

## Selectboard Meeting Minutes

*Monday, May 11, 2020 at 6:15 pm via 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), Kate Phillips, Larry Bush, Tobin Anderson, Scott Bassage, Nick Emlen, David Schütz, David Healy

1. Personnel Matters - Executive Session: Clif Emmons made a motion to go into Executive Session at 6:33 pm per 1 V.S.A. subsection 313 (a) (3), personnel matters. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0. There was a friendly amendment to allow Alfred Larrabee, Road Commissioner, to join at 6:39 pm. The Board resumed Regular Session at 7:15 pm. The Chair had nothing to report publicly.
2. Call to Order: Denise Wheeler called the meeting to order at 7:17 pm.
3. Public Comment: None.
4. Review, Additions/Changes to Agenda: None.
5. Updates/Reports: The Operations Manager noted that doubled or nested guardrails can be used across the span on the George Road grant project. The associated costs will be covered by the grant. A Class 2 grant will cover repaving from Route 14 to the school. Toby and Alfred will apply a structures grant to address a failing culvert on Luce Road.. The reimbursement for the structures grant is 80%, with 20% in-kind required from the town.

The East Calais stormwater project is getting ready for the engineering phase. The Road Commissioner noted that grading is happening as weather permits. There is approx. \$71,000 remaining for FY 20; there may be some surplus at the end of the fiscal year.

6. Emergency Management Update: Nick Emlen explained that the FEMA portal has been set up for Calais (Town Treasurer is the primary point of contact and Town Clerk is listed as secondary); for 2020, there is a minimum of \$3300 in expenses for the Town to qualify for reimbursement. FEMA has specific requirements for tracking expenses, which the Town Treasurer will handle.

The Regional Planning Commission needs permission to share local LEMP information with nearby towns, which could be helpful in mutual aid situations in terms of sharing resources. The Chair noted that Calais has done this in practice many times. Clif Emmons made a motion to authorize the Chair to sign the letter of support, which goes back to CVRPC; Rose Pelchuck seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

Nick Emlen discussed the Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS) which supports national leadership; federal, state, local, tribal and territorial governments; first responders; and other authorized national security and emergency preparedness users. It is intended to be used in an emergency or crisis situation when the landline network is congested and the probability of completing a normal call is reduced. The Department of Homeland Security approved Calais's request for participation in GETS, and the following officials specifically: Director of Emergency Management, Operations Manager, Road Commissioner, Selectboard members, Town Clerk, and the Information Officer. There is a card for each of these members which allows use of a pin when dialing with a landline to get your call through 90% of the time. Each member is encouraged to make a test call initially and then every few months.

7. CVFiber's Grant Application: David Healy explained that he is requesting an endorsement from the Selectboard for an upcoming grant program. It is a highly competitive process focused on getting to construction stage. He shared an update on the last few months of CVFiber's efforts: in January, a consultant was hired to do a feasibility study which is due back this week. One consideration of feasibility is whether the program can pay back for itself within three years. Existing models confirm this is likely. The consultant is looking at physical routes and where to do pilot programs. They are confident it can be done by underwriting.

The grant application is the first stage for getting a pilot program funded, and David explained three potential funding sources. VITA funds of \$4 million require a 10% match. The FCC sponsors a reverse auction for every unserved census blocks and David explained the details of the FCC reverse auction commitment, including collaboration with WEC. The third pool of money is the anticipated infrastructure money Congress is slated to talk about this year—it could be enough to pay for the entire project.

It doesn't appear that any of the money the state received for COVID related expenses could be used for broadband. Six routes are proposed, and the first route to be piloted will be based on where the best T-grade can be obtained.

The goal is fiber to every home. In the short term, a 5- to 8- year plan, the goal is to serve as many people as possible as quickly as possible, which would mean utilizing Wi-Fi at first. David noted that the question of when this will all happen, and to how many homes, will be answered by how much money is available next year. As long as there was a revenue stream, the plan is that fiber will go to every house. CV Fiber's internet capacity will far exceed Comcast's. John Brabant noted that we had an ordeal in a part of town with broadcast internet in the past; he expects the concerns of residents back then may be similar to concerns today. North Calais is underserved. Communication from CV Fiber to local residents may be door-to-door communication, with engineering work getting underway this winter.

