



TOWN OF CALAIS

3120 Pekin Brook Road
East Calais, Vermont 05650
802-456-8720

Selectboard Meeting Unapproved Minutes
Monday, November 14, 2022 at 6:00 PM
Location: Calais Town Hall (note no Zoom option)

PLEASE NOTE: Agenda items may be taken up earlier than noted if the 15 minutes set aside for public comment is not used, or if other items are completed more quickly than anticipated.

Board Members Present:

Sharon Winn Fannon (chair), Marc Mihaly (vice chair), Denise Wheeler (Board member), Rick Kehne (Board member)

Others Present: ORCA media, David Healy, Dot Helling, Ginny Sussman, Reed Cherrington, Judy Fitch Robert, Nick Emlen

6:00 PM

1. Call to Order
- Additions/Changes to the Agenda
- Review and Sign Warrants: The warrants were circulated for signatures.

6:05 PM

2. Executive Session under 1 VSA §313(a)(3), relating to appointment or employment of a public officer or employee

Sign in for Public Comment

At 7:00 the Board came out of Executive Session.

Marc Mihaly moved to take action consistent with the decision from Executive Session. Denise Wheeler seconded; this motion carried unanimously.

3. Consent Agenda

Minutes link: <https://www.calaisvermont.gov/index.asp?SEC=4C3EC8BB-B864-4211-8418-A36B25601387>

(The Board decided to move the minutes approval to a later meeting.)

Approved edited minutes of October 24, 2022 Regular Meeting
Approve edited minutes of October 17, 2022 Special Meeting
Approve minutes of October 20, 2022 Special Meeting
Adopt edited minutes of October 10, 2022 Special Meeting

Denise Wheeler moved to approve the following. Seconded by Marc Mihaly, this motion carried unanimously:

- Accept resignations of Candi Smith as DRB alternate and Ashley Moore as DRB members
- Appoint Candi Smith to complete DRB three-year member seat, reappointment due in 2023
- Appoint Ashley Moore to complete DRB three-year alternative seat, reappointment due in 2023

4. Personnel Update – Denise

Denise Wheeler shared that the Board had interviewed a candidate tonight for the position of Treasurer; there has been other interest expressed; however they have not followed up with resumes. Denise Wheeler shared that a previous applicant who had been interviewed had not been able to find housing in the area so he withdrew his application.

Denise Wheeler shared a list of positions that are currently open, including but not limited to:

- animal control
- constable
- emergency management
- webmaster
- asst zoning manager
- planning commission members
- conservation commission

Sharon Winn Fannon shared that a regular feature of the meeting will be to share a list of the positions that are vacant, in an effort to enlist help. She invited people to help share and spread the news. Rick Kehne stated that it would be helpful to have a position that was in charge of communications/ outreach.

Denise Wheeler shared some of the tasks that she has been completing in the past few weeks, including grant management. She noted that she has been responsible for payroll since April 2022.

Sharon Winn Fannon shared that we are beginning the next steps with labor management and the roads crew; this is a process that the Board has been through in the past.

5. Public Comment

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IMPORTANT NOTE: Each person who is present at 7PM and signs in to speak will be offered up to 5 minutes; public comment period will continue until each person has spoken.

Sharon Winn Fannon reviewed the intention and the parameters for public comment.

David Healy shared suggestions and thoughts for Selectboard consideration: He stated that maybe it is time to consider a town manager position - drafting budgets, agendas, etc.; he suggested using VT Town and City Management (VTCMA) as a resource.

He suggested a monthly town newsletter - keep the town apprised, also spotlight some of the positions that are needed, or roles of some of the filled positions in the town.

He suggested making available online meetings - purchase appropriate equipment to allow for this.

For meeting efficiency, he suggested creating motions (draft) in writing prior to the meeting.

When dealing with contentious issues - create a protocol for these issues before they occur.

He noted that the town office should be accessible -be open to visitors during more hours.

He suggested an oversight function with the other volunteer organizations such as planning commission.

