

## Selectboard Meeting Minutes

*Monday, February 11, 2019 at 7pm at the Calais Town Offices*

**Present:** Denise Wheeler (Chair), Rose Pelchuck (Member), Sharon Winn Fannon (Member), Clif Emmons (Member), Katie Lane-Karnas (Recording Secretary), Jerome Lipani (ORCA), Judy Robert (Town Clerk), Alfred Larrabee (Road Commissioner), Toby Talbot (Operations Manager), Stuart Morton, Chris Holcomb, Heidi Thompson, Tom McKone (Kellogg Hubbard Library), Jim Barlow (Town Attorney)

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

1. Call to Order: Denise Wheeler called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm.
2. Public Comment: None.
3. Review, Additions/Changes to Agenda: None.
4. Updates/Reports:
  - a) Road Commissioner and Operations Manager:

The Chair explained that this is the first of a couple of meetings to open discussion regarding the Town winter operations plan. Additional locations will be selected for future meetings. She recognized the discussion that has occurred on FPF and that some of the questions posed are already answered in the “Calais Roads FAQ” document and the Winter Roads Policy document (copies of both were provided at the meeting and are on the website). Heidi Thompson appreciated the hard work of the entire road crew and their willingness to handle a lot of feedback. She stated upfront that she is attending without pointing blame, but to communicate the concern and confusion she has and has heard from Maple Corner community neighbors. She stated her perspective that there is a long-term problem with Calais’ County Road not being clear enough in the winter and observed that since she became a resident in 1993, winter road conditions have been significantly better on the East Montpelier side of the border. She requested more manpower and to buy more sand rather than conserve as the winter goes along, acknowledging that this would mean raising taxes. She spoke to road conditions being a public safety issue, and how climate change is a contributing factor resulting in more ice, thawing and freezing patterns. She raised concerns for teenagers who lack experience driving in winter and people who cannot afford good tires and all wheel drive.

The Chair pointed out that Calais is at a higher elevation than East Montpelier; Magic Salt product was put into use beginning last year, as regular salt does not work under 20 degrees. She pointed out that the Road Crew consider weather forecasts in their decision making; for example, using salt to melt can create slush, which can then freeze quickly into ice if temperatures are dropping. Stuart Morton inquired about the price of sand, which the Road Commissioner supplied: \$13 per ton, around \$60,000 per year. Stuart Morton

commented that the pavement of County Road is a fraction of the 83 miles of total roads sanded in Calais and if the amount of sand put down was doubled on the asphalt part of County Road to the town line, it would be a small increase in the total sand budget. He considered an additional \$5,000 of sand for this purpose and his opinion that the increase to taxpayers would be easily justifiable; he considered that concerns are only in this area of Calais (complaints are not coming from East Calais). He pointed out that there is not a great difference in elevation in the couple hundred yards on either side of the Calais-East Montpelier town line, yet there is a noticeable demarcation. The Road Commissioner clarified that they do not put sand on the pavement of County Road, only salt. (Large rocks at .5-.75" in diameter that exist in the sand would be a danger to windshields adding liability; other towns also do not sand pavement. Sandbox sand is much more expensive and requires separate storage area as well.)

The Road Commissioner puts salt down on the County Road first at 4 am, then switches to sand to do dirt roads before returning to a second batch of salt (around 10 am). During steady snow, the snow is overtaking the salt by 7-8 am, while East Montpelier's section of County Road is done by a truck only doing salt (their salt truck does not switch to sand) and it has returned to that area already for a second time by 7-8 am. The Calais Road Commissioner's route requires sanding Lightning Ridge Road for school travel after County Road, and then necessitates returning to the garage for switching from salt to sand (taking 20 minutes at the garage). Each rodeo (plow route) is six hours long, unless a less traveled road is intentionally left uncared for (this is permitted in the Winter Operations Plan). The Board considered adding more details such as this to the FAQs document. Chris Holcomb commented on his challenges driving home during the night at the end of his work shift and stated concern that emergency vehicles could not travel the roads at nighttime. The Operations Manager commented that as Deputy Chief of the Fire Department, he can reach the town garage and get chains on them, so nighttime roads are not a concern for them as much as people's driveway conditions. East Montpelier and Middlesex have the same policy as Calais of not plowing during the night. The Chair pointed out that Calais is working with 83 miles of roads and four road crew employees. The Board hires part time employees as needed (and as available) for road crew members' sick days and sleep. She reiterated that the Board is open to ideas and discussion along with communicating these factors to concerned residents.

