

## Selectboard Meeting Minutes

*Monday, April 27, 2020 at 7 pm via recorded Zoom conference call*

**Present:** Denise Wheeler (Chair), John Brabant (Vice Chair), Rose Pelchuck (Member), Sharon Winn Fannon (Member), Clif Emmons (Member), ORCA Media, Katie Lane-Karnas (Recording Secretary), Alfred Larrabee (Road Commissioner), Toby Talbot (Operations Manager), Judy Robert (Town Clerk), Sandra Ferver (Town Treasurer), Doug Newton, Bill Powell

1. Call to Order: Denise Wheeler called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm.
2. Public Comment: None.
3. Review, Additions/Changes to Agenda: None.
4. Updates/Reports
  - a) Road Commissioner and Operations Manager: The Operations Manager noted that final design for the George Road culvert has been worked on and is ready to be prepared into a bid package. The design requires an ASHTA-approved guardrail on both sides; it is so wide that a regular guardrail can't be run, and the drop for a vehicle would be as much as 10 feet. He asked the Board for feedback on use of jersey barriers, unpinned, potentially painted or with an alternative aggregate (because they meet the ASHTA standard); another solution may be to pour a concrete base in which the guardrails could be placed. In any case, the barriers must be able to be hooked together. Denise asked whether the Town-approved "rusty look" guardrails could be installed in front of jersey barriers to improve the aesthetics. The Operations Manager is waiting for determination from Doug Newton, an engineer with whom the town regularly consults on road projects, on whether the poured concrete plus guardrails would be ASHTA approved. There are no other engineer-generated options.

The Operations Manager has spoken with Shauna Clifford, the local V-Trans contact, about the risk of grant funds not being available, and she has confirmed that the funds have been earmarked for Calais and will not become unavailable. The group considered any potential concerns with the RFP and work crews in the context of COVID19 guidelines, making sure contractors are working within the guidelines of the state directives. The Road Commissioner added that this location is a comparatively low-traffic road. Guardrail could be added later following jersey barrier use. The Operations Manager will share Doug Newton's response with the Board (poured concrete base with guardrail) and the price difference between guardrail and jersey barriers. The group noted this is a \$165,000 grant award with a 10% in-kind match. The Board and Operations Manager will confirm the available option before putting out the RFP.

In order to get the stream permit, the town needs to negotiate temporary easements (permission to do work outside of the right of way) and one permanent easement (a small corner of the stream where the bank needs to be hardened) with abutting landowners. The Board asked the Operations Manager to have these documents prepared by the Town Attorney.

5. Executive Order Addendum 11: Crews up to five can work as long as they follow the social distancing rules. One person on site needs to be the designated “safety officer” and some Town officials have taken a training course, including appropriate use of the safety checklist. The Road Commissioner will take the online course. The Road Crew is due to return after April 30. Sharon Winn Fannon will create a checklist; bathroom notices for handwashing will be sought for posting (the Assistant Town Clerk will be asked); a thermometer has been ordered but not available yet; cleaning supplies are being sought; the break room will not be available. Katie Lane-Karnas will sew masks for the Road Crew.

The Road Commissioner expressed concerns about his ability to keep up with workplace responsibilities while meeting the cleaning and disinfecting guidelines. The group considered options. The Operations Manager proposed a weekly cleaning service to remove dust and grime so disinfecting wipes can be used. The Chair will contact a cleaning service to learn the cost and details. The Road Commissioner noted that the hardest part is going to be shared spaces and tools in the shop. Six-foot distances cannot be maintained for some tasks such as installing the grader blade (three people need to lift it). The Board acknowledged the challenges of this situation and that we are all in this together, and the need to take a commonsense approach and make sure OSHA standards are being met. The Board asked the Road Commissioner to communicate the expectation for the Crew to be ready and able to work on Monday May 4 (they were off all last week and have not been in today), and the Board will follow up with a memo.

6. March 2020 Treasurer/Delinquent Tax Collector Report: The Town Treasurer noted that revenues are falling short due to delinquent taxes coming in very slowly (in comparison to a typical year). She noted that it is conceivable the Town will end the fiscal year in a loss—expending more than revenues. (A loss is not the same as a deficit, a deficit is a situation in which the fund balance is not able to cover expenses). FY21 may be the time when this shortfall shows up.

The legislature is considering a proposal (S. 344) that would give one-time permission for Selectboards to adjust the voter approved budget so that the resulting tax rate (FY21) may be adjusted downward; thereby, making it easier for folks to pay their taxes in full. The Treasurer noted it might be worth taking out the Town Report ahead of the next meeting identifying where the budget could potentially be modified in anticipation of revenue shortfalls. (The proposed legislation does not name a particular percentage.)