Mr. Healy had created a list and he provided it to the Board and asked that it be included in the minutes. (it is attached at the end)

Dot Helling introduced herself: retired lawyer, serves on DRB, works at Adamant Co-op

She stated that she has been appalled at Front Porch Forum - attacks against Selectboard members who are trying to do a good job for all of us; Selectboard seems to have gone out of their way to be transparent; trying to assuage the critics has undermined the work that the Board has to do for the town.

She stated that had she been a member of the Selectboard herself, she would have stepped down; instead, this Board is allowing more time for public comment.

She would like to try to address the maligning commentary - she invites people to speak their minds and their opinions.

Ginny Sussman stated that ongoing criticism is part of the democratic process; she thanked the Board for allowing public comment. She indicated that there are many sides to a story; it seems like there are some communication breakdowns; some relationship breakdowns; there seems to be a pattern. She stated that it feels like there is something systemic which is not working - maybe the roles have gotten bigger and harder to manage. She suggested reaching out to an organizational consultant or mediator, to get to the heart of what has been causing the challenges and to come up with a solution that pleases everyone. She stated that we all love Calais, we want to have a smoothly functioning government system within the town, which is why she suggested some sort of mediation protocol - some consultant to work with everyone together.

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Reed Cherrington stated that he does not find the format of the Selectboard agenda to be easily accessible. He accesses his from FPF; has not been able to print it. He stated that the agenda includes obscure items about things he has never heard of - could there be some way to explain each item on the agenda that might be confusing to people - some help with interpreting the agenda items?

He asked the Board to please explain acronyms; he does not feel that the average citizen will know what each of them means.

Sharon Winn Fannon shared that the Board has tried to be more specific in the agenda - e.g. when action is anticipated. She suggested using David Healy's suggestion of providing written verbiage for proposed motions.

Judy Fitch Robert thanked the Board for extended public comment time. She read a statement but also brought to the attention of the Board a written statement from Donna Fitch. She asked that the written statements be included in the minutes. (They are provided at the end)

She stated that the Board is trying to juggle multiple areas and solving a multitude of problems - the demands are so great; she agreed with Dot that the Board has been maligned unfairly.

She stated that each member has the town's best interest at heart; however, the Board needs to develop more effective communication, especially with respect to town employees.

Some suggestions:

- hold frequent, regular listening sessions with employees and the public
- develop system for hiring, training, supervising, engaging with employees
- develop job descriptions with expertise of others
- provide overviews/ updates on FPF beyond sharing minutes and agendas.

She read Donna Fitch's statement:

Donna was previous town clerk and treasurer. Her statement indicated that new positions have been created in response to issues that have festered over several years.

Rather than looking back, would like to look forward: some suggestions:

- treasurer/ business manager job description is unrealistic - it includes accounting, human resources, administration
- there is a need for a book keeping position
- there is a need for high level administrative support to the Selectboard and the town
- personnel issues go beyond these positions - over the years, more responsibilities have been handed to the town; these positions require expertise; she has concerns around the aging demographic of the town
- post pandemic employment situation is a challenge
- work together to engender respect and rapport

Sharon Winn Fannon asked how East Montpelier's Sign Post is published and whether Calais could do something similar. She shared that one of the struggles is with email It

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would be so much healthier if people would come to the meetings, get on the agenda, and speak at the meeting - so much happens in email and then it looks like a "surprise" on the agenda.

She shared the idea that so much excellent work can happen outside of the Board, and then check in regularly with the town - for example, a newsletter work group. She welcomes people coming to the Board with their ideas and then the question from the Board can be "what do you need to support this?..." (e.g. funding?)

Marc Mihaly shared some of the features of neighboring towns' webpages sharing current happenings. He thanked those who spoke to the Board for having concrete proposals and suggestions. Sharon Winn Fannon stated that she worries about over-promising; she worries about putting more on FPF - she worries about doing "town business" on FPF - similar to her worries about email interactions: she much prefers in person discussion as per open meeting law.

Rick Kehne stated that we as Board members do not speak on FPF on behalf of the Board.

Reed Cherrington stated, regarding communication with the public - do we know how many people in town do not have computers and do not use the internet? He would feel more comfortable with all of the electronic communication if we knew that everyone has access. Sharon Winn Fannon stated that she sometimes considers, what would happen if we took a hiatus from electronic communication?

