

Selectboard Meeting Minutes

Monday, November 23, 2020 at 7 pm via Zoom conference call

Present: Denise Wheeler (Chair), Sharon Winn Fannon (Vice Chair), John Brabant (Member), Rose Pelchuck (Member), Clif Emmons (Member), ORCA, Katie Lane-Karnas (Recording Secretary), Scott Thompson, Marc Mihaly, Bill Powell, Toby Talbot (Operations Manager), Sandra Ferver (Town Treasurer), David Delcore, Alfred Larrabee (Road Commissioner), Nick Emlen, John McCullough, David Healy, Rubin Bennett

1. Call to Order: Denise Wheeler called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm.
2. Public Comment: Marc Mihaly, President of the East Calais Community Trust (ECCT), shared that the Trust was contacted by the organization “Everyone Eats” about an effort made possible through a grant with the Agency of Commerce and Community Development. Simple, pre-prepared meals are made by restaurants and made available for those who need them and Everyone Eats identified the ECCT store building as a potential location for local distribution of food. The ECCT is willing to be part of this effort by making the meals available from the porch of the building and are asking the Town snow plow to make a pass in front of the building on the day that the meals are delivered weekly. The Chair recused herself from the discussion as she is a member of the ECCT. Rose Pelchuck supported the effort especially considering the food insecurity situation made worse by COVID-19. Clif Emmons concurred. The ECCT will contact their insurance company ahead of any activity; a contract between the Town and the ECCT can be prepared to clarify the responsibility lies with the ECCT (Marc Mihaly will prepare the contract for the Town Attorney to review). The group pointed out that this effort is COVID-19 emergency (and food insecurity) related; any effort next year could be reevaluated.

Scott Thompson (school board member) announced that Calais School has gone remote until Tuesday of next week; U32 has gone remote until tomorrow. This is a result of the State COVID-19 testing of staff (happening on a voluntary, four-week rotating basis) which turned up cases that might not otherwise have been detected. The main aim is to keep schools operating if it can be done safely. Scott Thompson invited all to a December 2 budget forum. The school hopes the legislature will “hold harmless” for a decrease in students due to COVID-19. Schools receive federal funding for students who participate in remote schooling.

Clif Emmons announced that the Calais Historical Preservation Commission will be working on having Maple Corner recognized as a national historic district.

3. Review, Additions/Changes to Agenda: None.
4. Updates/Reports: Treasurer/Delinquent Tax Collector: The Treasurer provided a report for the financial position of the town as of October 31, 2020. As of the writing of this report, there

was roughly \$1700 left in FY20 (2019) uncollected delinquent taxes. The Chair noted this may be the lowest amount it has ever been. The Treasurer is still waiting for postmarked FY21 (2020) checks which are still rolling in, and expects the amount of delinquent taxes at the close of the tax collection effort this year to be similar to previous years. The DTC added that next steps are creating payment plans and pursuing FY21 (2020) delinquent taxes. (No delinquent taxes remain from FY18.)

The IT Disaster Recovery line item is high for this point in the year and is likely attributable to purchase and installation of the replacement server in the Town Office; by next report, those expenses will be relocated to a more appropriate line item.

5. Updates: Operations Manager: The Operations Manager noted that the Municipal Roads Grant Permit Amendment Form (MRGP) is an update amendment for specific work that gets filed yearly. Clif Emmons made a motion and John Brabant seconded to authorize the Chair to sign the MRGP Amendment Form on behalf of the Selectboard. The motion was voted and passed 5-0.

The Operations Manager announced that the permit for installing speed radar signs in East Calais is complete, and signs will be in place in about two weeks. The Maple Corner speed sign is closer to the village rather than further up the hill to keep speed down as vehicles approach the village itself. The Operations Manager will provide a report for the Board of the speed radar sign's data. The first week it was installed showed 80% of vehicles coming down the hill exceeding the speed limit.

The Operations Manager reported that Doug Lily installed large cedar fence posts just off the road where they are a safety hazard for snow plowing. The Board will send Mr. Lily a letter explaining the ordinance around right of ways.

6. Updates: Road Commissioner: The Chair asked the Road Commissioner to create a backup plan in the event that we have a winter storm requiring plowing and employees unavailable due to COVID-19; a mutual-aid consideration between towns may be part of the planning. She asked him to report back to the Board with his ideas. The Road Commissioner requested more part time hires. Sharon Winn Fannon pointed out that the Road Commissioner's articulated plan will inform preparing for communication with the community about what the reality is during a pandemic. John Brabant considered federal legislation whereby the state may provide a waiver allowing otherwise competent drivers to drive our trucks without a CDL license (in an emergency), freeing up competent drivers.

The Road Commissioner said the 2009 truck will be used as a regular plow now that there are five (up from four) plow routes. That truck needs constant repair, and he is looking to replace it with a used truck and will keep the Board informed. He asked why he has not been reappointed as Road Commissioner. John Brabant explained that his position remains as Road Commissioner as previously appointed. The group planned to continue the personnel questions in executive session.

7. Private Road in Kent's Corner – Janet Ancel Driveway: Janet Ancel is not ready for the Board to address this request yet.
8. LGER Funding and CV Fiber Efforts: The conversation from last week's 11/17/2020 meeting regarding a high-speed internet solution for the Town Office during pandemic conditions was taken up again. David Healy, CV Fiber rep, reported that he talked to Cloud Alliance about a fixed wireless solution; there would not be a guarantee that it could be done by December 30, eliminating this as a potential use of grant funding. He also talked to VELCO about running a fiber optic line to the Maple Corner substation; it seems VELCO's plans will be in good timing with CV Fiber's installation timeline. The group looked at a draft letter from the Board to VELCO emphasizing how the timely completion of this work would greatly assist CVFiber running fiber to our office and to serve the many residents and businesses who are currently suffering with slow and inadequate internet speeds. Clif Emmons made a motion and John Brabant seconded to authorize the Chair to add all Board members' names to the letter to VELCO and sign on behalf of the Board. The motion was voted and passed 5-0.

