

Selectboard Meeting Minutes

Monday, June 8, 2020 at 7 pm via Zoom conference call

Present: Denise Wheeler (Chair), John Brabant (Vice Chair), Rose Pelchuck (Member), Sharon Winn Fannon (Member), Clif Emmons (Member, attending at 7:40 PM), Jerome Lipani (ORCA), Katie Lane-Karnas (Recording Secretary), Kate Phillips, Alfred Larrabee (Road Commissioner), Toby Talbot (Operations Manager), Doug Newton, Dan George, Linda Schütz, Larry Bush, Jeffrey Olesky, Reenie De Gues, Chance Payette, David Schütz

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: None.
4. Operations Manager and Road Commissioner Updates:George Road Project: The bid opening for the George Road project was Friday, and there were three bidders bidding on the scope of work defined by the Town. The Operations Manager explained that this grant was awarded last year, and the money has already been set aside for this project; there is no issue as far as State funding impacts due to COVID19. There are four currently pending grants (two Better Roads grants, Marshfield Road ditching and bank stabilization; a paving grant by the school; and a structures grant on Luce Road). Until the legislature passes the transportation bill, there will be no action taken on these projects to be funded by grant monies.

Green Mountain Trucking and Excavation was the low bidder by approximately \$18,000. . The Board asked the operations manager and road commissioner to report on the George Road low bidder's ability to meet the selection criteria outlined in the town's purchasing policy, adopted in 2015 and available in full on the town's website .

Sharon Winn Fannon read through the criteria, and Toby indicated that Blue Mountain was the low bidder and met all the criteria that applied to this project as outlined below:

- 1) Price
- 2) Bidder's ability to perform within the specified time limits
- 3) Bidder's experience and reputation, including past performance for the Town
- 4) Quality of the materials and services specified in the bid
- 5) Bidder's ability to meet other terms and conditions, including insurance and bod requirements
- 6) Bidder's financial responsibility
- 7) Bidder's availability to provide future service, maintenance, and support
- 8) Bidder's capability to complete the task

- 9) Any other factors that the selectboard determines are relevant and appropriate in connection with a given project or service

Doug Newton attended the meeting to support the Highway Department's recommendation of Green Mountain Trucking and Excavation and mentioned a positive letter of recommendation the Town received regarding Green Mountain. The Road Commissioner noted that he will be on site making sure that any contracted bidder performs work as expected.

Sharon Winn Fannon made a motion to accept the Highway Department's recommendation and award the contract for the George Road project bid to Blue Mountain Trucking and Excavation. Denise Wheeler seconded and the motion passed 4-0 (Clif Emmons was not present for the vote)..

- a) Summer Roads Update: The Road Commissioner commented that this week will be largely spent at the Town Hall finishing the grade, driveway (ADA compliance), grass seeding, and raking of the septic mound, all of which allows the Town to obtain the Certificate of Occupancy. Ditching and culvert work will occur soon. The Department is waiting to hear what happens with the four outstanding grants identified above to determine where they will fall in the work schedule. Grading work continues ongoing as needed (one grader is being serviced and hopefully operational soon). The Town had temporarily run out of sodium chloride, which is now stocked.
- b) Roadside mowing began today, and the Road Commissioner requested advice from the Board about the four roads that had been marked "no-mow" for invasives pulling last year (Old West Church Road, Fowler Road, Bliss Pond Road, and Singleton Road). John Brabant spoke with Peter Harvey about this year's wild chervil efforts. John noted that he has been pulling chervil for three years and they continue to grow as before with seemingly no deterring; plant fragments created during mowing generally do not result in new plants. John questioned the value of pulling, when mowing before flowering prevents seed spread. The Board discussed inviting Joanne Garton to the next meeting to discuss best practice and an invasives mowing schedule. In the meantime, the Board asked the Road Crew to continue mowing all roads except the four identified for no-mow last year. Sharon Winn Fannon emphasized the board has been clear in its policy that mowing early and often is important. The road Department should not hold up mowing waiting to get direction from the select board; Sharon encourages the Road Commissioner to communicate directly with Peter Harvey, remembering the discussions we've had in prior years to embrace input from citizens who take the time to learn about environmental issues and bringing helpful information to the board and road operations leadership. The Operations Manager will send the Board a draft plan from Joanne Garton in 2018.
- c) Curbcut Application at 533 Nelson Pond Road: Board members will visit the site individually to see the location of Daniel and Christina George's curbcut application. Jeffrey Olesky, civil engineer on the project, noted that the full engineer work on the proposed project was submitted to the zoning administrator, and will email the same to the Road Commissioner. He will schedule a site visit with the Road Commissioner as well.