Denise Wheeler stated that the Board does not make any decision via email. Marc Mihaly stated that the Board agrees that they would like to have meetings available via zoom; we currently don't have the capacity to do this. The Board spoke about the challenge of having hybrid meetings (online and in person).

David Healy shared that there are many who don't drive at night and an online option might be more well attended.

Sharon Winn Fannon suggested that if community members would like to prepare a proposal then the Board appreciates concrete proposals to consider.

Ginny Sussman stated that there may be many who don't have computers, but if we are wanting to get younger people on Board we might have to consider doing more on the internet/ social media, versus less. She suggested, for example, a FB page - she suggested that the Board not decide to shut down the idea of internet/ social media.

Denise Wheeler stated that a Selectboard FB page is required to follow certain standards.

Ginny Sussman stated that coming to meetings during inclement weather is more of a challenge - is there a way to have public outreach meetings in various parts of town?

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Sharon Winn Fannon suggested - would someone be willing to explore other venues, possible places for the Selectboard to hold meetings.

Judy Fitch Robert stated that the conflicts that have created a reputation of lack of transparency have emanated from the Board's interaction with employees - if there was more structure around employees/ appointed officials, then the communication challenges might take care of themselves. She stated the need for more relationship building and trust among the Board and with the people that the Board supervises; a culture of trust.

Judy Fitch Robert stated that there was a time when Selectboard members met with the town office employees twice a month; she felt that this was beneficial.

Shannon Winn Fannon stated that when our business happens at our Selectboard meetings, she would like to have stakeholders attend the meetings.

Denise Wheeler suggested having ten minutes on the agenda for office staff to address the Board.

Judy Fitch Robert stated that there is a power dynamic when someone comes to the Board to present, versus an in the office conversation/ creative collaboration that is less formal.

Barb Butler stated that the intention of Board members coming to the town office to check in is not so much about conducting business as it is about team building. She spoke about times from the past as Judy had noted, when members from the Board met regularly with town office staff.

Ginny Sussman stated that, again, this makes a case for bringing in an outside facilitator/ consultant. Some discussion followed around open meeting law.

6. Timeline to Town Meeting – INFORMATION ONLY:

Barbara Butler had shared information with the Board about town meeting preparation. She produces the town report with many deadlines between October and March. She noted that this is the Selectboard's responsibility but traditionally she has created this publication. She shared some information about graphic designers.

Sharon Winn Fannon shared that the Board will be meeting this weekend to begin the work on the budget.

Barb Butler stated that when people wish to be included in the warning items, the request comes to the town clerk. The town will post on FPF deadlines that people need to meet in order to meet requirements to run for offices, deadlines by which people need to file a petition to have an item included in the warning.

Sharon Winn Fannon stated that if someone comes to the Selectboard and asks that something be included in the warning, they do not necessarily have to have a petition signed; the warning is within the purview of the Selectboard to develop.

She plans to have town office staff come to a future Selectboard meeting to address an item for inclusion on the warning.

Barb Butler will provide to the Board the list of duties from the various stakeholders in preparation for town meeting warning and supporting documents.

7. Roads Report – Rick Kehne

Installation of Speed Signs County Road

Rick Kehne stated that the town road crew has been working efficiently; he shared some of the updated projects. He stated that we have begun to look at placement for speed signs as discussed in previous meetings.

Rick Kehne shared that we are expecting possible snow later this week; the town crew is working on getting equipment ready.

Rick Kehne spoke briefly about the bridge repair.

Regarding strategic planning: Rick Kehne is going to create a tracking document, listing the roads and keeping data on work that is done.

He shared that in May he would like to look at the bridges in town with the road crew to get an overview of the condition of the bridges, for planning purposes.

8. Cott System contract for Historical Indexing Services – Jeremy Weiss
(Propose use of ARPA funds in an amount not to exceed \$28,510)

Sharon Winn Fannon attempted to call.

Jeremy Weiss had shared information about this contract via email. Board members discussed whether they can take action on this item with Jeremy's absence.

