

## Selectboard Meeting Minutes

*Monday, October 28, 2019 at 7 pm at the Calais Town Offices*

**Present:** Denise Wheeler (Chair), Rose Pelchuck (Member), Sharon Winn Fannon (Member), Clif Emmons (Member), Jerome Lipani (ORCA), Katie Lane-Karnas (Recording Secretary), Donna Fitch (Town Hall Renovation Committee), John McCullough (Town Hall Renovation Committee), David Schütz (Town Hall Renovation Committee), Toby Talbot (Operations Manager), Scott Bassage, Alfred Larrabee (Road Commissioner), Rod Buck, John Simanskas (Cemetery Commission), Sandra Ferver (Town Treasurer)

**Absent:** John Brabant (Vice Chair)

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. The Chair noted that the Cemetery Commission would attend to present their budget.
4. Updates/Reports
  - a) Road Commissioner and Operations Manager: The Operations Manager reported that the Town will reapply for two Better Roads Grants for locations on Marshfield Road which were not awarded to the Town last year. The Board thanked the Operations Manager for his help on the Town Hall renovation work. The new truck is roughly 2-3 weeks away from being in service. Moscow Woods Road paving has been completed, and guardrail replacement on Jack Hill/Moscow Woods is in progress. The Road Commissioner is pursuing a possible candidate for winter road crew plowing work. Plows, sand piles, magic salt solution, and the salt contract are prepared for this winter and ready to go. Rod Buck commented that his family and out of town guests appreciated Calais's superior roads during their fall foliage tour driving on local roads.
  - b) Town Hall Renovation Committee: Septic tanks will arrive in November, and the leach field is fully installed (it will be covered after pressure testing, etc., have been completed). New front stairs, interior stairs will be done soon. John McCullough updated the group on the status of final renovation efforts and the Town's relationship with the renovation contractor, Green Line Builders (GLB). The untimely passing of Green Line Builders' owner, Ernie Parrish, and one additional GLB builder departing has deeply affected the remaining tasks, as well as leaving a vacancy of project management. John McCullough has volunteered every day since May. He explained that recently, GLB indicated it does not have the means to pay for labor to complete agreed upon final tasks. The Town had agreed to provide the labor for the work that was within Greenline's scope, but material costs for this work would be borne by Greenline. GLB's commitment to the project included approximately \$7,000 in materials that have not been delivered. As a result, the

Town did not make the final payment. The Town has withheld the remaining \$7,630 final payment to GLB, and the relationship between the Town and GLB has now ended. (Donna Fitch confirmed that there is written documentation of meetings with the bookkeeper for Green Line Builders, clarifying the resolution of the relationship between the Town and GLB.)

The Committee reported that the Town has gotten what they expected to receive from GLB, which was great quality, and the project can be completed with the use of volunteer efforts. Many comments of respectful regret were made about the tragic passing of Ernie Parrish, and the Committee reassured that both GLB and the Town were able to resolve the unexpected turn of events equitably and clearly. The group reviewed details of upcoming efforts, including metal handrails, vinyl flooring, and interior trim. The Committee will not have to return to the voters to ask for additional funds.

The Chair pointed out that the significant contributions of volunteers has been wonderful; however, there is an extensive list of tasks which GLB was supposed to do but were instead completed by John McCullough (with significant assistance from Sandy Hyde, Steve Sweeney, among others). The group reviewed a detailed list of these tasks. John McCullough became project manager of the job to keep the renovation moving forward when Ernie Parrish became ill. Rodney Buck questioned the Town's responsibility in this situation, in which John McCullough has been volunteering forty and more hours a week; he commented that the Town should find a way to create equity and treat people fairly for their labor. The Board had authorized Andy Felice be paid to contribute hours for the labor, which he may have time to do in the upcoming weeks; the question was raised of how the same compensation may be extended to John McCullough for his exhaustive labor. David Schütz commented that John McCullough's work hours far exceed any expectation of the number of hours a volunteer may contribute. It was commented that we should be prepared to explain what has happened in this process (referring to Ernie Parrish's untimely death and John McCullough's project management and contracting labor) in a transparent way to everyone in the Town, so that voters have a clear picture of what should be expected under these difficult circumstances. The Board acknowledged that John McCullough has volunteered significantly, noted that any compensation discussion will need to be in Executive Session as a personnel question, and noted that there is good documentation of John McCullough's hours worked. The group appreciated John's support.