- d) Review Opportunities for FY 21 Highway Budget Savings: The Board asked the Road Commissioner what items he has identified for savings. (Act 102 (S.344) allows Selectboards to reduce approved budgets for tax savings.) The Road Commissioner commented that the reduced price of fuel (gas and diesel) would allow reducing that line item by \$5,000. He wondered where further savings could be found; the gravel budget could have material reduction, if winter roads can be acceptable with less material. He pointed out that McCullough's, the local sand pit, is closing which will have implication of increased trucking distance cost. The group briefly discussed if there may be an opportunity for the Town to purchase this winter's sand from McCullough's before they close, but it remains unclear whether this is feasible. The Chair made a note to warn the topic for a future meeting and asked the Road Commissioner to calculate an anticipated cost of trucking sand from further afield.
5. Call-out Fire System; Seacoast Security Proposal: Clif Emmons updated the group on Seacoast Security's quote (Mountainview Security is the local provider for Seacoast). There is no insurance savings benefit from using Seacoast in Town buildings. The Operations Manager noted that the quote is for a full panel with smoke detectors and dial-out ability at the Town Office, at an installation cost just over \$2,000 (the Town Hall already has a system, but was just in need of a service provider for call-out feature). The Town Garage has both security and fire set up with this call-out service. The cost right now is approx. \$50 per month because of the security portion. Adding the Town Hall and Town Office (for fire protection, not security) results in \$37 per month for each of them. The Operations Manager commented that installation of the fire alarm at the Town Office is eligible for a grant at 50% coverage of the installation cost. He recommended engaging Seacoast to hook up the Town Hall as soon as possible. The Board discussed the importance of protecting local buildings. The Town made a significant investment in renovating the Hall, and it is a minimal amount for protection. The Board asked the Operations Manager to learn whether the Town Office can have a "panic button" option.

Denise Wheeler made a motion to authorize the Operations Manager to find out about the panic button; to have Seacoast Security immediately provide service for the Town Hall; and to apply for a grant for the Town Office before engaging service for the Office. Rose Pelchuck seconded, and the motion passed 5-0.

6. Use of Curtis Pond Swim Area: Linda Schütz, John Rosenbloom, Reenie DeGus, and Katie Lane-Karnas, an ad hoc group of citizens willing to work on safety guidelines for Curtis Pond during COVID 19, identified three goals: help swimmers safely enter and exit the water observing at least a six foot distance; build awareness of the need for community courtesy during Covid-19 at Curtis Pond; and consider VT State guidelines for recreational use in these recommendations. The group proposed signage making people aware of expectations at the parking entrance and signage at both swim areas helping ensure social distance while entering and exiting the pond to swim. Social distance is possible on the walkway down to the swim areas (the trail is wider than 6'). On the grassy side, there are two entrances to the pond, and is used for fishing and swimming. The first entrance is more narrow, and would be identified for swimmers to safely enter and exit the pond. The other access area could be used for fishing or families.

The group discussed promoting use of the two docks in a manner that allows for sharing. The hope is that when people understand there is a management practice being implemented, they will get on board and understand and help. If grassy areas are well mowed, they can be encouraging spots for people to sit. John Brabant clarified that his previous comments would limit Pond use only to Calais residents and their guests. The ad hoc group members have different perspectives on whether to limit the number of people at the Pond. The Governor's most recent order limits the number of people at one area 25 people. Rose Pelchuck felt the signage was a good idea and does not support limiting the area to only Calais residents. The Board considered that it can watch the situation and take further action if needed. A next step may be to determine a maximum number of people the Town determines appropriate at any time. The question of enforcement makes it challenging, and we will be relying on peoples' good will.

