



Select Board /Assessors Meeting Summary

Jan. 19, 2022

7 p.m.

Select Board members Present: Wes Daniel, Tom Johnston and Mitch Garnett

Others Present: Town Clerk/Treasurer Mary Anderson, Don Grinnell

Wes Daniel called the Select Board/Assessor's meeting to order at 7 p.m.

Approve Summaries of Dec. 29, 2021; Jan. 5 & Jan 12, 2022: Motion to approve summaries by Tom Johnston, Mitch Garnett seconded; all in favor, motion carries.

Sign Treasurer's Warrants dated Jan. 20, 2022:

P/R Warrant #7: \$4,367.41

A/P Vendor Warrant #6: \$173,516.37 (includes a payment to the school district)

Motion to approve by Tom Johnston, Mitch Garnett seconded; all in favor, motion carries.

Road Foreman Report: Written by Frank Jones Jr. and read by Wes Daniel

1/9: Frank called Steven, David and Jason to help put tire chains on trucks; sanded the rest of the day

1/10: Replaced a brake line on P300; replaced fan belt on P100

1/11: Changed oil on P100; finished P300; put new cutting edges on P200 plow

1/12: Worked on P500 tire chains; Frank called Ricky to help sand; washed trucks

CEO Report: None

Health Officer Report: None

Town Clerk/Treasurer's Report: Town Clerk Mary Anderson said the mileage rate has increased to 58.5 cents per mile and minimum wage has increased to \$12.75 per hour. The town received a \$487 refund check for unemployment compensation. The checking account balance is \$802,766. Mary has started sending town report write-ups. There is a Zoom meeting tomorrow night at 5 p.m. with Knox County Commissioners regarding town applications for the county's share of ARPA funds; Mary will attend from home and send the link to Select Board members as well. Mary completed the fourth quarter survey of property tax collections for 2021.

Other Agenda Items: Select Board members signed the November bank statement.

Ezra Casas submitted his resignation from the Planning Board. Wes Daniel made a motion to accept the resignation, Mitch Garnett seconded; all in favor, the resignation is accepted.

Kristie Grant submitted a letter of interest to join the Planning Board as an alternate member. Wes Daniel made a motion to appoint her as an alternate, Mitch Garnett seconded; all in favor, the appointment is confirmed.

Don Grinnell said he arranged a phone call from Bill with Dial My Calls, an emergency alert calling system. He is leaning toward recommending it for the town based on the structure of pre-purchased credits rather than the \$2,500 per year flat fee offered by Civic Ready. Don said Civic Ready has more features but that Washington doesn't necessarily need those features.

Bill with Dial My Calls called at 7:14 p.m. to answer questions. Tom Johnston asked what the initial fees are and Bill said there are a variety of packages to choose from, for example, 5,000 credits can be purchased for \$250. Don said he was looking at the 825-credit level to start and Bill said each call/text would be 6 cents for a total of \$50 in credits. Tom asked how credits are replenished and Bill said a credit card can be kept on file to automatically replenish credits when they drop to a certain level. He said there is no initial set-up fee and the credits don't expire unless an account is not accessed for two years.

Some of the levels of plans are 1,800 credits for \$100; 11,000 credits for \$500; and 25,000 credits for \$1,000 and Bill said there are also custom plans available. Don asked about jumping up to another level but Bill said the levels only matter initially because more credits can be purchased as needed.

Mary asked what one credit covers. Bill said one text is one credit and one 30-second phone call is a credit. A 60-second phone call would be two credits. Emails are free.

Tom asked about the security of the phone numbers collected and Bill said the company uses military-grade encryption and security. No contact data is sold by Dial My Calls, he said.

Tom asked about the number of municipalities using the company and Bill said there are thousands with multiple in each state. The company has been in business for 17 years and Bill has worked there for eight.

Don asked about a template to get people to opt-in to the service. Bill said there is a widget to allow people to opt-in through the town website as well as a link that can be shared to sign up. The company also offers a free vanity number for people to text "Start" to that will opt their number into the alert system. Bill emailed additional information about the appearance of the pages and widget.

Don asked about the "polling" option. Bill emailed a link with more information about that as well, but said it allows a response such as "press 1 for yes, press 2 for no" etc. For example, a poll could be sent regarding meeting attendance to be sure there's a quorum in advance of the meeting.

Bill said the testing system for Washington is already set up with 50 credits; he suggested trying out the system within the next two weeks.

Don asked about technical support and Bill said it's available seven days a week. The call concluded just after 7:30 p.m. Don mentioned using the system for public service notices such as food pantry day reminders as well.

Tom noted anyone who has the automated "this number does not accept calls from telemarketers ..." must remove it to be able to receive emergency messages from the system.

Mitch asked about an option through the town website, govoffice. Mary said a system is being developed but is not ready yet and she does not want to be a guinea pig town for a new system.

Tom said the company being in business for 17 years seems good. Don said Dial My Calls works with a lot of schools as well. Mary said the system can be paid for using ARPA funding. Don suggested doing some tests with the system in advance of the annual Town Meeting and making a decision so that information about the new emergency alert system can be included in the town report. Mitch asked if town approval is required to spend ARPA money (in this case, likely \$50) or if Select Board members can simply approve it. Mary said Select Board members are allowed to decide what to spend ARPA money on without a town vote.

Don pointed out communication was the top concern during a November tabletop exercise for Emergency Management scenarios. Mary noted that the most difficult residents to make aware of the system are older so that would need to be figured out. Don said he would be willing to go to Grange meetings and similar organizations to speak briefly about it to get the word out.

Mitch asked if the system will try a second or third time if a phone call doesn't go through the first time. Deputy Clerk Stephanie Grinnell said she read the FAQs about the system and that it appears phone calls are attempted at least twice and failed calls do not subtract from available credits.

Other business: Select Board members will meet at 6:30 p.m. next week, then at 7 p.m. will meet with the Budget Committee.

Tom said he would reach out to Sara Bullard and Mark Ouellette with Axiom regarding the town's broadband internet grant applications. He said he expects to recommend moving forward with the planning stages regardless of the grant outcomes so the town has a road map.

Mitch asked if Mary would reach out to Town Attorney Peter Drum about the ongoing Welzel case.

Motion to Adjourn by Mitch Garnett, Tom Johnston seconded; all in favor. Meeting adjourned at 7:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Stephanie Grinnell