Sharon Winn Fannon shared that the COTT System is what the town uses to manage land records. Denise Wheeler had spoken to Jeremy and had suggested using ARPA funds for this purchase versus using the Reserve Fund.

At 8:38, Jeremy Weiss called and explained this proposal.

He also spoke about cemetery records. The Board discussed the Town Office Reserve Fund versus Preservation Fund.

Jeremy Weiss explained the practice of charging fees for research records, and of setting some of the fees aside for growing the Preservation Fund.

Marc Mihaly stated that the Preservation Fund is created for this type of project.

Marc Mihaly moved to approve the contract and authorize Jeremy Weiss to enter the contract, and to commit \$8510 from Preservation Fund and \$20K from ARPA. Seconded by Rick Kehne, this motion carried unanimously.

9. Approve and sign Sole Source Reappraisal Contract with NEMRC – Marc Mihaly

Marc Mihaly had shared a revised contract which indicated \$125,625 and hourly rate not to exceed \$6K.

He recommends approving this contract, and he had collaborated with Jan Ohlsson,

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who also recommends approval.

Marc Mihaly moved that the Board approve this contract with Sole Source Reappraisal as discussed. Seconded by Denise Wheeler, this motion carried unanimously.

10. Approve and sign revised Municipal Policies-Form MP1 for ECCT VCDP grant

Denise Wheeler recused from this discussion and action. The Board agreed that in the absence of a quorum, they will move this to the special meeting agenda this weekend.

11. FEMA grant application for generator at Town Hall

Denise Wheeler, Rick Kehne and Nick Emlen presented information about this grant.

Nick Emlen shared this proposal for the town to provide a 50% match. The purpose of the grant is to support local emergency management improvement projects. Calais plans to move its Emergency Operations Center to the town hall, and purchase auxiliary power generators so that the town hall and Maple Corner Community Center can be used as emergency shelters or warming centers.

He noted that the building would be a suitable location for emergency shelter. The total cost of approximately \$32,000, with 50% match being approx \$16,000.

He asked the Board to authorize moving forward on the project, applying 50% match of approximately 16K (which could come from ARPA but doesn't have to).

He noted that Denise Wheeler would be the fiscal agent for this because we don't have someone in the position of treasurer; she would sign the document for the Board.

Marc Mihaly moved to approve application for the grant to Vermont Emergency Management Department of Public Safety for the Emergency Performance Grant, and that we agree to the local match of 50% of the cost, related to the installation of backup generators and related facilities at Town Hall and Maple Corner. Seconded by Denise Wheeler, this motion carried unanimously.

Marc Mihaly moved to authorize Denise to sign a letter of support for the grant. Seconded by Rick Kehne, this motion carried unanimously.

The Board thanked Nick Emlen for the work on this project; he thanked the Board for their patience and integrity.

12. Board round-robin on items of old business and other business

Sharon Winn Fannon stated that she had been copied on an email conversation around revised tax bill: does 30 day period to remit payment apply to revised bill? does 7 day grace period apply to revised bill? She noted that she is uncomfortable with

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conducting business through email. She had stated that if the 7 day grace period has been past practice, we should continue this. She would like to revise the delinquent tax policy in the future, to incorporate language around a grace period.

13. Review future agenda items

Invite Woodbury and East Montpelier to discuss the possibility of incentives (e.g. tax exemption) to entice volunteers for the fire departments

Sharon suggests reaching out to Woodbury and East Montpelier fire departments and ask them to present a proposal for the Selectboard to consider at a future meeting.

Warning for Curtis Pond Dam: Denise Wheeler stated that there is more research required; this is not ready for the Board to consider for warning yet

Historical background on Calais Road and Bridge Standards; next steps to confirm crew receipt of standards and full understanding (Stephanie Kaplan, Denise Wheeler)

Commission/Committee Reappointments – Sharon

Update from KHL, Craig Line/Carolyn Brennan, Co-Director, Library Director (Denise)

Installation of Speed Signs County Road – Rick – Update

Approve annual VAST Trail request

14. Potential Executive Session under 1 VSA § 313(a)

Denise Wheeler moved to make a specific finding that premature public knowledge would put the Board at a disadvantage relating to a contract. Seconded by Rick Kehne, this motion carried unanimously.