A motion was made to approve the ad hoc committee's recommendation, allow Linda Schütz to purchase signage and bill the Town, and have the Road Crew install it. Clif Emmons seconded and the motion passed 5-0.

The ad hoc group will follow up on signage (Always on Time Signs and Designs) and work with the road crew to get them installed. The Chair will ask the Road Crew to continue mowing. The ad hoc committee will write a draft PR statement.

7. Appointments: The Trails Committee will return to the Board at an upcoming meeting for appointing new members (and possibly expanding the number of seats on the Committee).

David Schütz noted that there are two women interested in joining the Historic Preservation Commission, Kate Phillips and Mary Alice Proffitt. Kate Phillips attended and spoke with the Board about her valuable experience at HPC meetings and desire to serve even though she has moved to East Montpelier (this is permitted). Kate Phillips provided her resume which shows her significant relevant education and experience to bring to the HPC. The HPC is currently working on the process of getting both East Calais and Adamant on the National Registry of Historic Places. The HPC is focusing on helping the East Calais Trust with the General Store. Maple Corner would be the only hamlet in Calais not on the National Registry. The Commission hopes to have a Maple Corner resident join their work for a future effort to apply for Maple Corner's admission to the National Registry. Denise Wheeler made a motion to appoint Kate Phillips and Mary Alice Proffitt to the Historic Preservation Commission for a term of three years to fill vacant memberships. Clif Emmons seconded and the motion passed 5-0.

8. Consideration of VLCT Resolution: VLCT has joined the National League of Cities' campaign to lobby Congress for direct federal aid to cities and towns throughout the country and is inviting selectboards to sign a resolution to show support to VLCT's federal delegation. The resolution states that "All cities, towns and villages in Vermont are essential, and Vermont local officials support fair and direct federal emergency aid to reopen and rebuild local American economies."

Clif Emmons made a motion that the Board agree with the VLCT resolution and members will sign it individually. The motion was seconded and passed 5-0.

9. Woodbury Volunteer Fire Dept. 2020-2021 Contract for Fire Protection Services: At the last meeting the Board asked the WVFD whether there were areas to identify for possible budget reduction. Chance Payette reported there are no budget categories that might reliably be reduced, considering there is no way to predict the volume or type of emergencies, and the crew is entirely volunteer. In signing the contract, the Town loses the ability to keep the WVFD portion of the budget on the table for COVID19 reduction relief. The Board planned to wait until the June 22 meeting to sign the contract, noting that we owe it to ourselves and the Town to leave no stone unturned; at the same time, the Board does support the Department and the contract. The contract does not start until July 1. John Brabant noted that the shoe is most likely to drop in the FY 23 budget. It is yet unclear what the federal government support is going to look like. Vermont is looking at a \$600 million shortfall; this is a national problem not limited to Calais. The WVFD contract will be looked at on June 22 and the Board really appreciates and supports the Department and all that they do. Chance Payette will send the July 1 billing for the first quarter to the Town as soon as possible.

10. Town Hall: Clif Emmons noted that very few inquiries have come in regarding the Town Hall painting RFP. At least one contractor the Town reached out to has declined to bid because they are so busy; one other is in contact with John and David regarding questions and does plan to bid (the 19th is the last date). Denise Wheeler, Clif Emmons, and David Schütz will look at the initial bids and share them with the Board. Realistically, it is seeming like it may not happen this year. The Board asked the team to be sure to look at the Calais's Criteria for Bid Selection as set out in the purchasing policy. Any contractor engaged is being asked to let the Town know if and how the project can be accomplished in phases.

There are a few items outstanding for obtaining a Certificate of Occupancy. Hopefully the building will be inspected the week of June 15.

A draft Management Agreement is being created by the Friends group, and the Board will be asked to review it and bring any questions to the next Board meeting. A separate document will ultimately be created for rental; at this time, an overview of what may be included in such a document is being defined and will be shared to the Board as "General Terms and Conditions for Rental." The group agreed that they should all be proud to be at this point after everything that has gone on since the project's inception.