The Town Clerk inquired about additional sites for sand and salt storage in order to decrease truck reloading times. The Road Commissioner agreed it would cut down on time, and in the past the Town Hall parking lot had been utilized when it was unused. This would require a second piece of equipment (the \$80,000 loader) at a second site. The Road Commissioner will look in to collaboration with another town as well as how Plainfield and Marshfield collaborate. The Board considered communicating the timing of the Road Commissioner's route more specifically to residents so they can make decisions based on this. Planning of the sanding and salting routes have been calculated based on prioritizing safe school bus routes.

The state use of GPS in their trucks was discussed, and whether there is any potential for town trucks to join that technology, allowing residents to track their route position. The Road Commissioner shared the plan for tomorrow's snow storm, which will be waiting to

start in the morning (avoiding having a six-hour rodeo from start of snow at 4 pm, ending at 10 pm). Rose Pelchuck suggested thinking creatively and outside of the box: for example, staggering the routes in such a way that the hours are best allocated to cover routes at the times that are needed. Rather than come in at 7 am on a day that snow is slated to begin at 4 pm, stagger shifts to have coverage during the storm. The Road Commissioner pointed out that there are issues with asking employees to work unpredictable hours or to work the night shift at a daytime rate. The Chair shared figures from this winter: four full time employees have worked 721 hours of overtime, and the three part time employees have worked 237.5 combined hours, from 11/1/18-2/3/19 thus far. Discussion turned to the challenges of finding anyone CDL qualified with experience, availability, and drug testing to drive per diem—trucks are expensive and involve a wing hanging five feet off the side of the truck, cars are travelling on the roads—this requires part time help that is skilled, as well as willing to wait for a last minute call and no guarantee or not on a paycheck. The Chair pointed out that there are many more details involved with this process than one might think. The Road Commissioner reported that the newly leased truck will be in commission for the upcoming storm. He invited anyone who has concerns on the roads to call him and talk to him, as he is willing and happy to explain what is happening in his office and with his crew.

The Operations Manager reiterated that the timing of the plowing at any one location is never going to be more frequent than approximately 6 hours, so any one person's experience at one time will be different from another person's experience at a different time. The timing of rain affects decisions on road care as well; if rain is coming, sand is wasted if laid down only to be washed off. The Chair pointed out that this issue could be brought up under "other business" at Town Meeting. The Road Commissioner stated that in 22 years, the crew has always been four people and that there is more traffic on the roads now than there was 20 years ago.

The Chair recapped the possibility of holding similar type meetings to provide residents more understanding of what is really happening on the planning end and to allow for more ideas to be generated; she thanked guests for their contributions.

The Municipal Roads General Permit Planning Report was discussed (the check is not due until July 1). This permit is required by state law. Clif Emmons made a motion to authorize the chair to sign the Municipal Roads General Permit; Rose Pelchuck seconded. The motion passed 4-0. The Operations Manager stated that the Town has already completed a lot of the pieces that they will be required to do well ahead of the deadlines. The state is considering changes to the road and bridge standards and he has asked VTRANS to confirm that Calais' standards already meet or exceed the proposed state standards.

- b) Treasurer: The Board studied a proposal NEMRC put forth to serve as the Town auditor, within the budgeted amount (which was \$6,000). The Board decided to ask NEMRC to share a template of what the reporting will look like as well as inquire on the frequency of the report of findings. This solution may relieve stress on the Town Treasurer (she is currently working without a charter-required Town auditor functioning). They clarified that the firm Sullivan & Powers is fulfilling the function of an external, yearly professional audit. A brief history of the situation was recapped: Calais went a significant period of

time where the duties described in state law (appointing a board of three auditors) were not being completed at all; the creation of Calais' charter allowed for a single auditor to be appointed to fulfill the statutory requirements. The Town Attorney clarified that the Charter could be amended to eliminate the office of town auditor (and the Town could have an annual external audit in place of that position—which the Town is already doing). The Town Attorney suggested that the NEMRC proposal may be a bridge to the next step for the Town.

