

Selectboard Meeting Minutes

Monday, January 13, 2020 at 7 pm at the Calais Town Offices

Present: Denise Wheeler (Chair), John Brabant (Vice Chair), Rose Pelchuck (Member, arriving 7:12 pm), Sharon Winn Fannon (Member), Clif Emmons (Member), Jerome Lipani (ORCA), Katie Lane-Karnas (Recording Secretary), Toby Talbot (Operations Manager), Donna Fitch, John McCullough, Scott Thompson, Phoenix Mitchell, David Schütz, Donna Smyers

1. Call to Order: Denise Wheeler called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.
2. Public Comment: Scott Thompson filled the Board in on the merged school district proposed budget, which the school board is likely to approve on Wednesday (a forum will precede the vote at 5:30 pm). The FY20 budget (current) is 12.3 cents higher than the previous year. The proposed FY21 budget is a 6.6 cent increase (a total increase 18.9 cents during FY 20-FY 21). This increase is driven by increased health care, putting more resources into early education, and rising special education needs. Scott Thompson commented that working on a 35 million dollar budget is a very different scale and level of detail than working on a single school. The education spending is rising by 3.09%; this is due to a one-time payoff of a U32 bond (nearly 500,000 per year). He pointed out that the U32 bond amount (approx. \$500,000) is roughly the estimate projected for the savings that would be gained for closing Calais Elementary School—essentially imperceptible (according to the efficiency study done in 2015). Education spending per equalized pupil is going down slightly (4.61% increase). Calais pupils have gone up sharply, but Calais residents end up subsidizing the rest of the district. While the merger forced sharing of other town schools' debt, it also forces distribution of Calais's Small Schools Grant. The common level of appraisal is also working to Calais's disadvantage: although there is one merged district, there are five separate level of appraisals amongst the five towns. The Chair noted that the Town Warning no longer includes the election of school directors; rather, they will be on the school ballot. The group briefly discussed block grant impacts for special education. The Board appreciated Scott and Dorothy's work on the Board.
3. Review, Additions/Changes to Agenda: None.
4. Updates/Reports
 - a) Road Commissioner and Operations Manager: The Operations Manager noted the clutch on the 2017 truck is being repaired. The Board pointed out that the first weather event after the Road Commissioner's leave of absence has occurred, and inquired about the Operations Manager's plan of action for unanticipated winter weather. (One call of complaint was received; no feedback was received from a school bus driver.) The Operations Manager described the preventative approach he will be taking, being less conservative and more proactive about calling in road crew for potential storms; the morning of the complaint in question he had not made an early call for road crew members to come in (0.5" was predicted, and it ended up accumulating more). The Operations

Manager has contacted Roger Hill to initiate Calais's participation in forecast and roads communication ahead of winter morning school cancellation planning.

The Board stated their expectation for the Operations Manager to check phone and email at the garage every day (he reported he has been checking 3-4 times per day and checking in at the end of the day). The Operations Manager acknowledged that he has just two weeks of experience on making the call for Town roads winter weather response, and is learning and making changes as needed. The Board emphasized the importance of the Operations Manager communicating his openness to feedback and the changes he's made based on feedback to townspeople when they contact him.

The school shall communicate directly with the Operations Manager with any bus travel issues; he will go talk with First Student about putting the town channel on their radios. (Current expectation and practice are for Town trucks to pull local school busses out if they get stuck.) The Board requested the Operations Manager get back to them with the results of the conversation with First Student bus company.

5. "Hitching Post" in Adamant: Donna Smyers (Adamant resident) proposed that a Hitching Post added on the Adamant Coop property, 21 feet from the center of the road (in the Town right-of-way, which would require a town permit). The physical post is a white cedar 4x4 post, installed in the ground below frost depth. The concept, created by Phoenix Mitchell, Worcester resident, also in attendance, is "creating imaginative alternatives to single-occupied vehicles." The Hitching Post encourages local people to start thinking about how to reduce the number of single-driver cars on the road, reduce carbon footprints, and is a community building tool. A person wanting a ride goes to the post and raises a flag in the direction they wish to travel, signaling to drivers that they need a ride. A Facebook page allows people to schedule rides ahead of time.

The "hub" in Montpelier is at the Hunger Mountain Coop, where travelers can raise a flag indicating where they need a ride home to and drivers can see where travelers are requesting a ride. Phoenix Mitchell commented that this suits Vermont well, where we do know and recognize a lot of people in our local community.

The Adamant Coop Board wants approval on the placement and how it looks. Donna Smyers commented that from the Adamant Coop's perspective, one-two cars per day would be nice because several of the workers do not have cars there. If it got bigger, a different solution could be sought. For the time being, it seems very few people would use it as a park and ride; rather, riding their bicycles or getting dropped off. Phoenix Mitchell commented that VTRANS is supportive of the idea and is incorporating the Hitching Post into their "trip planner" and their map. VTRANS allows any town to apply for a \$500 grant once per year to cover the cost of the Hitching Post physical installation in town. The group visited the Hitching Post's [website](#).

