

SPECIAL SELECTBOARD MEETING
Sunday, March 19, 2023, 9:00 am Calais Town Hall
Minutes Approved on 3/27/23

Attending: Gabrielle Malina, Jamie Moorby, Anne Winchester, Anne Toolan, Jordan Keyes, Barbara Butler, Larry Bush, Donna Fitch, Scott Bassage, Reed Cherington, Hasso Ewing, John Stafford, Peter Dailey, Larry Moquin, Tyler Stecher, Dana Huoppi, Rick Kehne, Toby Talbot, Wendy Wilton, Sandra Ferver and Rose Pelchuck.

Actions:

The Calais Selectboard warned this special meeting for the purpose of organizing and educating the new Selectboard. The meeting was Called to Order by Anne Winchester at 8:59 am. Jordan Keyes made a motion to go into Executive Session with the town attorney, Robert Fletcher Esq., in accordance with VSA § 313 (a)(B)(F) to get briefed on Curtis Pond Dam issues. Jamie Moorby seconded the motion, voted on and carried 5-0. Gabrielle Malina made a motion to come out of Executive Session at 9:42 am. Jordan Keyes seconded the motion, voted on and carried 5-0.

Additions or changes to the agenda – none.

Approval of Selectboard Minutes from March 13th – Gabrielle Malina made a motion to approve the Minutes. The motion was seconded by Jordan Keyes. One correction was made. The motion was voted on and carried 5-0.

Document Sharing and Secure email Systems – Jordan Keyes reviewed the possible options for technology services with regards to document sharing and secure email systems for the Selectboard and other town officials. Rb Technologies, LLC recommends going with Microsoft based Outlook, which is easier for them to access and maintain. The Town already has seven Microsoft licenses. Jordan made a full list of info, including costs to compare. All three options would be cloud-based. Jordan noted the town needs to have secure storage of documents and emails while conducting the business of the town. The gmail.com system is individually controlled and rbTech can migrate the data from these accounts to a new system at a cost. Jordan said they all have about the same amount of cyber security. The Selectboard discussed the amount in the FY23 budget for IT Contracts and IT Consulting (\$7996.00) and the noted increase in the FY24 (\$14,577.00). Jordan noted since most people are using Word and Excel, it makes sense to add email to what they are used to using. Jordan offered to assume the responsibility of training and thinks the Microsoft option is the way to go. Barbara Butler will work with Jordan to review the email lists of town officials.

Barbara Butler noted VLCT and other groups are waiting to have the Selectboard members email addresses. **Gabrielle Malina made a motion to have Jordan Keyes go ahead and obtain the Microsoft based email and document sharing system for the town. The motion was seconded by Anne Winchester. The motion was voted on and carried 5-0. This motion will be ratified at the next regular meeting.** Donna Fitch inquired if there is a list of town-owned IT equipment. Jordan Keyes said rbTech does have a list but perhaps some predates rbTech.

Public Input from Calais Citizens: Open Opportunity to Address the Selectboard

Larry Bush, member of the Conservation Commission and Historic Preservation Commission, spoke regarding equipment available in the public meeting spaces in Calais. Larry noted the shortcomings that come with in person, zoom or hybrid meetings. The town invested to refurbish the town hall as a

municipal meeting space and most people agree the acoustics are terrible. Larry said he couldn't hear what the SB was saying or the public speaking at a recent meeting with several people in the room. Larry recommends that the Selectboard puts as a very high priority to make the town hall functionally adequate to hear and to have equipment available that makes meetings more accessible. Hearing is a real problem for many.

Larry Bush went on to make his second point, the meeting space in the town office is vastly superior to hear during meetings (zoom or in-person), although there is a 16-person limit in that space. Donna Fitch stated no one manages the building (Town Hall). Donna told the Selectboard that she cleans it and John McCullough, the architect who designed it, keeps an eye on the building but nobody has been tasked to manage this (Town Hall) building. Jamie Moorby noted that beyond acoustics, high speed internet service will improve the functionality of the town hall once CV Fiber is installed.

