

Selectboard Special Meeting Minutes

Monday, November 30, 2020 at 7 pm via Zoom conference call

Present: Denise Wheeler (Chair), Sharon Winn Fannon (Vice Chair, joining at 7:17 pm), John Brabant (Member), Rose Pelchuck (Member), Clif Emmons (Member), Katie Lane-Karnas (Recording Secretary), Hans Melhus, Jan Ohlsson, Scott Bassage, Barbara Butler, Judy Robert, David Schütz, Nick Emlen, Sandra Ferver, David Healy, John McCullough (joining at 7:56 pm)

1. Call to Order: Denise Wheeler called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.
2. Public Comment: David Schütz announced that the 2021 CLG (Certified Local Government) grant application, in support of Maple Corner being considered a National Historic Place, is before the Selectboard and needs to be sent in a few days. This same process has been completed with North Calais, East Calais, and Kent's Corner, all of which have been added to the National Register (Adamant is about to be added as well). The grant money would be used to hire an historic preservation consultant to work with the Commission throughout 2021 to develop the nomination of Maple Corner. Two local historians would volunteer on this project (Steve Gallagher and Linda Grey). This grant is accomplished with volunteer hours in-kind (not cash).

Rose Pelchuck made a motion to authorize the Chair to sign the CLG grant application (budget and narrative) on behalf of the Selectboard to hire a consultant to work with the Historic Preservation Committee to get Maple Corner on the National Register of Historic Places and to send it in along with the Town's most recent financial statement. John Brabant seconded the motion.

This item was not warned for this meeting (just an oversight) and the Board planned to approve tonight, warn this topic for the next meeting, and invite any comments from the public at that time.

The original motion was voted and passed 4-0.

3. Review, Additions/Changes to Agenda: None.
4. Review and approve minutes, warrants
 - a) The Board delegated review of the invoices and orders to Clif Emmons, Denise Wheeler, and Rose Pelchuck.
 - b) Clif Emmons moved and Denise Wheeler seconded to approve the minutes of the 10/26/2020 meeting, with the changes as noted; the motion passed 4-0.
Clif Emmons moved and Denise Wheeler seconded to approve the minutes of the 11/9/2020 meeting, with the changes as noted; the motion passed 4-0.

Clif Emmons moved and Denise Wheeler seconded to approve the minutes of the 11/16/2020 - 1/17/2020 special meeting, with the changes as noted; the motion passed 5-0. Clif Emmons moved and Rose Pelchuck seconded to approve the minutes of the 11/23/2020 meeting, with the changes as noted; the motion passed 5-0.

5. CV Fiber Update/Pursuing High Speed Internet and LGER Grant: The group continued discussion about use of the LGER grants the Town has secured. David Healy, Calais' Delegate to CVFiber, updated the Board that Cloud Alliance will not be able to perform any build out in the brief timeframe required by the grant. In a related item, he informed the Board that VELCO will be planning to run a fiber line to WEC's Maple Corner Substation in the second quarter of next year. This will help speed up bringing fiber to Calais. CVFiber is also part of a consortium bidding on FCC funds to bring high-speed internet to rural locations. The FCC determined that Calais has 307 locations that are rural without broadband and would be eligible for this funding. He will request that CVFiber Board prioritize Calais in its Phase 1 project at its next meeting.

In the absence of a highspeed internet solution from CV Fiber before Dec. 31, the Chair revisited the previously created list of potential ways to utilize the LGER grant funds:

- Upgrading the phone system (Integrity)
- Revamp website (web designer)
- ZA computer/scanner (rbTech)
- Better scanner/printer for Town Treasurer home office use (rbTech)
- Use of funds to pay for cost of Town Treasurer laptop (it was not a budgeted expense)
- rbTech setting up the office systems at a remote office space with high speed internet in East Calais
- Adobe license (this item was added at this meeting)

The group weighed in on the previously explored idea of a potential server relocation to East Calais office space. Clif Emmons suspects rbTech has more concerns to work through than initially thought. For IT, the server would be moved, firewall in place there, and any additional equipment purchased for connection to high speed fiber.

