

Selectboard Special Meeting Minutes

Monday, August 5, 2019 at 6pm at the Calais Town Offices

Present: Denise Wheeler (Chair), John Brabant (Vice Chair), Rose Pelchuck (Member), Sharon Winn Fannon (Member, arriving 6:23 pm), Clif Emmons (Member), Jerome Lipani (ORCA), Katie Lane-Karnas (Recording Secretary), Judy Robert (Town Clerk), Sandra Ferver (Town Treasurer), Barbara Butler (Assistant Town Clerk), Toby Talbot (Operations Manager), Jan Ohlsson (Lister, Planning Commission)

1. Call to Order: Denise Wheeler called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. The Chair acknowledged the recent death of Ernie Parrish, and the group expressed their deep regret and keeping his family in their thoughts. September 8 has been tentatively scheduled for Ernie's memorial service at the Old West Church. The Board noted the deep sadness they feel about Ernie's passing and his many contributions to the Town.
2. Public Comment: None.
3. Review, Additions/Changes to Agenda: The Operations Manager added an update on the one-ton truck. The truck that was found in NH is the same price as the one the Board had already approved. A disadvantage of waiting for a truck that isn't built until early winter is that the trade in truck would be gone, leaving the department without one truck for the start of winter; if the trade in truck is not traded until next spring, it will return less value. Moving ahead now would allow the department to have a working truck in a month. The Board discussed their preference to be kept apprised of timing and not be rushed in decision making in the future, and asked the Operations Manager to move ahead with identifying a truck for purchase at this time. The total price of the new truck is \$116,000, reduced by trade in value of \$18,000, for a total expenditure of \$98,000. The [minutes](#) of the 6/24/2019 meeting reflect the Board's approval of the details of the purchase: *approve a) a five-year lease purchase of a mid-duty truck in an amount not to exceed \$116,000 and b) trade the 2015 F550 truck for no less than \$18,000, so the net cost to the town of the new 5-year lease is no more than \$98,000.* [Minutes](#) of the 7/8, 7/15, and 7/22/2019 meetings also include details on the ongoing discussion.
4. Setting Property Tax Rates: The Town Treasurer attended, providing a comprehensive set of handouts for the Board to refer to in understanding contributing factors in setting the tax rate.
 - The FY20 amount to be raised in taxes is \$1,428,650. This amount is calculated by Calais's approved budgetary expenses reduced by the amount of projected income.
 - The rate is calculated by dividing the amount to be raised by the current grand list. This year's grand list did reduce by a number of variables: listers corrections and adjustments, increased number of veterans, higher current use participation, and a lower Comcast assessment.
 - There are 10 veterans or veteran survivors in the town of Calais entitled to receive the Veterans' Exemption on their property tax bill. Calais allows a \$40,000 exemption.

This means that if a veteran's home is assessed at \$100,000.00, the tax rate is applied to \$60,000.00 of value; the remaining assessed value is exempt from taxation to the veteran.

- The State of Vermont allows for a veteran's exemption of \$10,000.00. Because Calais provides for an additional \$30,000 in veterans' exemption, the property taxes on the \$300,000 of assessed value (10 veterans times \$30,000 of exempted value) must be collected from the Calais taxpayers. The FY20 veterans' exemption tax rate is 00.0015 and is included in the Local Agreement tax rate. In sum, the Town remains obligated to fund the state education tax associated with these exempted Veteran properties (anything over \$10,000 of assessed value for each property).
- Non-approved, non-homestead contract exemptions (by vote in Calais at Town Meeting): there are seven of these properties in Calais (such as the Adamant Coop and Community Center). Their total assessed value is \$588,200 and therefore \$9,712.95 needs to be collected: the resulting tax rate is 0.0049.

The Town Treasurer's recommendation to the Board for the 2019 tax rate is as follows: town tax rate, 0.7107; veteran's exemption rate, 0.0015; non-homestead contract rate, 0.0049; and a **recommended 2019 total town tax rate of 0.7171**. As an example, the tax consequences of the *town's* portion of the tax rate per \$200,000 of assessed value would be \$55 above the 2018 tax amount. The Board appreciated the Treasurer's prepared documents and explanation, and requested she include some of the information in the tax mailing. John Brabant made a motion to approve setting the tax rate as outlined in the documentation from the Treasurer and as presented. Denise Wheeler seconded, and the motion passed 5-0.

