

Selectboard Meeting Minutes

Monday, January 14, 2019 at 7pm at the Calais Town Offices

Present: Denise Wheeler (Chair), John Brabant (Vice Chair), Rose Pelchuck (Member), Sharon Winn Fannon (Member), Clif Emmons (Member), Katie Lane-Karnas (Recording Secretary), Jerome Lipani (ORCA), Rick Kehne (School Board member), Helena Kehne, Gus Seelig (Town Moderator)

1. Call to Order: Denise Wheeler called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.
2. Public Comment: None.
3. Review, Additions/Changes to Agenda: Rose Pelchuck added an item to be under Other Business regarding the announcement of a two-step verification process from DotGov.
4. Updates/Reports
 - a) Road Commissioner and Operations Manager: The Road Commissioner and Operations Manager were not present for an update.
 - b) Treasurer: The Treasurer was not present for an update.
 - c) Town Clerk: The Town Clerk was not present for an update.
 - d) Town Hall Renovation Committee: The Chair reported that interior renovation is progressing.
 - e) CVRPC: John Brabant reported that the Agency of Commerce and Community Development recently presented on their efforts to reinvigorate job centers in Vermont's cities. This effort looks at several factors including the distances outside of cities that people commute to as well as creating incentives for people to move out to country sides to reinvigorate industries there. John Brabant let the Board know that at the presentation he brought attention to the relationship between Act 46's elimination of local schools in these same small country towns and the need for those schools' continued presence to maintain the health of local towns.
 - f) Act 46 Update: The Selectboard and Calais School Board member Rick Kehne sought a date for the two boards to meet with the Town Attorney.
The Chair shared information on a (meeting held at the Adamant Community Club on Saturday, January 12 with legislators and residents from East Montpelier and Calais.

The Selectboard discussed their concern about Rep. Janet Ancel's representation of Calais residents in light of Act 46, and the Board's interest in hearing the cross section of town residents' opinions, alongside Rep. Ancel and their other state legislators. Toward this end, the Board decided to explore holding a special Selectboard public information meeting regarding Act 46 at the elementary school on February 10, inviting state legislators; Rick Kehne commented that he believed the School Board would support it. Discussion continued around Rep. Janet Ancel's Act 46 comments and activities. The Chair will send

a note to the School Board regarding details and setting the date for a February 10 meeting; Rick Kehne suggested the School Board provide information they have gathered in the form of a handout.

5. 2019 Warning: The Chair brought attention to changes made by the Town Attorney on article language regarding tax grace periods; the Board decided to accept his edits and define a consistent and transparent interpretation of the tax grace period following Town Meeting. Moderator Gus Seelig requested that any petitioned resolutions be listed in a position other than last on the Warning (none have been received or anticipated to be received so far this year). Other discussion included whether to include Article 16 (purchase of a tractor for roadside mowing) and areas of potential lively debate.

A question was raised regarding the unusual situation brought about by the uncertain status of Act 46. The Town has voted to vote by Australian ballot for school budgets, and typically would vote on a school budget at Town Meeting; however, this year, the AOE's direction to WCSU schools is to not bring a budget to vote. The Board, Moderator and Rick Kehne agreed that questions about Act 46 are likely to arise in the meeting, and they discussed options and potential debate that may ensue. Rick Kehne commented that the Calais School Board is planning to vote to adopt the budget that they have recommended, as they normally would, and bring it to voters by Australian ballot at Town Meeting. In 2019 the School Meeting will be scheduled first, Town Meeting second. Gus Seelig was considered as an impartial moderator for the February 10 meeting; Rick Kehne thanked the Selectboard for their efforts toward that meeting.

6. FY2020 Budget: Sharon Winn Fannon shared analysis she created, focusing on salary trends over time. She shared a spreadsheet that compared town budgets from 2005, 2010, 2015, and every year up until the proposed FY2020 budget. Comparisons included categories for total budget, highway, fire, salaries and social services, and focused on the percentage increases in recent history, as well as percentage increases from 2019 to proposed 2020. The Board reviewed a spreadsheet detailing salaries and discussed the evolution of where current salary levels are at and how they came to the configuration and amount that they currently are. Lengthy discussion ensued around increasing statutory and financial obligations within office job descriptions, the Selectboard's history of being very careful and cognizant to not have significant increases, aiming for a 2.7% increase this year, and Town Treasurer, Delinquent Tax Collector and Town Clerk salaries.