Scott Bassage commented that the Memorial Hall Project Association (a similar historic and community renovation effort) has expressed their envy for John McCullough and Donna Fitch, recognizing the significant contribution they bring to the Town Hall Renovation. The Committee foresees occupancy permission may be gained by December (site work is still needed to make it handicap accessible). The Board considered what can be done that is meaningful and long-lasting to thank John McCullough and Donna Fitch for their efforts in a challenging project with significant unforeseen interruption.

5. Treasurer Update: Expenses are on target and revenues are more than anticipated due to the current tax collection efforts). Highway revenues are at budget; expenses are also on target. The 2019 International Truck lease has closed. The purchase price of the chassis was made out

of the HW Capital Equipment Fund in the amount of \$42, 437 and has been reimbursed to the Town and deposited into the Highway Equipment fund. The Town Treasurer sent bills at the beginning of October to taxpayers who had not made payments by the end of the grace period to start bringing those funds in. 2018 delinquent taxes are at \$14,715.75. Of that balance, \$7,114.94 has been turned over to attorney Gloria Rice for collection. The remaining 2018 delinquencies are anticipated to be collectible without further attorney involvement. At the conclusion of the 2018 tax collection effort on November 29, 2018, there was \$175,958.24 in delinquent taxes. As of September 30, 2019, the Delinquent Tax Collector has collected \$161,242.49.

The Board reviewed binders prepared by the Town Treasurer and Assistant Town Treasurer for first draft FY21 budget. (The Treasurer explained that the first version of the budget shows a 3.6% increase and asked the Board to hand write all changes for her to regularly enter in the budget planning spreadsheet. Each new iteration of the budget will be included in the binders, as a new tab, allowing members to easily view each version of the budget as it is developed by the Board.)

The Treasurer identified the last payment date of the large debt expenses that will leave room in the budget when paid off without the budget increasing significantly each year (such as the Town Deficit loan and the Town Hall renovation loan). Town Office staff hear from older folks on fixed incomes who are struggling to manage increases that exceed their own increases (if they get any). Medical insurance is up approximately \$6,000; estimated increases for dental and HSA are indicated in the working budget. The group noted that last year, the Board moved to the Gold CDHP Plan: costs were contained, and premiums were lowered. The Board requested the Treasurer add a column in the budget spreadsheet for percentage increases, include column headers, include pagination, and include end dates for Highway capital expenses. The Board noticed the Highway Department disregarded the direction from the Board to not enter requested salary increases in the working budget before discussions with the Board. The Board requested of the Road Commissioner, Operations Manager, and Office Staff not to get ahead of the Board's process, to avoid creating a staff expectation before the Board has completed its process and finalized a budget. The Chair noted the Board's frustration that the directive that came from the Board in writing to not fill in salary lines was done anyway, and is not okay.

The Treasurer has counted eight budget planning meetings, and will review the notes following each meeting to incorporate the changes. The Board thanked the Treasurer and commented on how helpful the binders and process are. The group planned to create a shared budget folder area within Google Docs.

6. Cemetery Commission Budget Presentation: John Simanskas attended to present the Cemetery Commission's FY21 appropriation request (from \$40,500—which was the result of an original request of \$39,000, plus an amended additional \$1,500 for the Poplar Hill Cemetery-- to \$49,500). This is an increase of approximately 22%. The Cemetery Commission's FY2020 budget is overspent by approximately \$500; the rollover money from the previous year (approximately \$20,000) keeps the Commission from being in an overall deficit. John Simanskas commented that mowing at the recently acquired Poplar Hill Cemetery increases costs by at least \$1,500—the voters approved \$1500 for that use, but the actual cost is \$3,000

per season. An additional increased cost is a proposed stipend for Jennifer Whitman as Sexton. The former Sexton was getting paid \$2,400 per year which was in the budget; when that person was no longer serving, Jennifer Whitman took over free of charge and the Commission cut their budget by almost \$10,000 (between FY19 and FY20). The Commission now wants to add Sexton stipend back in to their budget. The Chair noted that the Commission needs to be prepared to answer questions about the increase and sell their budget to the voters at Town Meeting (the Cemetery Commission budget is warned as its own item, not included in the Town budget). The next Cemetery meeting is scheduled for November 20, 7 pm.

