

Village of Manchester
Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees
August 1, 2022, 4:30 pm, Bennington County Courthouse

DRAFT MINUTES

In Attendance: President Tom Deck, Trustees: Jim Lewis, Bill Mariano, Nina Mooney and Anthony MacLaurin; Clerk/Treasurer and Tax Collector Donald Brodie; Office Administrator/Asst. Clerk & Treasurer Missy Johnson and Zoning Administrative Office Curan VanDerWielan

President Deck brought the meeting to order at 4:31 pm.

Ms. Johnson asked to have the agenda corrected on the second page to show there were 2 openings on the Planning Commission. Trustee Mariano moved to approve the agenda with that correction and Trustee MacLaurin seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

Trustee Mariano moved to approve the minutes from the July 5th Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees. Trustee Mooney seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

Ms. Johnson provided an office update. She reported that the BCRC had identified the Village for a small grant to be used for “municipal equipment” and that more information on this grant will be forthcoming. She discussed that she was working on insurance quotes for medical insurance for the office staff, and that it looked like the insurance would come in well below what was budgeted. The trustees will be emailed information on the various plans within the next week. She mentioned that the Village Office hours have been extended from 9:00 am – noon to 9:00 am – 3:00 pm, Monday – Thursday. The BCRC was also in contact with the office recently regarding a traffic study opening in the fall. It was determined that Ways Lane would be set up for that study and that there will be no cost for the Village for this project. Jim Henderson was also in contact with the Village regarding the road inventory he was contracted to complete. This project is finally wrapping up. The information gained from the study is showing a couple of areas that may need limited work in the Village. Ms. Johnson explained that this study is needed to fulfill requirements for some grant applications. The BCRC has agreed to work with the Village on obtaining any grants available for the work that needs to be done. Ms. Johnson is also working with VLCT in getting a “library pass” for its educational library. She will forward more information on that opportunity as soon as it is available.

Mr. VanDerWielan provided a briefing of his written report.

There was discussion regarding partnering with the Town of Manchester on a short-term rental study. There was no new information on the study available as the proposal is being crafted based on Village participation. The cost for the Village is expected to be \$1,166.00. The reasoning behind the need for the study was discussed. Comments and questions were taken from the public. President Deck discussed the need to gather information on short term rental to make future regulations in this area. A question from the public regarding a potential conflict of interest in this area was taken. Trustee Mooney moved to approve the partnership provided the proposal comes back as described. Trustee MacLaurin seconded the motion, and all voted in favor. Trustee Mariano moved to give authority to Mr. VanDerWielan to accept the proposal on behalf the Village of Manchester to prevent further delays. Trustee Mooney seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

Mr. Brodie presented the tax rate of .1668. Trustee Mooney moved to accept that tax rate for the 2022/23 tax year ending April 30, 2023. Trustee Mariano seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

The meeting was opened to take comments and questions regarding the Village of Manchester Noise Ordinance. Mr. VanDerWeilan provided some background on what was used by the Village in the past and explained why it was necessary to adopt an ordinance. The deadline for the submission for petitions to open this issue to a vote is September 15th. John Burnam, the executive director of the Manchester Business Association introduced himself and read a statement in favor the changing some the wording in the ordinance.

Comments were taken from the public and business owners. Some expressed their desire to see more serenity in the Village, others asked for more security from the ordinance to book future business without worry that they would lose the ability to host events until 11:00 pm. Using decibel levels to measure the volume of noise was suggested. One resident expressed that she did not like the idea of concerns being labeled pro-business or pro-resident asking the group to look at the ordinance as a means to allow property owners to enjoy peace and quiet on their property. Orland Campbell, who was instrumental in the crafting of the ordinance, spoke and he reiterated the need for the ordinance and stated that this “is meant to be starting point” and that before the ordinance was approved, the Village had no means to address noise problems. President Deck mentioned that there is some flexibility built into the ordinance. Those on both side of the issue voiced the need to work with their neighbors while working on solutions. Orland Campbell addressed the process from this point forward in regard to the Ordinance. He reiterated the deadline of September 15th for petitions on this matter and explained that a public hearing would be scheduled if a petition was received by the Village Clerk property signed by 5% of the Village of Manchester voters. At the ensuing public hearing, the current ordinance could be voted out making it void.

The board then moved on to discussion and possible appointment for open seats on the Development Review Board, Design Review Board and the Planning Commission.

