Select Board Meeting

July 22, 2020

6:01 pm meeting called to order by Neil.

Select Board members present: Mike Bedini, Ericka Oleson and Neil Oleson.

Select board members absent: None

Others present: Charlie Labatt, Scott Roycroft, Doris Lewis, Stanley Brown, Bret Billings, Patrick Connelly, Ron Bosley, Jon Oleson, Christine Dobbert and Vicki Winchell

Ericka Oleson made a motion to approve the minutes from the 7/8/20 meeting. Mike Bedini seconded. Unanimous.

Selectmen:

* Charlie Labatt, Guntlow Associates and Scott Roycroft of Better Places Forests presented their plan to the Selectboard for property they are under contract to purchase (pending Special Town Hearing) from Dwight Brown at 333 South County Road.
  + They operate for profit conservation memorial forests (currently on West coast but expanding to East coast) where clients spread the ashes of loved ones (mixed with soil) at the base of trees in place of cemeteries. There is a 3 ½” marker placed at the base of the tree (not attached to the tree). There are two people per tree and clients pick their own tree/location for their ashes. If a tree should die, a new sapling will be planted there. Customers are fully aware of this possibility.
  + The house on the property would be remodeled into a visitor/welcome center with restroom facilities and plan to upgrade near the house for 20 parking spaces. They have no plans to add any additional structures on the property, and hope to have a conservation easement on the property.
  + The business would be daytime operating hours only.
  + Better Places Forests would upkeep the property and maintain forest in healthy conditions. They were drawn to this property for its beauty and plan to thin the forest to a healthy level.
  + Advertisement is done mostly online and through word of mouth as cremation rates are increasing.
  + This is a low impact development that would require a Special Permit Hearing. It is a for profit business and the property would be taxed at a conservation tax rate.
  + Selectmen have set a Special Permit Hearing for Wednesday, September 2, 2020 at 6pm. Christine will send Better Places Forests the list of abutters to send a certified mailing to.

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* Patrick Connelly, Connelly Wildlife Management
  + Mr. Connelly attended the meeting at the recommendation of Jim White to introduce himself to the Selectboard. This business is an animal damage control and trapping business, specializing in Beavers and Muskrats. The preference is to use non-lethal solutions whenever possible. The Selectboard took Mr. Connelly’s information in case the need should arise for his services in the future.
* Bret Billings, Manice Center
  + Mr. Billings attended tonight’s meeting also at the recommendation of Jim White to discuss the road leading into the Manice Center. There is a lot of washout on this road, which keeps happening year after year. He hopes to work with the town to solve the issue. He has suggested a ditch be created along the side of the road to help with drainage and ease the washouts. This would hopefully ease the need for the town to replace the gravel on the road yearly.
  + Neil had researched who actually is responsible for this road as he had heard from a Manice Center employee the center had considered the idea of installing a gate on the road. Mr. Billings did clarify that they would NOT be utilizing a gate. The idea was for more of a chain, not anything that would lock, only to keep people out of the buildings who did not belong there and was considered for only through the COVID pandemic as he had found strangers in his building on occasion claiming they thought it was a DCR building. Neil was unable to find any record that the town had ever adopted this road as one of their roads. However, historically, the town has always maintained this road.
  + They currently agreed the town would continue maintenance on the road, as gravel is only a few hundred dollars. Mr. Billings is in no hurry for any action as the center will not be hosting campers until Spring 2021.
  + Selectboard will discuss this issue further on the August 5, 2020 meeting.
* Ericka made a motion to approve the license from Darin Lane for Best Friends Boarding. Mike seconded. Unanimous.
* Mike made a motion to sign the warrant for the Special Town Meeting to be held on August 19, 2020 to vote on allowing the town to sell property to an organization that would like to use the land for a Marijuana Farm. Ericka seconded. Unanimous.
* Ericka made a motion to authorize crack sealing on Blackstone Road, Tilda Hill Road, and a portion of North County Road to be paid out of Chapter 90 funds in the amount of $40,096.00. Mike seconded. Unanimous.
* Selectmen reviewed a letter received from Pan Am Railroad detailing they are in the process of installing a more robust exhaust system on Central Shaft Road.
* Mike expressed concern that he has left 2 messages for the building inspector and she has yet to return his messages. Christine recommended he try texting her as the response seems to be better.

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* Mike brought up a truck was found for the Highway department. It is a ¾ ton, long bed single cab for $22,000.00. Jim looked and test drove it. Low miles and no rust. A deposit was submitted by the town. It should take 2-3 weeks to complete the process due to the registry and COVID restrictions.
* Neil discussed a conversation had with Jim White regarding the loader. Jim mentioned there is a tick in the motor. Schmidt looked at it and they think it is a head gasket. Jim will get quotes on repairing it.

Christine Dobbert, Town Administrator:

* Wi-Valley sent an email updating Christine on where things currently stand. There are pole hearings needed in Hawley. One employee fell and sustained injuries. Until the entire network is complete the speeds will not be as high as listed.
* Highway has worked at cutting back the roads.
* Doug has been out with the brush hog.
* There are 2 funerals this week.
* May need overlay on Tilda Hill Road next summer.

Public Comment:

* Ron Bosley mentioned the Railroad is allowing its Diesels to run overnight in the Tunnel area for 20-30 hours at a time.

6:58 pm Mike made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ericka seconded. Unanimous.