7. Auditor Contract FY 20, 21 and 22: Sullivan and Powers has completed the Town audits for 2017, 2018, and 2019. Their new contract increases \$300 in FY21, and \$300 in FY22 (2% increase). The auditors have been invited to attend the November 11 meeting. (NEMRC continues to perform the monthly audit, performing internal reviews, and is fulfilling the function within the Board's budgeted auditor amount. The Treasurer will check to see if NEMRC hourly rates will remain stable.)

Clif Emmons made a motion to continue the contract with Sullivan and Powers and sign the engagement letter for FY21 and FY22. Denise Wheeler made a friendly amendment to postpone the approval of signing the engagement letter until after the Board has met with Sullivan and Powers at the November 11, 2019 meeting. Clif Emmons accepted the friendly amendment.

8. Update Petition #19-27, IBEW Local 300 Union Negotiation: The Chair noted she has been playing tag communicating with Tim about a union conversation (to begin to learn what the negotiation process looks like). The group discussed potential meeting dates for starting off a union negotiation conversation. VLCT did not have a labor relations management person they could recommend. Sharon raised again the point that the Town needs to have its own advisor on union negotiations, rather than relying on the union's representative to explain the process and options. Denise will connect with the Town Attorney to see whether he feels he has expertise to guide the board, or to get a referral to another Attorney experienced in advising management in union relations and negotiations.
9. CVSWMD's Grant Application: Household Hazardous Waste Facility: The Board considered a letter of support for CVSWMD's grant application for a household hazardous waste facility. Sharon Winn Fannon made a motion to approve the request from CVSWMD to submit a letter of support for their grant application under Denise Wheeler's signature. Rose Pelchuck seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.
10. ESF Bond Fund Use for Flooring: Bruce Johnson (East Montpelier Town Manager) had pointed out the Boards voted to allow Calais Selectboard 48 hours after the East Montpelier Selectboard to approve any invoice that uses the ESF Bond. The Board discussed the timeframe being quite unreasonable for Calais. The Chair explained that the bond loan was given in only one town's name, and it was put in East Montpelier's name (they were the signors, and this was found acceptable by Calais' Town Attorney at the time). Recently, Bruce Johnson noted there is approximately \$16,800 remaining the fund, and \$3,700 has been requested for use for flooring improvements in two bays of the emergency services facility. Denise Wheeler's email has been not working, and without her knowledge the Calais Board

did not receive her shared email about this bond use request within the 48 hour time frame. They noted that it would be unlikely to ever have enough time to review it as a full Board within the 48 hours' notice. The Board has no issue with the expense, but the process of 48 hours' notice is problematic and inconsistent with the Open Meeting Law.

11. IT Update: rbTech will have a contract for consideration to sign at the next meeting. The Town has not decided to award the contract but will be reviewing rbTech's proposed contract at that time, in executive session.

12. Chair Update

- The Board recalled how much time it spent reviewing employee health insurance options for FY20, along with specifics provided from the Town Treasurer from BCBS. They will consider whether there is a need to schedule a discussion with VLCT (Kelley Avery) regarding new FLSA rules.
- There is a VLCT Ordinance Enforcement training 12/4/19.
- The Planning Commission is expected to provide a recommendation on a Zoning Administrator candidate soon. The Chair detailed the Commission's process and her confidence in it. The Board prefers having the Commission present to the Board for approval and invite the candidate to meet the Board at a future meeting.
- There is a need for a person to organize the town meeting lunch. The Board appreciated Linda Schütz's efforts organizing the lunch over the last years.
- The Memorial Hall Committee will attend an upcoming meeting to request tax exempt status and the Board will consider potential impact this would make in terms of school and town taxes.

13. Review and approve minutes, warrants

- a) The Board reviewed the invoices and orders were processed for payment.
- b) Denise Wheeler moved and Clif Emmons seconded to approve the minutes of the 9/30/2019 meeting, with the changes as noted; the motion passed 4-0.
- c) Clif Emmons moved and Rose Pelchuck seconded to approve the minutes of the 10/14/2019 meeting, with the changes as noted; the motion passed 4-0.

14. Executive Session for Personnel Matters: Sharon Winn Fannon made a motion to go into Executive Session at 9:23 pm per 1 V.S.A. subsection 313 (a) (3), personnel matters. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 4-0. The Board resumed Regular Session at 9:50 pm. The Chair had nothing to report publicly.

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

16. Adjournment: Clif Emmons made a motion to adjourn at 9:51 pm. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 4-0.

Date: 10/29/2019 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas, Recording Secretary  
*Approved by the Selectboard at the 11/11/2019 meeting*

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