

TOWN OF TUNBRIDGE

Tuesday June 13th, 2023 at 6:00pm via Zoom and Town Offices

Meeting called to order at 6:07pm

Present: Cal Heminway, Rudi Ruddell, George White, Janet Zug, Fred Pond, Sue Salster, Maureen McCullough, Brenda Field, Michael McPhetres, John Echeverria, Mariah Cilley, John O'Brien, Gary Mullen, Rodney Hoyt, Amy Frost, Fern Strong, Michael Sacca, Todd Tyson, Betsy Gaiser, Joe Paquin, Robert Childs

Road Report-Rodney Hoyt

There is a hole in the walkway by the Mill Bridge. Hoyt would like the Selectboard to go down and see Hank Joseph about the sluiceway that is under the road to the mill and how he is planning on fixing it. Hoyt would just like to fill it in but knows the homeowner doesn't want to do that. The Whitney Hill project is underway. The Button Hill project starts on Monday June 19th. That project should take about one week. Hoyt is working on getting a bridge put in on Kibling Hill. We are waiting on approval for a bypass but if we can't get a bypass, then the road will be closed. Discussion of a new four wheel drive with a new style front end. Hoyt thinks that the quote that we received is for a truck that is too big for what we need. If we wait until 2024 there will be an updated motor in the wheels and the lead time on the truck is 18 months. If we order now the lead time is two years. The mower is getting old, it is a 2006. Hoyt will get a quote for the cost of a new mower or a whole new apparatus. McPhetres motions to allow Hoyt to get up to three days of crack sealing. O'Brien seconds. All aye. So moved. We are still waiting on the evaluation from the State for the Strafford Road slope issue.

Tax Sale Approval Legal Wordge- Joe Paquin

McPhetres makes a motion to use Stitzel Paige and Fletcher to conduct the towns tax sales. O'Brien seconds. All aye. So moved.

Crime Problems/Policing- Robert Childs

Childs has come to plant a seed with the Selectboard. He is part of the Central Vermont Intelligence Based Policing and in the last three years there have been many Tunbridge and Chelsea residents who don't feel comfortable reporting crimes on the groups Facebook page so they message Childs directly. There is an understaffed State Police barracks and no sheriffs in Orange County. People are looking for a police officer to come out and make them feel safe. Childs has talked to Vershire and Chelsea Selectboards and will also see Strafford's Selectboard. Childs proposes that we contract out with other departments to have an officer that spends designated time between two or three towns so if a resident were to call needing help they would be there in a reasonable time. O'Brien will speak with Sheriff Palmer from Windsor County Sheriff's Department.

Legal Trails Discussion

George White is very frustrated that the trails are not open to bikes after the mud season is over. Legal council states that we won't hurt our current case by using bikes on the trails. He believes the Selectboard has been extremely polite and cautious thus far. Why was it decided upon to just have walkers? Can this be changed.

Sue Salster states that the trails committee did not recommend bicycle usage on the trails.

Amy Frost says that we do not have to make this so difficult, we should just go back to the original ruling on the trails being open to all.

Todd Tyson wanted to state for the record that John Echeverria is the plaintiff in the lawsuit pending on the town and is also not a resident of Tunbridge.

John Echeverria believes there is no right to use the trail. He disagrees on the history. The Town Plan had originally stated walkers and then it was changed. Other landowners on other trails (Cal Heminway and Priscilla Farnsham) have voice their opposition to bicycles. The Planning Commission has encouraged pursuing alternative trails. He believes that landowners have the only right to maintain the trails and that the town and the landowners need to come together to work on maintenance.

Todd Tyson- It is inappropriate to discuss ongoing litigation with the plaintiff. He started a bike ride in August of 2020 and was confronted by Echeverria. He came to the Selectboard to see who had a right to use the trails. On May 31st, 2023 he rode his bike to the Orchard Trail and then walked his bike through. He determined the trail is usable. If the decision continues the way that is it to only allow walkers, this is very unprecedented. He would like to see the whole town weigh in on this topic at town meeting.

Sue Salster- How have the lives of the bicyclers been affected? As a member of the trails committee that has been trying to establish both public and private landowner trail collaborations, she feels all this negative media coverage has made it very difficult.

Janet Zug- The Orchard trail and Crossroads trail are very important. Is unsure how walking on a muddy trail or pushing her bike on a muddy trail is any different.

Amy Frost- There is a reasonable solution on the table. Go back to the original usage. Which forces the litigation to go forward and then forces the legislation forward. Or hold a town meeting on legal trails to make the decision.

Brenda Field feels bad for the Selectboard who have been put in an awkward position. Reminds everyone of the amount of money that is going into this lawsuit. It has cost \$14,000 so far. We need to find a work around to put an end to this.

Michael Sacca- This is a public Right of Way. That has not changed. There has never been any restrictions on a Right of Way. The landowner purchased the land knowing there was a trail. Sacca would like to have a vote.

Mullen will write an article for the TQ as well as the Herald to get more people informed.

John Echeverria- Forty people coming to a meeting to make a decision is not going to solve the problem. Alternative routes on the Crossroad and Orchard trails are what needs to be done. A conversation needs to be initiated. If we cannot come to a happy medium and bicycles are allowed back on the trail, Echeverria will shut off the rest of his land to everyone.

Amy Frost- Asks who is suing who? Because it sounds like you think you are being sued by the town but it is the other way around.

Todd Tyson- Tarnished feelings when it comes to the trails committee.

George White wants to volunteer man power to trail maintenance at no cost to the town. He would like to open the trails and have a public vote.

John O'Brien states that in the interim he wants to keep it the way that it is. He would like to see the trails committee work on creating trails and connectors. Put it up to a vote at Town Meeting. Believes that maintenance is a shared responsibility and that VAST and VIMBA have done a great job on creating trails with landowners.

George White- Why do you want to leave the trails closed?

O'Brien- With the future of e-bikes etc., it is a blurry line.

George White- Nonmotorized is pretty clear.

Michael Sacca- Knows the Selectboard has the right to decide these things but should be sensitive to the townspeople who elected them.

Town Offices Pressure Washing Bid Decision

McPhetres makes a motion to hire J. Andrews Painting for \$765.00 to pressure wash the town office. O'Brien seconds. All aye. So moved.

Other Business

McPhetres makes a motion to sign Gillespie bids for the propane tank. O'Brien seconds. All aye. So moved.

McPhetres makes a motion to hire Brookfield Services to upgrade the electrical in the basement. O'Brien seconds. All aye. So moved.

McPhetres makes a motion to approve liquor licenses. O'Brien seconds. All aye. So moved.

McPhetres makes a motion to purchase a utility sink from Home Depot for \$199.99. O'Brien seconds. All aye. So moved.

Approve Warrants

All warrants signed and approved.

Approve Minutes

Minutes from last meeting were signed and approved.

McPhetres makes a motion to adjourn. O'Brien seconds. Meeting ceased at 8:58pm..

Mike McPhetres, Vice Chair

John O'Brien, Clerk