Discussion turned to use of the LGER grant funds. Denise Wheeler talked with the East Calais Community Trust (ECCT) Board and a private office space lease operator about the Town renting office space in a building with high speed internet. Nick Emlen confirmed that a year lease paid with grant funds before December 31 would be allowable if it included all the materials by that date. John Brabant considered the longer-term projection of COVID-19, such as limiting office space to one employee at a time. Having high speed quality internet and a safe space may be a way to prepare for expectations for winter pandemic conditions.

Rubin Bennett (rbTech) joined the meeting. He was asked: if we cannot bring the fiber to the server, can we bring the server to the fiber (at an office in East Calais)? What are the technical possibilities? Rubin Bennett stated that the challenge is that someone in the office would have basically no connectivity to the server. Without impossible expense, it's not possible to have mirrored instance of the server in the office and elsewhere. He stated that this is a Vermont problem, and one that the State has spent a lot of money attempting to solve. A lot of rural Vermonters are experiencing this, that there is no broad band beyond a certain point, and the straight fact is that a DSL modem does not provide sufficient resilience.

John Brabant outlined the benefit of isolation at two private, rented offices with high speed internet. Until high speed internet is run to Town office premises, could we relocate to allow two office staff members space to work? Could we relocate the server, expecting the Clerk to travel between Gospel Hollow and East Calais? Rubin Bennett explained that this would include: building a firewall and building a VPN. There would be spotty internet at the Town Office (as usual), NEMRC would run from the local server, and the work from home experience would not necessarily be better (due to the limitations of NEMRC). (The NEMRC application is not runnable without the workstation being in close proximity to the server.) Moving NEMRC to the cloud is possible and is a change that cannot be undone.

Rubin Bennett thought the office computer setup could be moved to those offices before December 31. Nick Emlen asked rbTech to provide a letter guaranteeing the tech changeover can happen on this timeframe. John McCullough noted the listers use NEMRC on a semi-regular basis and need to access the Town Clerk's Office regularly for paper records. The

Board agreed this would continue. The Board continued considering what is best for the Town, and how to keep critical Town operations functioning through pandemic challenges. Rubin Bennett will be in touch with anything that comes to mind for him in the next few days.

9. Animal Control in Maple Corner: Many, many concerns and complaints have been received about horses loose in Maple Corner. The horse owner, Elisabeth Shedd, has been contacted numerous times in the past and the Board considered how to proceed. Rose Pelchuck pointed out the issues of the animals' health and welfare, the public safety concern that this is causing, private property impacts, and communicating to the community member that this is not okay. John Brabant had those horses at his property since May; the owner doesn't have a property that affords keeping horses, they don't respect fences; he considered if another resident has a space for housing them in the winter. The way the current statute is written there is not a lot that the Board can do to take action on this situation and they agreed that writing a letter may achieve a positive outcome.
10. FY 22 Budget: Board members agreed for Clif Emmons and Denise Wheeler to begin the first iteration of the budget planning, using a 1-2% budget increase.
11. CVSWMD regarding the draft certification amendments for two CSWD facilities: John Brabant reminded the group that the status of the public hearing (requested by the Calais Selectboard) resulted in the CVSWD penning a public letter stating that enforcement action and resolution toward the CSWD is appropriate, not issuing after the fact permits that in some way condone their behavior. The NE Kingdom Solid Waste District also submitted a letter. The State decided to stay the permitting process until the "enforcement action" is resolved. John Brabant explained that this is as much as he knows at this point.
12. Other Updates
 - EMFD FY 22 budget presentation – 12/3/2020 at 7 pm via Zoom
 - Joint meeting with E. Mont. SB re: EMFD FY 22 budget request –12/7/2020 at 7 pm via Zoom
13. Town Hall: Clif Emmons announced that the Town Hall exterior painting project and final walk through are completed. The Town Treasurer will be notified to pay the bill and the certificate for lead abatement (provided by the painting contractor) will be filed. There were over 800 pounds of lead paint chips removed. Rose Pelchuck made a motion to approve a \$100 expenditure for a gift certificate in appreciation of the restoration painter's work that went above and beyond expectation. John Brabant seconded, and the motion was voted and passed 5-0.

Clif Emmons noted that there are some winterization efforts that need to be made annually for the Town Hall, such as ensuring it is at least minimally heated, plywood leaning against windows, etc. The Board asked Clif Emmons to contact Andy Felice for this work. The alarm still needs redundancy service activated on the phone lines at a cost of approx. \$60. Clif Emmons made a motion to activate a second phone line to the Town Hall to act as a backup to the alarm system. Rose Pelchuck seconded and the motion passed 5-0.

14. Review and approve minutes, warrants
 - a) The Board reviewed the invoices and orders were processed for payment.

b) Approval of minutes was tabled until a subsequent meeting.

15. Executive Session for Personnel Matters: This item was not needed.

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

17. Adjournment: Rose Pelchuck made a motion to adjourn at 9:21 pm. The motion was seconded by John Brabant, voted on and carried 5-0.

Date: 11/25/2020 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas, Recording Secretary
Approved by the Selectboard at the 11/30/2020 meeting

Click on the link below to view documents associated with this agenda:
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1PG98mR4Wv491q22FmVywKEzuWGPOaEez?usp=sharing>