit. Mr. Tanza reported that Town Clerk and Assistant Clerk were tested on the guidelines about entering the office for title searches, etc., and on the restricted use guidance from the state and CDC; that the policy for use of the office had been in effect 100 years; that the town was complying with the state mandates for this and for meetings. There was discussion of the policy, noting that Selectboard meetings were allowed if social distance and PPE were practiced.

Mr. Dutton observed that it seemed necessary to have a town policy, and that there was a lot of state and federal guidance; but that some agreement was needed locally; and discussed current practices and meeting attendance. Mr. Jones confirmed with Mr. Tanza that all five members could attend in person if the room were reconfigured, but that people should be attending remotely as much as possible.

Mr. Tanza will speak with VLCT and the Secretary of State's office to obtain the latest guidance and policies.

Ms. Brimmer suggested not operating on commonsense, that the submission was a statement that the town was following the guidelines; that there was some confusion about meeting attendance by the public, and that there should be clear guidance.

The matter was Tabled for next meeting. Mr. Tanza will follow up on formal policy for meeting attendance, noting that formal policy may already exist in the office use policy, and that the remote aspect could be more explicit. Mr. Tanza will obtain the guidance from VLCT and the Secretary of State, and noted there was a contact sheet for signing in.

Solar Generator

Mr. Jones noted that Gary Lavorgna had suggested looking into a Tesla battery through GMP. Mr. Tanza reported calling twice, and will persevere.

Old Business

Building Update

Mr. Mello reported finding that the heater had not been installed. There was discussion of the need to have the tanks swapped out, and that there had been a vehicle breakdown. Mr. Tanza explained that Ms. Parker had spoken with Amerigas, and that the breakdown may have slowed the heater installation; and noted that there had been a meeting September 29.

Mr. Mello discussed a lightbulb issue at SLP, and that the tenant had asked to replace vinyl flooring for three classrooms, that this was not a safety issue, that the tenant claimed it was about hygiene; that there had been discussion of relative responsibilities, and that other than safety and structural issues, it was not the town's responsibility to replace the tiles. There was discussion.

Mr. Mello reported meeting with the state water department; that the town must fill out a Mitigation of Hazard Report every three years; that this should have been done in January, and must be done by October 22; that Ms. Maggio had done this and provided information, and helped greatly to complete the report.

Mr. Mello reported that the building had been re-inspected and that the previously reported rot had been mitigated; that outside lighting, GFI outlets, and a Radon test were needed; that the rebuilt decks needed waterproofing treatment; that the parking lot, except for a section near play area, should be sealed in Spring (and annually); and that near-term needs included boiler service, filters, a leaking pump, chimney cleaning (consulting with Mr. Bills), septic system filter cleaning, and turning on basement exhaust fans; and the tenant should be updated and have their questions addressed.

Mr. Mello reported that including the current month's rent, there was over \$13,000 on hand, anticipating \$13,500 next month. Mr. Mello thanked Mr. Tanza for the accounting information on rental fees and building supply costs, fire alarm repairs and maintenance, and water testing; and reported expenditures of \$6,6040 spent in the current fiscal year.

Mr. Tanza asked about air exchanger filters. Mr. Mello discussed the changes that had been made last year, and would be checking again soon; and invited Questions.

Summary / Update / Reports

Guy Tanza – Town Clerk Report

Mr. Tanza reported that the office was busy with election season; everyone had been emailed, absentee ballots sent out with a link to a voter information page; that the town will have regular polling from 9:00 AM to 7:00 PM, November 3; that there were 430 registered voters; that absentee ballots had been sent out and only 12 were undeliverable because of moving and no forwarding addresses; that every avenue had been tried to reach

Draft Minutes
Town of Brookline Selectboard Meeting
Wednesday, October 7, 2020, 6:30 PM
(videoconference)

all voters, and possibly more than 400 would vote this year; that 85 had already returned ballots; that voters may bring their ballots during polling hours or drop them in the mail slot.

Mr. Tanza reported on refinancing activity, and had accommodated all information requests, working from home while making appointments for office visits.

Highways & Roads

Mark Bills – Road Supervisor

Mr. Bills reported replacing missing street signs, and forwarded email that the town had received salt from American Rock Salt at \$70 per ton from Troy NY. Mr. Jones noted that this would be on the next agenda, that it had been \$75 per ton last year, and that Cargill also down from last year. Mr. Bills reported that old pavement millings for shoulder material along driveway aprons, etc. was working well. There was discussion.