- Attorney Client privileged information 1 VSA § 313(a)(1)
- Appointment or employment of a public office or employee under 1 VSA § 313(a)(3)

At 9:25, Rick Kehne moved to go into Executive Session to discuss Curtis Pond real estate/ related contractual item. Seconded by Denise Wheeler, this motion carried. Marc Mihaly recused himself.

At ___ the Board came out of Executive Session.

15. Adjourn: The Board adjourned at ____

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Grace, Board Recording Secretary

November 14, 2022

To: Town of Calais Selectboard
From: David Healy, 770 Robinson Cemetery Rd
Subject: Suggestions and Thoughts for Selectboard Consideration

Town Management: It may be time for creating a Town Administrator or Manager position. The management and operations of the town has gotten more complex over the last ten or more years. This person would be responsible for providing Drafting Budgets, Drafting Board Agendas; managing staff, recruitment, , etc. Before going in that direction, the Board may want to seek out help for moving in that direction. Here is the link to the Vermont Town & City Management Association <https://www.vtcma.org/>

Dealing with Surprises: A monthly town newsletter would provide all residents with information about what is going on. It would also provide an opportunity to profile various members of the town staff. They may be volunteers who would be willing to take this on.

On-Line Meetings: Web-based meetings allows for a lot more public engagement. Outfitting the town hall to better accommodate this is critical. The Board could use some of the Town's ARPA funds to purchase the appropriate equipment—audio and video equipment (camera that moves to the person speaking.) and acoustic treatment if necessary.

Meeting Efficiency Improvement: One way of improving the efficiency of the Board meetings is to have whoever oversees an area in which a motion is to create the motion in writing prior to the meeting. The same applies to making a motion to go into executive session. They get posted in meeting chat. This is the standard practice at CVFiber Board and Committee meetings. Our meeting seem to be incredibly productive with this approach.

Dealing with Contentious Issues: The Board should develop a protocol for dealing with contentious issues before they get out of hand. This could be providing the pros and cons of the issue in advance.

Town Office Access: It is important that the Town Office be more generally open and available to visit.

Oversight Function: The Board should establish a process for reviewing Planning Commission, Conservation Commission and Development Review Board Activities, et al.. More engagement with these volunteer bodies can help avoid controversial surprises within the community.

Thank you for your consideration.

To: The Calais Selectboard

From: Judy Fitch Robert,

(former Calais Town Clerk, Assistant Town Clerk & Assistant Treasurer, 2011-2021)

Date: Nov 14, 2022

Thank you for providing an opportunity for this extended public comment period to hear the ideas, opinions, and concerns of the Calais community. I would like to first make my own statement and then read a letter from previous Calais Town Clerk and Treasurer Donna Fitch who could not be here tonight. I will submit both letters to the recording secretary.

I want to first thank each of you for the time, energy, and skills you give the town in these unpaid positions that require juggling the management of multiple areas and solving a multitude of problems. We owe you our gratitude and I appreciate how impossible these positions must feel at times.

While I believe each individual member of the selectboard is working hard and has the town's best interest at heart, my observations in my ten years as a town official (assistant town clerk and assistant treasurer and as town clerk until 2021) lead me to believe the selectboard needs to develop more effective patterns of communication, particularly regarding employee relations. I have witnessed a number of employees and some town officials leave their positions stating that they felt unheard, disrespected, and discouraged in their relationship with the Selectboard.

In order to move forward in good faith I suggest the selectboard:

- 1. Hold frequent and regular listening sessions with employees, officials, and the public.**
- 2. Develop strong, professional systems for hiring, training, supervising, evaluating, and engaging with employees and appointed officials.**
- 3. Developing job descriptions in collaboration with people in town who have direct experience, skills, and knowledge of the scope and work of those positions.**

4. Provide overview updates to the public on Front Porch Forum that explain the major direction and priorities of the Selectboard, beyond the agendas and minutes, in order to increase transparency and trust.