David Healy was specifically requesting the Board sign a letter in support of CVFiber's Grant Application for their Northern Border Regional Commission Application for an Economic and Infrastructure Development Investment Program Grant for the construction of a Pilot High-Speed Internet Project of their Phase 1 efforts as referenced in their recently completed Feasibility Study. The Board planned to review the letter before their next meeting, May 26.

8. Calais Historic Preservation Commission's National Historic District Nomination, Adamant Village: The Board thanked Scott Bassage for the work completed, which reads like a story with beautiful pictures. David Schütz noted that Larry Bush has been very involved with this project. Kent's Corner and North Calais are on the National Historic Registry, and East Calais is pending. The draft application for Adamant is now completed. Brian Knight was hired as a consultant on East Calais and was hired back to complete Adamant's nomination. The project has two components: the nomination, and an oral history project that would complement the nomination document. The oral history segment will hopefully be endeavored this summer (involving people who can speak knowledgeably about the music school; the cooperative movement; and the quarrying operation). This is a CLG grant where the match is in-kind. An identified historic district status adds momentum to grant applications, such as that in East Calais to save the general store. Kate Phillips, archivist and historian, has recently attended the Commissions meetings and introduced herself. Rose Pelchuck thanked the Commission for the enthralling history and well-done application. Board members concurred.

Denise Wheeler made a motion to ask that the Historic Preservation Commission move forward with the application to nominate Adamant for the National Historic Register. Rose Pelchuck seconded, and the motion passed 5-0.

9. FY 21 Budget and Potential Savings: The Board is very aware of the financial situation that is likely to occur as a result of the pandemic, and will likely affect everyone continuing into FY21. The Board acknowledges the potential for financial impact in many, many ways, including impact for local government budgets. The Board is looking for opportunities where they may be able to reduce the town's budget; S. 344 permits lowering the property tax rate to respond to a lower budget, once the Selectboard has made reductions.

The Board took a first run at reviewing the FY21 budget and identifying possible areas of cost savings. The next step is to invite various chairs and commissions to come talk to the Board about such reductions, find opportunities for savings such as projects that could be put off, or to reduce the amount put in to reserve funds. The items to be discussed are not a "done deal," but rather a first step looking at potential locations and the conversation may proceed to include more, or less, in terms of reductions. The Board is very cognizant and caring about what taxpayers may be up against and are looking at what we can do. The Board will be having discussions with groups to learn what their plans are; the governor's guidance has changed significantly in the last weeks, for example. Scott Bassage appreciated the efforts of the Board. Larry Bush commented that the woodchipper consideration should include its ability to handle the dead ash trees in Calais as resulting from Emerald Ash Borer.

Some examples discussed included that Selectboard stipends may be eliminated and the invasive species program may be eliminated. The Town Hall may not be fully repainted as initially planned. Existing paint on older clapboards may be able to wait; lower boards with only primer may be accomplished this year to protect those boards until next year. The RFP language will allow addressing these ideas.

10. IT Update: Clif Emmons noted that the Town Office is waiting for equipment to come in for server replacement.

11. Chair Update

- Daniel Keeney, Swim Committee Chair, said that pulling off a successful program this summer is still under consideration. There have been challenges finding a swim instructor, who must be certified in a swim training program quite a ~~location~~ distance away. The committee is weighing these issues and will return to the Board.
- The location for June 24 tax sales is likely to be at the Town Hall, allowing for social distancing.
- The next meeting is Tuesday, May 26, 2020.

12. Executive Session for Personnel Matters: Rose Pelchuck made a motion to go into Executive Session at 8:35 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 9:18 pm. The Chair had nothing to report publicly.

13. Other Business/Old Business/New Business: Next regular meeting will be Tuesday, May 26, 2020 at 7:00 pm, day after Memorial Day.

14. Adjournment: Rose Pelchuck made a motion to adjourn at 9:18 pm. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0.

Date: 5/12/2020 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas, Recording Secretary  
*Approved by the Selectboard at the 6/8/2020 meeting*

*Click on the link below to view documents associated with this agenda:*  
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