The Town Clerk noted that at any moment, she may be in the vault, getting a box of zoning records, getting mail, answering the door, in different digitized and computer records; replicating this in another space would not help. Clif Emmons questioned how an office move would affect the external auditing expectations. Checks and payments are stored in the vault until the Treasurer transports them to the bank; she discouraged bringing the checks offsite and back and the disruption of changing the Town's mailing address. The Chair clarified the Board is responding to concerns from office staff and does not want to create more problems than it solves. The Assistant Town Clerk noted that documents are stored in a fireproof vault or fireproof cabinets. She added that many days people arrive for dog registration, marriage license, death certificate, notarization, etc. and the staff serves a community need, in a location where people know where to find them.

John Brabant refocused on the earlier meeting and communication from staff that the office is at a crisis point in terms of internet connectivity and proposed \$70-80,000 be spent to resolve

those issues. He recalled the need for staff to isolate only one person at a time in the office (due to COVID-19); the Board is trying to provide a set of options so workers can have access to work and an alternative to spending \$70-80K. He pointed out the Board was not talking about relocating the office, but providing high speed internet opportunities and office space so each person could have isolated space. He wondered what had been lost in translation. The Chair acknowledged the Board received mixed messages about the severity of the problem. The new information that CV Fiber may have fiber installed in the near future may have changed thinking on what could be done. Sharon Winn Fannon noted that the East Calais space would not be about moving staff there necessarily, but about locating the server there, to increase speed of remote work from home.

The Town Treasurer thanked the Selectboard for reaching out to staff at a time that they understood there to be a real challenge. She explained that when we hooked into NEMRC in 2018, we began to realize that our internet at the office was not good, which has been the case since then. The Town Treasurer has had mixed experience of working at home, though never terrible and the work is getting done. She noted that the availability of the grant money and the availability of an entity (Consolidated Communications) was what precipitated this research for a solution at this time.

Jan Ohlsson (lister and citizen) commented that she heard that we need a server and broadband. Listers need to go into the vault to get documents that are not digitized, and they have worked out coordination with the office staff during COVID-19 and a new space would not help.

The Chair summarized that the East Calais office space is off the table (noting again the concern that once the server is moved to the cloud it cannot be brought back locally if the server is moved back to the Town Office) and we are back to the items bulleted above. The Board was responding to what they heard from staff. The money will be spent on equipment to support more effective remote work from home; a Consolidated Communications agreement is off the table; East Calais office space is off the table. (The grant was driving this and the Town cannot enter into a lease agreement for monthly payments that would occur in the next year.) The Town Clerk pointed out that all around the country, municipalities are scrambling and frustrated in not being able to find a way to get high speed internet to utilize this grant before Dec. 31.

The group nailed down tasks and responsibilities for getting the grant documentation together:

- Nick Emlen to confirm details about grant coverage and return to the Board
- Pursue Adobe license-Clif, for Town Treasurer to purchase
- Quote and invoices from rbTech – Clif
- Inquire about web designer – Clif and Nick

6. Executive Session for Personnel Matters: Rose Pelchuck made a motion to go into Executive Session at 8:23 pm per 1 V.S.A. subsection 313 (a) (3), personnel matters. The motion was seconded by Clif Emmons, voted on and carried 5-0. The Board resumed Regular Session at 9:15 pm. The Chair had nothing to report publicly.

7. Other Business/Old Business/New Business: The Selectboard will meet Thursday, December 3, 2020 via Zoom with the EMFD Board of Directors to review their proposed FY 2022 budget and other updates. Denise Wheeler will make a special meeting agenda to post. The Selectboard will meet Monday, December 14, 2020 via Zoom with the East Montpelier Selectboard to review and approve the EMFD FY 2022 budget.
8. Adjournment: Sharon Winn Fannon made a motion to adjourn at 9:16 pm. John Brabant seconded the motion which was voted on and carried 5-0.

Date: 12/1/2020 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas, Recording Secretary
Approved by the Selectboard at the 12/19/2020 meeting