- c) Town Clerk: This item was not needed.
  - d) Town Hall Renovation Committee: Rose Pelchuck made a motion to appoint Scott Bassage to Town Hall Subcommittee (which is formulating guidelines for usage) and Denise Wheeler seconded. The motion was voted on and passed 4-0. Clif Emmons added that the subcommittee will perhaps have two purposes: someone must manage the Town Hall use on the town's behalf; the other function will be fundraising, which is Scott Bassage's interest.
  - e) Act 46 Update: This item was not needed.
  - f) CVRPC: This item was not needed.
5. Kellogg Hubbard Library (KHL) Update: Tom McKone, Executive Director of the KHL attended. He mentioned his appreciation of the challenges of the Selectboard's winter roads planning from his experience of having served on Worcester's Selectboard. He summarized services the library provides: it serves 17,000 people from the six communities surrounding the library, second in the state only to the Burlington library in terms of numbers served. He highlighted improvements, necessary landscaping, an upgraded elevator and several capital improvements that are being paid for with grants and private donations, without asking taxpayers for support. Last year was the first time in six years that the library had asked for an increase in funding, and they are not asking for an increase this year. He shared a handout created for Town Meeting Day. The Board recognized the improvements in public relations and communications that Tom McKone brought to the organization and the value of the library itself, and thanked him for his service.
6. Greeter Grant Program 2019: This grant is in the amount of \$6,379, and has a \$1,610 Town match (in kind). Last year \$250 was budgeted for miscellaneous expenses. Curtis Pond has been shown to be the pond in the worst shape in Calais in terms of susceptibility to invasive species, and the Program has been recommended to be continued at Curtis Pond. Sharon Winn Fannon made a motion to authorize the Chair to sign the 2019 Greeter Grant; Rose Pelchuck seconded, and the motion passed 4-0.
7. Discuss RFP for IT Support Services: Clif Emmons reported on his research around what other towns in Vermont and nationally have done regarding RFPs for IT. Proposals he sampled ranged greatly in length and content. He will bring a draft RFP for Calais to the next meeting and he provided a proposed timeline for the entire process. The Town Attorney added that the limitations of NEMRC (being old technology based on FoxPro, no longer supported by Microsoft), is "legacy technology" that has been adopted by the state of Vermont and is what it is. The security necessary must be built outside of the NEMRC application, and therefore, Calais' RFP for IT support will include an articulated expectation for security protection for NEMRC.

8. VLCT Town Meeting Training: The Board agreed that at Town Meeting, “Other Business” items cannot be binding.
9. Town Meeting Preparation: This item was tabled for a subsequent meeting.
10. Chair update, projects, etc.: None.
11. Review and approve minutes, warrants
  - a) The Board reviewed the invoices and orders were processed for payment.
  - b) Approval of the minutes was tabled for a subsequent meeting.
12. Other business/old business/new business: None.
13. Executive Session: Denise Wheeler made a motion to go into Executive Session at 8:44 pm for negotiating or securing of real estate purchase or lease options per 1 V.S.A. 313(a)(2) and/or 1 V.S.A § 313 (a)(1), confidential attorney-client communications. The Chair invited Town Attorney Jim Barlow, Esq. to join them. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 3-0 (Rose Pelchuck departed at this time). The Board resumed Regular Session at 9:14 pm. The Chair had nothing to report publicly.
14. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 9:43 pm.

Date: 2/12/2019 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas, Recording Secretary  
*Approved by the Selectboard at the 3/25/2019 meeting*

*Click on the link below to view documents associated with this agenda:*  
<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1pCjb1p6SIG0E1BPmJCcAR8PCbrChisEi>