5. Interior Redesign of the Town Office: Clif Emmons and Denise Wheeler have been meeting routinely with the office staff; the Chair reported that the office is incredibly busy with the number of people utilizing the space now (Clerk, Asst. Clerk/Treas., Treasurer and 3 Listers) compared to when the Office first built (Town Clerk/Treasurer). Immediate reconfiguration efforts before tax season kicks in may be reasonable. There is currently \$65,000 in the reserve fund for the office. The Town Clerk highlighted the unpredictable timing of customers using the space, the number of hours the three staff members are in the small inner space, use of space by the listers in a small corner alongside researchers and the copy machine. The listers' corner makes the accessible window hard for disabled customers to access and removes the possibility for privacy in discussions at the desk (such as tax delinquencies). A preliminary proposal was reviewed in detail, including moving the listers out of the lobby area and freeing both customer windows. The Historical Society and Robinson Sawmill's very large filing cabinets will eventually move to the Town Hall. In the meantime, they could be stored in a storage unit. The Town is at critical mass in terms of storage in the vault, and a retention policy/destruction schedule will be created soon.

Denise Wheeler made a motion to approve the project proposal for quick and immediate fixes for a Town Office re-design as outlined in the document presented, in an amount not to exceed \$4,000 and including communication and IT upgrades and updates. Rose Pelchuck seconded. The Board expressed their preference to keep documents at the Town office (rather than offsite) and John Brabant will help with storage container investigation. The Chair will ask the Road Commissioner to look at and work with office staff on leveling that may need to be completed for a storage container to be placed. The motion passed 5-0.

The office staff expressed their intention to work as inexpensively as possible to maintain a pleasing aesthetic and make the office more accessible and efficient, minimizing spending on this reconfiguration, and saving funds for a more comprehensive future office redesign.

6. Errors and Omissions Certificate: The Listers provided two items to the Board. These changes were provided by the Listers to the Town Treasurer before she created the proposed 2019 tax rate; in other words, these errors and omissions have been taken into account already.
 - 1) A computer glitch (a communication oversight between two computer programs) for owners Green Mountain Electric (\$-25,000), Hardwick Electric (\$41,400), and Washington Electric (-\$182,800).
Sharon Winn Fannon made a motion to acknowledge and sign the errors and omissions as presented by the Listers. Rose Pelchuck seconded, and the motion passed 5-0.
 - 2) Owner Edward Walbridge's East Calais General Store property was corrected (\$18,200) due to a corrected error land grade. Sharon Winn Fannon made a motion that the Board accept and sign the errors and omissions certificate for Edward Walbridge's property; the motion was seconded and passed 5-0.

7. Review and approve minutes, warrants
 - a) The Board reviewed the invoices and orders were processed for payment.
 - b) John Brabant moved and Clif Emmons seconded to approve the minutes of the 6/24/2019 meeting, with the changes as noted; the motion passed 5-0.
John Brabant moved and Clif Emmons seconded to approve the minutes of the 7/8/2019 meeting, with the changes as noted; the motion passed 5-0.
John Brabant moved and Clif Emmons seconded to approve the minutes of the 7/15/2019 meeting, with the changes as noted; the motion passed 5-0.

8. Executive Session for Personnel Matters: Denise Wheeler made a motion to go into Executive Session at 7:22 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 9:35 pm. John Brabant made a motion to authorize Andy Felice, Facilities Maintenance Director, to engage a contractor to remove part of the existing roof and perform repairs to the rear of the town office building at a cost not to exceed \$5,000.00. It was noted the roof repair is long overdue and must be fixed. Denise Wheeler seconded the motion, it was voted on and carried 5-0.

9. IT RFP Contracts: Clif Emmons provided a brief update about the IT RFP review process and will provide a full update at the regular meeting on August 26th.

10. Other Business/Old Business/New Business: The Chair noted there will be a Joint Meeting of the Calais and East Montpelier Selectboards with the EMFD Board of Directors on Thursday, August 8, 2019, at 7:00 p.m. in the meeting room of the Emergency Services Facility (54 Village Acres in E. Montpelier). The East Montpelier Fire Department will provide a budget and emergency services update. The public, as always, is invited to attend.

11. Adjournment: Denise Wheeler made a motion to adjourn at 9:50 pm. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0.

Date: 8/7/2019 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas, Recording Secretary
Approved by the Selectboard at the 10/14/2019 meeting

Click on the link below to view documents associated with this agenda:
<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1nMgVg6g0ESP1O1J8s9MCI819oFXUP72K>