Trustee Mooney moved to reappoint Jack Morris and Gordon McClellan and to appoint Orland Campbell to the Development Review Board for two -year terms. Trustee MacLaurin seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

Trustee Mariano moved to reappoint Terry Findesisen, Larry Koloff and Hong Campbell and to appoint Kim White to the Development Review Board as alternates for one-year terms. Trustee MacLaurin seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

Trustee Mooney moved to reappoint Hong Campbell, Terry Findeisen and Larry Kolloff and to appoint Claudia Burns and Peter Mull to the Design Advisory Committee for one-year terms. Trustee MacLaurin seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

Trustee Mooney moved to reappoint Audrey Kolloff and Renee Waller to the Planning Commission for 2-year terms.

Tom Deck then reappointed Jim Lewis as Road Commissioner and Tree Warden to a one-year term.

Donald Brodie then appointed Missy Johnson as Assistant Clerk & Treasurer for a one-year term.

After a short discussion, Curan VanDerWeilan was appointed as Bennington County Regional Commission Representative.

Ms. Johnson then asked the BOT to delay hiring a new office employee. She cited several reasons to postpone the hiring including an increase in the existing staff hours, increased staff productivity and the fact the office is going into a slower period. She mentioned she would like to revisit the need for this employee in January. Trustee Mooney strongly opposed the proposal. Trustee MacLaurin also opposed the proposal stating that the Village needed to increase its marketing efforts and the upcoming digitization of the zoning records as reasons for the additional person. Ms. Johnson indicated that the infrastructure needed to hire a new person was not in place and that she had recently sent two bulk emails to those signed up to receive updates from the municipality. She continued by saying Twitter and Facebook accounts have been discussed and are in the works. She mentioned her experience and her ability to handle these efforts for the Village. Having another person trained by Ms. Johnson in the event of her absence in the office was also discussed. Mr. Brodie indicated his desire to see this matter tabled for the September BOT meeting. President Deck agreed.

A draft policy on electronic mail was provided to the trustees for their review. Ms. Johnson described the policy as one in a multifaceted approach to the Planning Commission's finding that Village communication with the public needed to improve. She mentioned that additional policies related to these efforts would be forthcoming. Discussion and possible approval of the electronic mail policy will be listed on the agenda for the September BOT meeting. It was mentioned that a media liaison on the BOT is needed to approve some messaging.

Trustee Mooney stated that the board had approved funding for improvements to the website in the budget passed last month and requested information on the status. Orland Campbell stated that he felt updating the website should be a process that involved both the board and the public. A communications committee was suggested.

Claudia Burns suggested that the board have name tags as she did not know several of the board members' names.

Jim Lewis then provided the Road and Trees Report. President Deck mentioned that he had recently talked to Kyle Zecher, and he was waiting for delivery of some equipment before he started on the Village tree list for this year. Mr. Lewis indicated that he and Trustee Mooney would be shopping for trees in the fall. He also mentioned that the trees planted last year were looking a little rough and that these trees would be watered until their health improved. A question was taken regarding a drain on Taconic. The property owner was referred to the Town of Manchester Water department. The Curb Cut Application recently presented by Burr and Burton Academy was reviewed. It was confirmed that the application contained conditional language that an asphalt company be used for patching the road after the project was added to the agreement. Ms. Johnson confirmed that payment for the application had been received. Trustee Lewis moved to approve the application as written. Trustee Mooney seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

Mr. Brodie then provided the Clerk/Treasurer and Tax Collector report. He indicated that tax bills would be printed soon and would be going out before the August 15th deadline. He mentioned that the Village was still anticipating the second ARPA payment from the federal government.

President Deck provided a short report. He is settling into his new role. He has met with some neighbors and John O'Keefe at the Town of Manchester. He set up, and has had, weekly meetings with the office staff.

In Other Business, Mr. Alstrup mentioned the improvement on the islands in front of the Equinox and everyone agreed that Alan Mowrey deserved the credit and a big thank you for laying the new grass and for keeping it watered.

Orland Campbell mentioned to the board that they should keep up with what is going on with the current legal matter with the Equinox Hotel.

There being no further business before the board, President Deck moved to adjourn the meeting. Trustee Mariano seconded the motion, and all voted in favor. The meeting ended at 6:14 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Missy Johnson
Office Administrator