Mr. Bills reported cleaning up a lot of debris just north of Johnny Swing's shop; checking on the speed limit question; calling about line painting; and had driven the distance of Hill Road, 2.5 miles one way; and noted that Putney Mountain Road might need new yellow and white striping for a total of 3.1 miles; that he had called the previous vendor and consulted Newfane's Forman; that Nat King at Poirier Line Striping had quoted the white line at \$0.20 a foot for both sides, but that the yellow line would only need one side painted. There was discussion; the vendor booking a week to two weeks out; 3.1 miles would be 16,368 feet.; the complete job would be \$0.40 per foot, or \$6,547. There was discussion of whether to do all stripes; budget concerns; previous spending.

Mr. Jones suggested further research of what would be necessary, for the next meeting.

Mr. Bills noted that if any towns within sixteen mile radius need painting, the vendor might offer better terms. There was discussion of the paving budget, and the cost of pavement milling. Mr. Bills reported having completed grader maintenance.

Communications

A. Email

- Class 2 highway grant programs situation unclear; Better Back Roads grants did move forward; Alan May from VTRANS had said another round of funding became available and the town had applied last December, but they called when the money became available if the work could be done by June 30, about \$10,000 matched with about \$2,500 from the town; the town was awarded the grant.
- The VTRANS biologist will visit the Salt/Sand shed site in connection with the environmental review.
- Ms. Parker re: a Face Book page for the Meetinghouse; a donation button on the page; consulted Social Media Policy and Mr. Webb; there was nothing to preclude this. Mr. Jones polled the Selectboard; no concerns were heard.
- Gary Lavorgna re: annual report from NewBrook on calls responded to etc.; and that \$9,000 from the Town budget should be level-funded this year.

B. Regular Mail

- Postcard from So Vt Economy Project, webinars and workshop.
- Quote from Cargill: \$70.25/T.

Pay Orders

B. Payroll

Mr. Jones polled the Board on their review of the Payroll Warrants.

Mr. Jones moved to approve Payroll Warrant #2020-66, dated September 30, 2020, in the amount of \$1,507.32. Second by Mr. Mello. **All in Favor.**

A. Accounts Payable

Mr. Jones polled the Board on their review of the Accounts Payable Warrants.

Mr. Jones moved to approve Accounts Payable Warrant #2020-67, dated October 6, 2020, in the amount of \$366,951.70. Second by Mr. Mello. **All in Favor.**

Set agenda for the next meeting – Wednesday, October 21, 2020

- Executive Session on future Treasurer options.
- Voting on Road Salt vendor.
- VTRANS Grants-in-Aid Letter of Intent.
- Road Safety Enhancements.
- Remote/In-Person meeting structure
- Line-painting
- Solar Generator

Adjournment

Mr. Jones moved to Adjourn. Second by Ms. Tanza.

The meeting was Adjourned at 8:28 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Peter Barus, Recorder, October 10, 2020

Appendix

Draft Statement – October 7, 2020

The Town of Brookline condemns hate speech, prejudice, and acts intended to induce fear in any person based on their identity. We are a community of diverse backgrounds and opinions, and we draw strength from it. Everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and feel safe in our beautiful town.

Statement by Scott Tabachnick, Principal, NewBrook Elementary School

Good evening folks. My name is Scotty Tabachnick and I am the Principal at NewBrook Elementary School. I want to remind you folks that I am a resident of Dummerston, Vermont, and a paid public official here in Brookline. As a school administrator, one very important aspect of my job is to promote my school, hoping to encourage new families to move to our towns, and adding children to our rosters. In doing so, we lower the tax burden on the property owners. As I do this work, I promote NewBrook as a place where we move all kids forward, where all kids can feel safe, and where all kids feel included in our programming and school community.

Another aspect of my job is to provide a safe and healthy environment for every NewBrook student and our staff. We are obliged by law to provide an inclusive environment in which every student can thrive, and we are good at it. We include children in this work, teaching our behavioral expectations explicitly, and teaching our students to be active bystanders, and to be socially responsible.

I believe that by making a public statement condemning hateful and racist attacks on our community, the Brookline Select Board would be supporting the school in our work towards equity, safety and inclusion. This is a night when folks like you will leave your mark.

Thank you for hearing me out.