Donna Fitch, former Town Clerk and Treasurer, was asked to make a list of Highway Grants to present to the Selectboard. Donna provided a spreadsheet itemizing the highway grants and status of each. The highway grants were formerly managed by Toby Talbot, former Highway Operations Manager. Donna stressed the importance of setting up responsibility of the grant originator (for example the Planning Commission or Historic Preservation Commission) and follow through to completion. Final records should be kept in the Town Office. The Agency of Commerce and Community Development is known for providing grant funding. Scott Bassage, who wrote 12 grants for Historic Preservation over the years, stated that writing is the easy part, administering them is just horrible. Donna Fitch worked in tandem with Toby Talbot when she was treasurer and compared notes to manage in-kind matching. Scott Bassage said Marc Mihaly, State Representative, would like to get small towns access to the large grants afforded to big towns. Scott noted Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVPRC) has the staff, skills and experience and the large grants need a full-time paid staff to administer. Barbara Butler said she is sure there is grant information, but that there are no files at the town office. Sandra Ferver, Treasurer, told the former Selectboard that someone needed to get a handle on this. Gabrielle Malina asked if the Selectboard should solicit townspeople to bring forward any grant information they have in their possession. Gabrielle inquired about ARPA grant funds that Calais has received. Jamie Moorby recalls seeing a list and will put it in the SB google drive. April 30th is the funding report deadline for ARPA funds Barbara Butler stated. Barbara will forward to the full Selectboard the ARPA fund report.

Scott Bassage ended the public input session with sage advice for the new Selectboard member - "have fun, it will reduce the stress and improve the quality. You are taking on an incredible amount of stuff." Scott may have a solution for zooming in; it's in the testing stage. Donna Fitch appreciates the level of detail in the agendas.

Vermont Building Energy Code Ordinance Compliance Project – Anne Winchester said they want towns to join a group of state agencies, professional organizations and municipalities that are applying for a grant to create a system for enforcing the Vermont state energy code. At this time they would like our support for the grant application. If they receive the grant, they will convene a working group to discuss solutions. Gabrielle Malina said the public input process is very difficult to make meaningful changes. Jamie Moorby showed the list of cities signed on to this are South Burlington and Montpelier. Jordan Keyes spoke about the town having some say about enforcement, noting differences from one municipality to another. Jordan asked what the effects are on the citizens and municipality? Can we recognize the importance of the issue? Anne Winchester said we can say we didn't have time to fully consider it and would like to stay informed on this. Anne Winchester will let them know we can't support this at this time.

Adopt Rules of Procedure – Gabrielle Malina made a motion to adopt the current Rules of Procedure used by the previous Selectboard. Jordan Keyes seconded the motion; it was voted on and carried 5-0.

Discuss Preferred Format of Agendas and Minutes – Jordan Keyes appreciates more detail in the Minutes, noting it is unnecessary to include verbatim remarks. Jordan recommends a comment and brief notes on various positions are important. Jamie Moorby agreed, noting she’s received positive public comments on our longer form agendas, and thinks detailed minutes would be appreciated as well. Rose Pelchuck added her comments regarding taking Minutes for 11 years for the Selectboard and on other boards as well.

Meet the Calais Road Crew and Discuss Priorities and Concerns – The newly elected Selectboard members introduced themselves to the Road Crew. The Road Crew members were welcomed and introduced themselves as follows: John Stafford, Tyler Stecker, Peter Dailey and Dana Huoppi. Absent was Ogden Hersey (who was out salting). Larry Moquin, Jr. from LiUNA, regional organizer for a union was present stating he was representing the union since the Road Crew filed cards with them last fall.

Anne Winchester wanted to hear what the day is like; how do you organize yourselves in summer and winter. The crew organizes the night before to stay ahead of school buses. Days start 7 am to 4 pm, all have their own plow routes, and they keep an eye on their own route for downed trees and signs. Consensus was they are doing really well without a Road Commissioner, stating Dana Huoppi is an essential part of the road crew, a part timer who works more in winter as necessary.

Anne Winchester asked about issues.

The Crew expressed a concern about an area of Lightening Ridge Road where the road is straight and people tend to speed upsetting some of the people whose homes are on that portion. A discussion regarding working with the residents on that portion of the road to develop traffic calming techniques ensued.