The Board reemphasized outside influences causing significant budget increases such as computer DRA, IT services and COTTS digitalization. The Board continued discussion of office staff salary from a number of angles, and the Chair pointed out her discomfort that Town Office staff would not have been aware that salary discussions would be up for lowering at the meeting. Continuing lengthy discussion included clarification of the way the office staff positions have been reconfigured over the past year, current staff's work beyond their weekly expected hours in order to meet obligations and whether a salaried position may include the expectation of working more hours than the job description.

The Board discussed if the Town Treasurer position was a full-time position at 40 hours, whether it makes sense to have an additional position of Delinquent Tax Collector. The Board raised a question of whether the Delinquent Tax Collector position could be combined with a full-time Town Treasurer position. Questions were raised around how much time the current

Town Treasurer spends on Delinquent Tax Collector duties. John Brabant proposed in the interest of compromise to merge the Delinquent Tax Collector title with the Town Treasurer title, make this combined position one line. The Board decided in compromise to leave the proposed Town Treasurer salary the same and add \$6,000 of the budgeted \$10,000 from the Delinquent Tax Collector line; this results in a total of \$55,733.

The Board agreed on the usefulness of being mindful each year of how line items are changing over time, and how the percentage change relates to the published CPI increases. The Chair reported that she and Clif Emmons came up with \$15,000 in savings in the proposed budget in their work last week.

Sharon Winn Fannon questioned whether providing a computer for visitors to use could allow the town to delay the COTTS digitization work; Clif Emmons communicated staff needs around minimizing interruptions and movement into the vault, and that the COTTS system being underway is a top priority for them. He highlighted other supports to office staff that are such as the upgraded phone systems and IT services.

Sharon Winn Fannon provided comparisons to two towns slightly bigger than Calais, Londonderry and South Hero; Calais appears to fall right in between them. The Chair commented that having spent so much time in the office this year has been a learning curve and very informative in terms of being able to bring an awareness of the day to day functions to the Board and public. Rose Pelchuck commented that this budget has been a very thoroughly digested and researched process and included a thank you to Sharon Winn Fannon for the spreadsheet she created. She valued everyone's input and appreciated the town staff, but said she finds it hard to see increases of this significance for town staff. The Board continued discussion on their commitment to finding any savings to the budget.

The Board agreed a letter would be created for legislators to be made aware of this Selectboard's stance on a number of issues. John Brabant stated his interest in a legislative study on the level of need for fire service coverage state wide, how it's currently being funded across the state, and how much the state and federal government fund (or do not fund) it.

The Board returned to consideration of salary and the Town Clerk's proposed FY20 salary, which reflects an additional 70 hours a year of work. Passionate discussion ensued on whether a .8 salaried and FLSA exempt position should expect to sometimes work hours beyond the expected weekly number and balancing that with quality of office life for employees. Sharon Winn Fannon commented that she respects, values and likes the people, and her analysis is not personal but is based on math. John Brabant mentioned the need to discuss paying for two fire departments, which is a significant cost to the Town. The Board noted the lowered proposed amount from the Operations Manager on the highway fund and decided to remove the article that included the tractor.

John Brabant made a motion for the Board to accept the budget with changes as discussed, contingent on the Chair and Clif Emmons bringing the edited budget to the staff meeting on Wednesday; if new information arises or this is problematic, the Board may revisit their budget. Clif Emmons seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

The overall budget increase was calculated to be 3.05%, down from 11.03%, and includes savings from a number of areas and the results of a team effort.

7. Town Report: The Chair will ask the Assistant Town Clerk to proofread the Town Report and the Board agreed it is then ready for publishing, after addition of language regarding adding a public computer workstation for research in the Town Office.
8. Computer Support Discussion: This item was tabled until a subsequent meeting.
9. Appreciation Dinner: The Board decided to postpone planning of an appreciation dinner since timely efforts are needed for a public Act 46 information meeting.
10. Review and approve minutes, warrants
 - a) The Board reviewed the invoices and orders were processed for payment.
 - b) Approval of minutes was tabled until a subsequent meeting.
11. Other Business: The registrar at Dotgov emailed Rose Pelchuck regarding their requirement for a two-step verification process. Rose Pelchuck is the billing point of contact; she work with office staff to resolve billing and administrative duties of DotGov Town business.
12. Executive Session for Personnel Matters: Sharon Winn Fannon made a motion to go into Executive Session at 9:36 pm per 1 V.S.A. subsection 313 (a) (3), personnel matters. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0. The Board resumed Regular Session at 10:10 pm. The Chair had nothing to report publicly.
13. Adjournment: Rose Pelchuck made a motion to adjourn at 10:11 pm. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0.

Date: 1/15/2019 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas, Recording Secretary
Approved by the Selectboard at the 1/28/2019 meeting

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