November 11, 2022

To: Calais Selectboard

From: Donna Fitch

I will be out of town for two weeks and won't be able to attend the November 14th Selectboard meeting, but wanted to speak to the current personnel issues. I hope my past work experience in business settings and as town clerk and treasurer can offer some insight.

My observation is that the new positions, Director of Public Works and Treasurer/Business Manager, have been created in response to issues that festered over several years and were not addressed at the time. The Selectboard was reluctant or unable to address the strained relationship between the Board and the Road Commissioner. The Operations Manager position, which in its original iteration was temporary, was intended to be evaluated after a few months. It was not. A part time Selectboard Administrator position, created by a Selectboard-appointed committee in 2017, was in the end not approved.

Rather than looking back, the Selectboard and citizens need to look forward. I would like to see us do this together.

- 1) The Treasurer/Business Manager job description is unrealistic. I doubt if there is a person out there who could fulfill the requirements or whose experience covers - or who would want to take on - accounting, human resources, and high-level administrative support.**
- 2) Is the Treasurer position part time? Define part time so it is clear how many hours the job is expected to take and clearly lay out the expectations of that position that go beyond day-to-day bookkeeping tasks and payroll.**
- 3) High-level administrative support to the selectboard and the town is desperately needed. Many of these expectations are spelled out in the Treasurer/Business Manager job description. The person for this job is NOT a treasurer. The previously mentioned Selectboard Administrator job description also addresses the organizational and managerial skills needed.**
- 4) The personnel issues go beyond these two new positions. Over the years, more responsibilities and requirements have been passed down from the state to the towns. Specific skills and expertise are needed. I am concerned about the aging population of those who serve on our town commissions and committees. I am exposed to the work of the Planning Commission, the Zoning Administrator and the Listers. These are professional positions requiring specific**

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expertise. We need to be reaching out and mentoring younger Calais citizens so that current committee members can share their knowledge. And that includes mentoring future Selectboard members.

- 5) The Selectboard cannot work in a vacuum nor do five people necessarily have all the skills and experience needed to run the town. The post-pandemic employment situation is a challenge. However, there is a lot of talent and experience in Calais, and there are people who want to help.
- 6) None of this will happen unless we work together to engender respect and rapport between the selectboard, town employees, committee and commission members, and Calais citizens.

November 28, 2022

- Invite WVFD and EMFD to discuss recruitment incentives
- Historical background on Calais Road and Bridge Standards; next steps to confirm crew receipt of standards and full understanding (Stephanie Kaplan, Denise Wheeler)
- Commission/Committee Reappointments – Sharon
- Update from KHL, Craig Line/Carolyn Brennan, Co-Director, Library Director (Denise)
- Traffic Control Ordinance Update – Reduce County Road Speed Limit – Next Steps -- John/Rick
- Installation of Speed Signs County Road – Rick – Update
- Use of ARPA funds for traffic calming road design study – Next Steps Discussion – Rick
- Approve annual VAST Trail request

December 12, 2022

- Change to property tax grace period – Jeremy/Barbara

Future Agenda Items

- Planning commission present changes to Zoning Regulations – moved from September 26 agenda; date TBD depending on completion of planning commission's work; *note: SB has 120 days (4 months) to complete its process, once received from Planning Commission*
- Curb Cut Application (NEEDED) and Curb Cut Application Assessment Form (new) (Sharon/Denise) – ACTION ITEM ([Curb Cut Materials](#) at this link; CC has requested input)
- Highway Capital Plan – Rick
- County Road Speed Limit -- Rick/Denise
- Immunizing Ash Trees – Rick/Neal Maker
- ARPA Process - Denise
- Meet with road crew members
- Curtis Pond swim area railing – Linda Schutz (February 2023)

Review and Update Existing Policies and Ordinances

- Traffic Ordinance – Rick
- Personnel Policy – Sharon/Denise
- Job Descriptions Review and Update – Sharon/Denise
- Conflict of Interest Policy ([Conflict of Interest Background](#))

Create Ordinance/Policy

- Junk Ordinance – requested

Issues Awaiting Further Development

- East Calais Stormwater Project – Rick