Other concerns included:

- Lack of parts to install the new radar speed signs.
- The need for someone with authority to approve expenditures and help with town highway and weight restrictions filing. The selectboard later appointed Toby Talbott as Highway Grants Administrator to serve this function.
- The need for a Selectboard liaison to work directly with the Road Crew. The selectboard later appointed Anne Toolan and Jamie Moorby as co-road commissioners to serve this function.
- The need for the crew to have easy access to a credit card for small expenditures such as filling a truck with gasoline. They have a large tank for bulk purchases, but fuel dealers will not deliver less than 900 gallons at a time and the crew finds that the fuel goes bad before they can use it all. The selectboard will look into updating the credit card policy to enable authorizing the crew to have a credit card.
- The water at the town garage is not drinkable. Toby Talbot recommends that someone come in to evaluate the well water there. Donna Fitch noted there is a file at the town office about drinking water at the town garage and town office. Jordan Keyes mentioned Magee Office Supplies can set up a water filtration system and would come out periodically to change the

filter. They have the base for large water dispensing but cannot get water bottles delivered. For the short term, Anne Toolan will pick up and deliver water to them on a weekly basis.

- The crew is down 1 ½ positions. The crew would like to hire Ed Rowell back part time and one other full time person. Gabrielle Malina wondered about the need for a leader; does it not need to be a leader/manager? The Selectboard will consider hiring Ed Rowell and begin the process of hiring for the full-time position. Jordan Keyes asked if a member of the Road Crew would like to be the point person for interviewing – they suggested Toby Talbot.

Anne Winchester asked about the threshold of needing Selectboard approval on highway expenditures. Rick Kehne talked about strategic planning for a road grader replacement, which should be on the Selectboard's radar. The calcium chloride trailer is rotted out and not inspectable, the Road Crew can move the tank to a dump truck on a temporary basis. Tools need to be replenished at the town garage instead of employees using their own tools. Anne Winchester said we will appoint a Selectboard liaison to work with the Road Crew. Washington Electric Co-op and Sadie Foss Road easement will be on next Monday's agenda. Dana Huoppi said some foundation blocks near the garage doors need replacement. Toby Talbot said that would come under the town garage maintenance line item.

The meeting was recessed for a lunch break at 12:20 pm and reconvened at 12:55 pm.

Highway/Roads Grants Management - Toby Talbot, former Highway Operations Manager, began his presentation by saying he did the paperwork and the road crew did the dirt work. Essentially Toby managed the highway road policies, Road and Bridge Standards, the AOT Municipal General Roads Permit, highway grants applications and funding reimbursements, annual certificate of highway mileage, reviewed the details of the roads in order to comply with state road erosion standards, 13000 segments; kept an inventory of roads, provided annual reports and updates to the Selectboard.

Toby informed the Selectboard of the different types of grants related to the highway department as follows:

- Class 2 Highway, Structures Grants and Municipal Roads Grants-In-Aid Program - Toby noted these are state grants. More than half of Calais roads connect to water and have to meet the state standards. If the town does work on these identified segments, we get reimbursed by the state as an incentive of what the state wants to manage erosion and improve water quality.
- Better Roads Grant – Toby reported that by doing normal road work, keeping track of materials and the time town employees put in; he was able to bring in \$15,000 last year under this grant program. Toby finds work that needs to be done anyway and applies for grants to get reimbursed on.
- VLCT Safety Grants – These grants for loss prevention are for PACIF members through VLCT. In the past Toby identified the things we could benefit by and applied for a grant at the first of the year. Larry Smith, VLCT representative, will do a safety assessment and see if the town has some equipment or improvement needs. Examples of items that were funded by these grants in the past are PPE, road sign packages, highway cones and barriers all that pertains to safe operations of the roads and town employees in an effort to decrease injuries and liability. CVRPC did the actual road inventory in 2017. Toby noted what would be helpful would be to have the Road Crew keep good records of when they work on a road, add gravel, fix the crown or clean ditches so that Toby can compile that information to use to obtain grants. Toby identifies grants, supervises big projects and knows what to submit for reimbursements. In working with the Treasurer getting receipts, canceled checks and managing various grants, Toby has brought in to Calais well over a million dollars. Toby noted sometimes the funds or expenditures go from one fiscal year to the next.