11. FY 21 Budget Opportunities for Savings (S.344): Act 102 (S.344) creates a small window of opportunity (in terms of timeframe), and if changes are made, the tax rate will be set on whatever that reduced budget amount is. Once tax bills go out, the opportunity is done. The group considered if and how much of a reduction to identify as a goal. For every \$20,000 reduced in the budget, there is roughly \$20 municipal tax savings per every \$200,000 of assessed value. 3% reduction on the whole budget would result in approximately \$40 savings on every \$200,000 of assessed value. The Town Treasurer cautions people may expect such savings to continue in the future. John Brabant described a possible issue with reducing by a percentage amount -- say 5% -- is that then becomes the official budget. If monies become available to help towns offset impact due to COVID19, that 5% may now be ineligible for funding. If there is a shortfall in revenues based on inability to pay by taxpayers, the Town could possibly be compensated for some shortfall of the new budget, but not the additional amount for running the Town that had been trimmed out of the official budget. This may be a

risk taken and caution may be warranted. If the Town comes up short, there may be more information available at that time to take into account about how to best proceed. If the Town happens to have a surplus, as a result of being conservative about expenses, then that can be refunded back to taxpayers. Similarly, the Town can request voters allocate a surplus going forward to reduce their future taxes. Act 102 (S.344) allows the Town to waive interest and penalties for people who are delinquent.

A 5% reduction to the total budget would translate into a reduction of \$45 per every \$100,000 of value, or just over \$90 for a \$200,000 assessed home. Realistically, can the town budget be cut enough to make a difference? It may put the Town at risk for accessing other funds, at a time when people need the Town to be here, and need the services to be here. \$90 is not a huge savings for a household with a home assessed at \$200,000. The school taxes are the larger influence on property tax bills, and unfortunately Act 102 (S.344) does not give school districts the same ability to reduce taxes as it does towns. The Board has reviewed the budget extensively at a number of meetings and recognized the best effort may be for the Town to be as diligent as we can, watching overtime, and watching expenses and potential areas for savings. There are a few items, such as Selectboard stipends and the “budget opportunities for savings” spreadsheet, that members will review for savings without actually and officially reducing the budget. The Board discussed the potential to be fiscally prudent throughout the upcoming fiscal year, to hold back money and create a surplus if possible.

12. IT Update: The Town Garage was removed from consideration as a location for Wi-Fi hotspot because of safety concerns. The East Calais General Store will ultimately be the location for the hotspot; an interim solution is locating it at the East Calais Rec Center, generously supported by Scott Bassage getting an internet connection initially set up. The replacement server has been installed at the Town Office. There is a “final migration” that needs to occur. Town Office staff identified mid-July as the ideal time for the work. Internal wiring in the Town Hall building will be needed before the “slingshot” setup can be installed. This setup will save some money monthly compared to the currently engaged cloud backup.

13. Chair Update:

- EMFD quarterly meeting with E. Montpelier Selectboard for Thursday, 6/11/2020 has been cancelled (their meeting room has not been opened for meetings yet). The Board will ask the EMFD to provide an overview summary and the financials to review ahead of the end of the fiscal year. The next meeting is August.
- Board of Abatement meeting has been scheduled for 6/22/20 at 6:30 pm via Zoom.

14. Review and approve minutes, warrants

- a) The Board reviewed the invoices and orders were processed for payment.
- b) John Brabant moved and Denise Wheeler seconded to approve the minutes of the 5/11/2020 meeting, with the changes as noted; the motion passed 5-0.
Denise Wheeler moved and Clif Emmons seconded to approve the minutes of the 5/26/2020 meeting, with the changes as noted; the motion passed 5-0.
Clif Emmons moved and John Brabant seconded to approve the minutes of the 5/31/2020 meeting, with the changes as noted; the motion passed 4-0 (Sharon Winn Fannon abstained).

15. Executive Session for Personnel Matters: John Brabant made a motion to go into Executive Session at 9:40 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 9:56 pm. The Chair had nothing to report publicly.

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

17. Adjournment: Sharon Winn Fannon made a motion to adjourn at 9:56 pm. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0.

Date: 6/9/2020 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas, Recording Secretary
Approved by the Selectboard at the 7/27/2020 meeting

Click on the link below to view documents associated with this agenda:
https://drive.google.com/open?id=1aYovj7rrcSmDJkJa78grz4GUCZFTN_5z