The Town Treasurer noted that we are in uncharted territory. We have a lot of payments that come due early in the fiscal year; we MAY have a sufficient fund balance to pull us through that up to the first tax payment of FY21. That payment due date appears to be delayed, although we do not know by how much.

The listers have limitations in their access to the office, to inspect homes, etc., which are factors coming into play that make it unclear when we will have a grand list. The Town Treasurer remains hopeful Calais will be able to get tax bills out in time to have the first tax payment due in September. She explained the need for the Town to consider how to adjust the budget so that it can best try to collect enough taxes in this pandemic context. It is impossible to predict how this situation will impact delinquent taxpayers and this additional challenge. FY21 may be the place where the Town feels the pinch. She reiterated that it may be time to consider that if the Town gets legislative authority to trim the budget which will in turn lower the tax rate, the Board will want to be prepared to make adjustments based on what can be removed entirely and what can be put off for later in FY21.

The CLG grants for East Calais and Adamant are federal reimbursement funds and can't be spent or invaded by the state of Vermont; Scott Bassage seems confident that those expenses will in fact be reimbursed. The George Road grant expenses (such as contractor pay) will hit in the summer of FY21, and the Town doesn't have a way of knowing if the fund balance will be able to fund it as well as cover expenses through to the first tax due date. The CVRPC project, in contrast, requires no money out of the Town's pocket (rather, labor and in kind). John Brabant noted that the money has already been awarded and is being held in escrow; he spoke in support of taking out a note if needed to cover costs between expenditure and grant reimbursement. He noted future significant hardship and potential implications to future infrastructure funding and advocated for taking advantage of this earmarked money while it is available.

IF the legislature does NOT pass the legislation as described above, the Board can still consider what from the FY 21 budget can be put off for the future. The Board already has the ability to reduce the budget, but the legislature (S. 344) would add the ability to create a newly lowered tax rate.

The Town Clerk noted that there may be implications next year for people requesting abatements. The Town Treasurer agreed that the Town may even see requests for abatement of FY20 delinquent taxes. The Town Treasurer said her forecast includes planning to not have a deficit by FY22. The Board thanked her for her work.

7. Town Clerk Update: This item was not needed.
8. Town Hall Painting RFP: The Town Meeting article was originally for \$30,000 but voters graciously increased it to \$50,000 from the floor. The Board has added language to the RFP that allows the town to solicit offers and bids, but ultimately the Town will need to decide whether (or not) they will go ahead with the RFP responses. Sharon Winn Fannon made a motion that the Town release the RFP with the edit as noted ("Please note that due to circumstances related to COVID19 pandemic, whether to award the contract or commence the project will be at the sole discretion of the Calais Selectboard"). The motion was seconded and passed 5-0.
9. IT Update: Clif Emmons reported that the Town received a call from a resident who has been battling with Consolidated Communications for a few years trying to get improved internet

service, to no avail. Rob Fish mentioned that commercial grade internet hot spots are possible to be installed in Towns that need them. The Board will work with them to see if this can be coordinated quickly. The location has been identified as the Calais Town Garage. Verizon has a mobile hot spot option; another update on this will occur at the next meeting.

The “slingshot” system that accomplishes better backups at the Town Hall, from the Town Office, was discussed (see notes from previous meeting). The current failure of the Town Office system to be fully backed up daily presents a security issue, such as the liability the Town may face if locked out of their system. The cost is \$2200, and there is the possibility of grant coverage up to \$1000.

John Brabant made a motion that the Town move forward with the WIFI bridge and local backup project and fund it based on the quote from rbTech (\$2164), with the understanding the Town apply for the VLCT grant. Clif Emmons seconded, and the motion passed 5-0.

10. Chair Update

- The EMFD quarterly meeting has been tentatively scheduled for June 11 at 7pm (15 days short of the end of the fiscal year).

11. Review and approve minutes, warrants

- a) The Board reviewed the invoices and orders were processed for payment.
- b) Approval of minutes was tabled for a subsequent meeting.

12. Executive Session for Personnel Matters: Denise Wheeler made a motion to go into Executive Session at 8:48 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 9:14 pm. The Chair had nothing to report publicly.

13. Other Business/Old Business/New Business: None.

14. Adjournment: Denise Wheeler made a motion to adjourn at 9:14 pm. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0.

Date: 4/28/2020 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas, Recording Secretary  
*Approved by the Selectboard at the May 4, 2020 meeting*

*Click on the link below to view documents associated with this agenda:*  
<https://drive.google.com/open?id=137vom30WJXfmVBB27Br7tgLwfIDxvh3M>