Toby Talbot gave a historical overview of the Calais Road & Bridge Standards. The town did more recently adopt the State Standards. Jordan Keyes talked about efficiency and the ability to adapt. There are highway and bridge weight restrictions and Toby has done training with the Road Crew about the Road Standards. Toby showed the culvert inventory map with over 600 culverts in town. Each year in December, Toby has presented a proposed budget to the Selectboard. Toby would be happy to continue in this capacity since he had been doing this with no change in his \$16,000 annual salary for 8 ½ years (up until last September). **Toby is willing to do this again for \$30.00 per hour for an average of 8-10 hours per week.** Toby is willing to do some management but urges the Selectboard to find a new day to day Road Foreman or Road Commissioner, perhaps from within the current Road Crew.

Gabrielle Malina said moving forward this is a long-term personnel issue. Toby said the Selectboard should be moving toward someone in a leadership role. Barbara Butler asked if Toby would be willing to take on managing the town highway overweight permits and Toby agreed. **Gabrielle Malina made a motion to appoint Toby Talbot as Interim Highway Grants Administrator, to handle highway overweight permits and to authorize Toby to sign off on expenditures, within the scope of a budgeted line item, or under \$15,000.00 for an unbudgeted expense. Jamie Moorby seconded the motion; it was voted on and carried 5-0.**

Roads Management Issues Review with Rick Kehne – Former Selectboard Member and former acting Road Commissioner, Rick Kehne, outlined in detail the following highway department issues that he had been working on as follows:

- Moscow Woods Road bridge – This bridge needs to be replaced and DeWolfe Engineering Associates is going to do a temporary design plan. The temporary repair will cost \$120,000 of which the town got a grant for \$80,000. A complete fix to install a box culvert is estimated to cost \$700,000 and will need to be bonded for. The town made a very temporary fix last year but Rick noted this to be a very high priority for the Selectboard. Rick said Structures Grants from the start are limited to \$175,000. Toby Talbot noted the first step is to put this out to bid and then we'd know the cost to repair it. Any in-kind matching funds is already in the budget since the Road Crew is working anyway.
- Luce Road culvert replacement – need to get easements from landowners. Toby Talbot will follow up with the draft documents and give them to Anne Winchester who will send them to the lawyers.
- East Calais storm-water mitigation and outflow issues – Rick reported the town has been trying to stabilize the bank in East Calais with the goal of putting in water storage under the East Calais Post Office parking lot. The town has been working with CVRPC on this and we need to reconnect with them. CVRPC was going to manage the grant application process for us then they had staff changes. Toby Talbot will reconnect with them to see where we are in the process.
- Kent Hill Scoping Study – to replace the culvert at Pekin Brook Road and Kent Hill Road intersection. Rick reported this is already in process with CVRPC. Two grants have been received toward the cost of this project.
- Calcium Chloride trailer – was previously discussed by the Road Crew, see above.
- Radar Speed Signs – these signs were purchased with the intent to move them around the town for speed control. Rick said the parts should all be in the boxes at the town garage and just need to be assembled.
- Road & Bridge Standards - needs forethought; the town wants to make sure we align with the state standards. This ensures the town remains eligible for grant funding.
- Director of Public Works (DPW) – The prior Selectboard intended to hire a DPW to manage all the town owned buildings. The new Selectboard will have to decide what you think is the best approach for the town.
- Tools for the town garage - A lot of tools are gone and need to be replaced.

- Fuel issue (gasoline) already discussed, see above.
- Equipment Replacement Schedule – The road grader replacement is going to be a large expenditure. Rick encouraged the Selectboard to continue to build up the capital replacement fund that allows the payments to be spread out over several years.
- Appoint a Selectboard member as Acting Road Commissioner - Jamie Moorby expressed interest in serving in this position; Anne Toolan is willing to share the role. Rick Kehne noted someone needs to be in touch in the early morning hours regarding winter road conditions and school closings.

Anne Winchester made a motion to appoint Jamie Moorby and Anne Toolan to jointly serve as Selectboard Acting Road Commissioner liaisons. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0.

Financial Reports Overview and Explanation - Wendy Wilton, New England Municipal Resource Center (NEMRC) Consultant and Acting Town Treasurer, provided a detailed review and explanation of the town's financial documents. Wendy will continue with monthly reconciliation, payroll and close each quarter to make General Ledger adjustments as needed "The most important tool you have is to understand the balance sheet," Wendy Wilton said. Federal ARPA funds came in two parts, one in 2021 and the other in 2022. Wendy explained that the general fund contains all the money of the town but certain funds are earmarked for specific entities. The Swim Program does have a Vanguard account that was given as a gift. Wendy believes the town is close to being on track for this fiscal year. Noted line-item overages were in Professional Fees (11,033), Legal Fees (64,234), NEMRC (48,718) and Animal Control (14,837). The unused treasurer line item (55,000) can offset the NEMRC expense since Wendy is the Acting Town Treasurer. Wendy reported we are at about 80% spent in this fiscal year that ends June 30th.

