

## Selectboard Special Joint Meeting with E. Montpelier Minutes

*Monday, December 7, 2020 at 7pm via Zoom conference call*

**Present:** Denise Wheeler (Chair), Sharon Winn Fannon (Vice Chair) Clif Emmons (Member, joining 7:36 pm), Rose Pelchuck (Member), Katie Lane-Karnas (Recording Secretary), Bruce Johnson, John, Paul Cate, Seth Gardner, Amy Willis, Carl Etnier, David Delcore, Denise Wheeler, Judith Dillon, Virginia Burley, Bill Powell, Michael Duane, Ty Roland, Kimberly Jessup, Ginny Callan, Cindy Thompson, Susan, Rosie Laquerre, Lee Simard, Scott Bassage (arriving 7:37 pm), Alfred Larrabee (arriving 7:37 pm), David Schütz (arriving 7:38 pm), Nick Emlen (arriving 7:55 pm)

**Absent:** John Brabant (Member)

1. Call to Order: Denise Wheeler called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.
2. Public Comment: None.
3. Review, Additions/Changes to Agenda: None.
4. Discussion on Proposed FY22 Ambulance & Emergency Services budget request by the East Montpelier/Calais Fire Department (EMFD): The EMFD total proposed increase is \$37,500 (a specific amount of planned increase discussed at this time last year). The fire department side is down 5.9%; ambulance up 17.3%; net to the towns is 7.9% up. The overall net is 4.35% above last year's total budget. The underlying reason for increase is staffing; in December 2019 the towns discussed increasing funding for staffing over a period of three years. This staffing increase request is for per diems; salaried employees would cost significantly more. The Boards have stated their support of increased per diem staff. The group reviewed the proposed budget document. The volunteer workers continue to drop off and the only real option is to increase per diem employees; there doesn't seem to be a different option other than moving to a completely different model (such as contracting).

Marshfield and Plainfield's contract increase is a rate of 3% per year. Calais and East Montpelier increase more than that yearly. The understanding is that Marshfield and Plainfield's participation is essential to infuse dollars into the program; a steady percentage increase is necessary, and the predictable increase is an incentive that keeps participants in contract. There is another revenue stream, which is when services are provided to towns (approx. \$60-75,000 per year from Marshfield and Plainfield). When ambulance transports are made (regardless of the town), the cost charged is income allocated in various ways. Each month the ambulance revenue received is allocated to pay paramedic intercepts, some loan payments and put some into the contingency fund. The net ambulance revenue for the month goes into the capital reserve fund. The contingency fund is capped at 40,000; remaining revenues go into the capital reserve fund. In the past, 15,000 has been taken out of the contingency fund to be used for salaries, not out of ambulance revenue.

The capital reserve is set up to pay for trucks and equipment and does not have a margin of extra padding built in; therefore, removing revenue to pay for salary ends up resulting in the Department needing to ask the Towns for more funding for trucks and equipment in the future.

The East Montpelier Chair pointed out that the capital reserve fund is likely to go in the red. He considered whether the Department is going to ask the towns for additional money in the near future for a new truck. The Calais Chair stated that at last Town Meeting, some voters asked for significant increases, specifically EMFD, to be broken out as a separate line item. The East Montpelier Chair noted that they have also heard this request from voters. The current interlocal agreement (auto-renews yearly since its inception in 2013; or requires five months' notice to change) disallows the EMFD operating budget to be listed as a separate line item. The renewal date is September 1. Town of Calais select board members noted they would be taking up the issue to provide timely notice (by April 1) of intent to break out the emergency budgets from the town's budget vote, moving forward. The EMFD final budget, for inclusion in each town's SB budget, is mutually agreed upon by the East Montpelier and Calais Selectboards with input from EMFD as needed.

5. LGER Funded Projects: There is the opportunity for a one-time cost upgrade of the website by the current website host GovOffice (the annual licensing fee will remain as budgeted yearly); this could be funded completely using LGER grant funds. This would give us an ADA compliant website and allow emergency notices up front and center for visitors; the work could be completed within the LGER grant timeframe. Clif Emmons shared a sample of a town website created by GovOffice and the four website design package options; the level called "progressive" would include a COVID-19 clickable banner, highlighting of town emergency services, and allow for a couple of significant revisions over the first year. A feature (see dw comment) in development is a communications package allowing website visitors to sign up to receive digital notification of town emergency information (\$900), which can be added later. This website redesign includes cleaning up redundancy and streamlining organization.

Denise Wheeler made a motion to approve signing the contract for the "progressive" option for the website design with GovOffice. Clif Emmons added a friendly amendment to allow Denise Wheeler to sign the contract on behalf of the Board. Rose Pelchuck seconded the motion. It was voted and passed 4-0.

Clif Emmons updated that there are some equipment updates that would assist the office staff and ZA in their ability to function remotely. This equipment includes a town-assigned laptop for the Assistant Town Clerk for remote office work. The estimate from rbTech is approx. \$5300. Not included is consideration for smart teleconferencing equipment that would allow the Selectboard to hold a remote Town Meeting should that occur. The Board could sit socially distanced with the moderator in a room, with a rotating screen that can turn to whomever is speaking. Nick Emlen attended and reminded the group about the Tax Department's required details.

Clif Emmons made a motion to approve the rbTech quote for the goods described therein various equipment for the Office Staff and ZA (approx. \$5300 for the hardware) and allow the

Chair to sign the contract on behalf of the Board. Rose Pelchuck seconded the motion which was voted and passed 4-0.

6. Maple Corner CLG Grant Application: David Schütz commented that this would be the Historic Preservation Commission's project for 2021; they will conceivably be returning to the Board at the end of 2021 for the next part of the grant. The Commission has a potential new appointee, Dirk Van Susteren, interested in serving particularly because of the Maple Corner effort.
7. FY 2022 Budget, Warning and Town Meeting Preparation: The Chair noted she would like to invite moderator Gus Seelig and Middlesex moderator Susan Clark to the December 14 meeting. Susan Clark is knowledgeable about and has been researching legislation and options for a remote Town Meeting 2021 and is willing to speak with the Calais Selectboard. The Board tentatively scheduled a budget planning meeting for Saturday, December 19.
8. Executive Session for Personnel Matters: Clif Emmons made a motion for the Board to go into Executive Session at 8:12 pm per 1 V.S.A. subsection 313 (a) (3), personnel matters with the Road Commissioner, Alfred Larrabee. The motion was seconded by Denise Wheeler, voted on and carried 4-0. The Board resumed Regular Session at 9:30 pm. The Selectboard met with the Road Commissioner, Alfred Larrabee, in Executive Session. The Selectboard confirmed with Alfred Larrabee that a Road Commissioner appointment is effective and carries forward until such time as the Road Commissioner is reappointed or the Selectboard takes other action.
9. Other Business/Old Business/New Business: The Selectboard agreed to meet at 6:00 pm on Monday, December 14, 2020, one hour earlier than usual for the regular meeting.
10. Adjournment: Rose Pelchuck made a motion to adjourn at 9:35 pm. The motion was seconded by Clif Emmons, voted on and carried 4-0.

Date: 12/10/2020 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas, Recording Secretary  
*Approved by the Selectboard at the 1/11/2021 meeting*

*Click on the link below to view documents associated with this agenda:*  
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1urrKLWGB69Y87OK4BfqUFOIZDyoq9HX7?usp=sharing>