Sharon Winn Fannon made a motion to authorize the Chair to sign the letter of support for the Hitching Post at Adamant, for grant application purposes. The motion was seconded and passed 5-0.

6. Town Hall Renovation Committee: John McCullough updated the board that there are approx. 10 days until interior painting is completed; remaining work includes lights, interior door hardware, fire alarm system, elevator inspection, and certificate of occupancy from the state. Key system options were discussed and still need to be approved by the Committee. Donna Fitch walked the group through the status of budget expenses and income. Additional details needed include light fixtures, entry mats, kitchen window seats, etc. Donations of wood and countertop milling for the kitchen counter have been offered. Most of the Committee have morphed into the Friends of the Town Hall; Donna asked what the expectation of the Board may be going forward. David Schütz commented that the Committee can prioritize the remaining items. The group discussed items John McCullough and Andy Felice may work on: build door jam, install antique door, build window seat, construct historic paneling at kitchen counter front. The Committee will continue to meet and prioritize and price a list of remaining items for the Board to review. John McCullough estimates approx. 50 days until move in. The Board thanked the Committee for their work.

7. Friends of the Town Hall: David Schütz noted that the Friends group has had a few meetings; Barbara Butler is serving as Chair. Clif Emmons, Scott Bassage, and David Schütz are members of the Board; they will have a display at Town Meeting and contribute a report to the Town Report. Their bylaws are somewhat based on the similar organization, Friends of the Plainfield Opera House, and they are in the process of setting up a 501(c)3. Their draft mission is to assist the Town of Calais with preservation of the Town Hall, and support fundraising that will continue to help develop the Town Hall as a community center for municipal, community, and cultural opportunities. David Schütz noted that the new facility will need to be marketed to potential new users to develop a new stream of revenue from renting for “community and cultural” purposes. The majority of downstairs uses are anticipated to be Town meetings. Money will need to be raised for additional chairs and other upstairs materials. The former Blue Barn Players, now rebranded as the Gospel Hollow Players, anticipate being the first major cultural users of the space in the spring. The box pews will be reused for finishes in the restored Town Hall (they predate the building and their origins are unclear). An upcoming meeting will begin to assess how money is managed, in consultation with the Plainfield Opera House Friends of group; the Board encouraged the Town Treasurer be invited to the meeting. The relationships between the Town and the Friends group will be defined in a separate memorandum of understanding, “MOU,” document, provided to the Board shortly after their meeting with Plainfield.

8. FY 21 Budget, Warning and Selectboard Annual Report: Sharon Winn Fannon Made a motion to approve the warning as discussed this evening, including budget numbers of total highway and general fund expenditures of \$1,661,574, of which \$1,354,449 shall be raised by taxes and \$307,125 by non-tax revenue. Denise Wheeler seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

Sharon Winn Fannon provided a pie chart graphic for the town report illustrating the distribution of the Town of Calais FY21 proposed budget. Portions of the budget include emergency services (16%), town government (31%), highway (47%), social and community services (3%), and cemetery (3%).

Clif Emmons made a motion and Rose Pelchuck seconded to approve the Selectboard report with edits as noted. The motion passed 5-0.

9. VLCT request for a Resolution Supporting Municipal Authority in a Commercial Cannabis System (S. 54): This item was tabled until a subsequent meeting.
10. IT Update: The rBtech owner or their designated representative will meet with the Board annually to advise on short- and long-term recommendations and assist in planning for funding; the executive summary resulted from this. Clif Emmons guided the Board in reviewing rBtech's most recent executive summary and shared professional interpretation on technical language. The Board reviewed the current status of these recommendations. John Brabant made a motion to approve the contract with rBtech for a term of one year. The motion was seconded by Denise Wheeler and passed 5-0. The Board noted their plans to look into cybersecurity options offered by VLCT, or potentially pursuing training through rBtech.
11. Update Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (CVRPC grant): This item was tabled until a subsequent meeting.
12. Review and approve minutes, warrants
 - a) The Board reviewed the invoices and orders were processed for payment.
 - b) Approval of the minutes was tabled until a subsequent meeting.
13. Executive Session for Personnel Matters: This item was tabled until a subsequent meeting.
14. Other Business/Old Business/New Business: None.
15. Adjournment: Clif Emmons made a motion to adjourn at 8:57 pm. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0.

Date: 1/14/2020 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas, Recording Secretary
Approved by the Selectboard at the 3/9/2020 meeting

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https://drive.google.com/open?id=1_XzQVkxkI2aqd9b0dxDPwkbXmj_WMvIz