The highway balance sheet was reviewed. Wendy will check with Toby Talbot about highway grant funds received that need to be placed in the grant line items instead of the highway general fund. Wendy reported the town highway budget is about 61% spent with a noticeable drop due to vacancies. Capital Funds were reviewed. The technology fund is to fund replacement of servers and computers every five years. Previously it was recommended to put in 8,000 per year to build the fund. Wendy said we should have a capital plan for each of the reserve funds to make sure the town is on track to fund those big-ticket items when they need replacement.

Jamie Moorby inquired about the funds that the Curtis Pond Dam Association gave the town in 2022 (50,000). Wendy offered to get more detail on any of these line items since it is all contained in NEMRC. Gabrielle Malina inquired about overspending on a line item. Donna Fitch and Sandra Ferver historically would point out to the Selectboard where the town is financially at any given time. Sandra said no checks are sent to a vendor without approval of the Selectboard warrants. There are a few exceptions Wendy noted such as time sensitive bills like medical and dental insurance premiums. Wendy noted that as long as by the end of the year, you're not far off that's the goal. The town is underspent in the Highway Budget this year, that would go into your highway fund balance. Unassigned general fund balance you need to check with the town attorney if you have too much need to have a plan and voter approval. Wendy recommends that the town have a 10-15% range of annual revenues to the unassigned fund balance of the budget. Wendy said we need to have a town policy on this unassigned fund balance (needs voter approval). Sandra Ferver noted in 2015 the highway fund balance goes into the highway capital reserve fund. It was voted on at town meeting. Sandra said we used to have a Rainy-Day Fund that was depleted when the town had a deficit and had to take a loan to pay that off. Wendy noted that nobody is watching over these grants. Sandra Ferver noted there has been no oversight on grant follow through since 2018. Sandra recommends someone overseeing the grants that needs organizing and noted the liability to the town. Barbara Butler thinks the ARPA

documents should be in the Google drive folders. Gabrielle Malina suggested having a work session with Sharon Winn and one other former Selectboard member.

Other Business - Anne Winchester-explained that the town has received a \$428,000 community development grant which it has sub-granted to the East Calais Community Trust. The town must appoint a Municipal Authorized Official (MAO), who must be an elected official, to sign documents regarding these funds on behalf of the town. There will be a meeting soon to discuss cash flow between the state, the town and the ECCT as the grant is administered. Sandra Ferver pointed out that she has begun work for the town and the Selectboard and will attend this meeting. The selectboard agreed that it is fine that Sandra Ferver has begun work as Town Treasurer and will get paid for her time. Anne Winchester will be at the meeting. A Municipal Authorized Official (MAO) will be appointed at a later date.

Barbara Butler suggested instead of using \$49,200 ARPA funds for the radar speed signs to move that expense back to the highway budget. Wendy Wilton said to put it under road signs under road maintenance. Jamie Moorby agrees that is a great idea and recommends the Selectboard set aside a significant amount of time to discuss ARPA funds at a future meeting. Barbara Butler noted there needs to be an ARPA fund administrator. Anne Winchester asked someone to investigate what, how much over and what the projects are that were promised ARPA funding. Gabrielle Malina offered to do that. Wendy Wilton will get the expenses spent on ARPA for the generator, CV Fiber support and the radar speed signs. These funds have to be spent by the end of 2026 per the federal guidelines. **Anne Winchester made a motion to transfer the expenditure \$49,200 for Marlin Controls radar speed signs to pay for that out of the highway budget road signs line item instead of using ARPA funds. Jamie Moorby seconded the motion; it was voted on and carried 5-0. Motion to be ratified at the next regular Selectboard meeting.**

Wendy Wilton will defer discussion on the professional audit reports to another time and in conjunction with Sandra Ferver, Town Treasurer.

Jordan Keyes made a motion to adjourn at 4:00 pm. The motion was seconded, voted, and carried 5-0.

Rose Pelchuck
Interim Recording Secretary