

Selectboard Meeting Minutes

Monday, February 10, 2020 at 7 pm at the Calais Town Offices

Present: Denise Wheeler (Chair), John Brabant (Vice Chair), Sharon Winn Fannon (Member), Clif Emmons (Member), Jerome Lipani (ORCA), Katie Lane-Karnas (Recording Secretary), Judy Robert (Town Clerk), Sandra Ferver (Town Treasurer and Delinquent Tax Collector)

Absent: Rose Pelchuck (Member)

1. Call to Order: Denise Wheeler called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.
2. Public Comment: None.
3. Review, Additions/Changes to Agenda: None.
4. Updates/Reports
 - a) Road Commissioner and Operations Manager: The Operations Manager was not present for a report.

The Board noted the importance of the Operations Manager's presence at regularly scheduled meetings, as it gives them the opportunity to communicate and increases the transparent approach in the case of unexpected staffing issues, route changes, etc. and planned to learn why he was unable to attend.

The Board discussed a report from a resident about timing of plow trucks on roadways on Friday's storm. Was there replacement coverage for a sick day, and why was a particular sanding route running so late? What is the expectation for plow routes in the case of school closing? The two additional temporary drivers are utilized to both add an extra truck to the route and to cover for sick days. There are several ways to consider increasing the travelling public's understanding of Calais road conditions: GPS satellite smart devices at minimal cost exist that plug into a truck's port; there are satellite solutions for managing and knowing where your fleet is located. Verizon offers an app to track where the vehicles are.

John Brabant noted that he observed a bus with summer tires still on. He communicated with the school board chair, who inquired to the interim superintendent. He photo documented each WCSU bus at the garage, only three of which had winter tires on all wheels. Deborah Taylor, interim superintendent, responded by phone message (played at the meeting). Reportedly, all Calais, Worcester, and Middlesex busses have snow tires, although John only found three busses in the garage with snows on—he will follow up with the school board, suggesting getting a printout of bus numbers and tires installed.

5. Treasurer/Delinquent Tax Collector reports for November and December 2019: The Town Treasurer, Selectboard, and Town Clerk reviewed the financial position of the town as of December 31, 2019 (50% of the fiscal year). Looking at the budget to expense picture half of the way into the fiscal year, the Treasurer does not see any big issues. However, she recommended scrutinizing the budget at the end of February and will attend the February 24th board meeting for that purpose.

In General Government, we have collected 71.02% of budgeted revenues. December is the sixth month of the fiscal year and existing revenues are primarily due to tax and Current Use payments. The balance of revenue receipt relies heavily on successfully collecting delinquent taxes. We have expensed 63.32% of budgeted expenditures. Despite expenditures overall exceeding 50% of the budget, expenses are on track with nothing standing out. There are one-time payments made in the early part of the fiscal year that affect the percentage of budget spent early in the fiscal year and therefore skew the expenditure picture until we are later in the year.

The *storage* unit at \$75 per month is the only remaining expense to pay for the interim Town Office re-design. The Town Clerk commented that inviting the contractor to present a design and estimate may be best scheduled after Town Meeting. Accessibility grants are still due to be awarded to the town in the next few months. Certificate of occupancy is projected to be ready in March; meetings will not be held there until it is granted.

In Highway, we have collected 90.96% of budgeted revenues. The remainder of budgeted revenue for FY20 will come from State Aid to Highway. We have expensed 63.36% of budgeted expenditures. Highway expenses are on course despite the appearance that they are running over budget. This is due in large part to certain one-time payments that are made early in the fiscal year, similar to General Government.

The current Fund Balance is built from the balance the Town came into the year with, plus revenues, minus expenses so far. According to the auditors a good fund balance to maintain is approximately 20% of budget to cover expenses incurred between the end of the fiscal year and the first tax collection date (approximately 2 months). It also covers unbudgeted highway and general government grant expenses until reimbursement is received. In the absence of this fund balance, a note in anticipation of taxes would have to be taken at the beginning of the fiscal year. The current Fund Balance is \$380,621.87.

Update on tax collection effort: As of December 23, 2019, the 2019 tax collection effort officially closed. At the close of the 2019 tax effort, there was \$190,343.72 in taxes outstanding. This amount is roughly \$15,000 higher than last year. The collection process has begun. The DTC noted that most people do want to pay their bills, and the office makes sure that all are treated with respect and work hard to create a plan with any delinquent taxpayer.

Implications for the proposed budget: The group reviewed calculations of the estimated tax rate's effect on a sample property assessed at \$200,000. In 2019, the property tax for that sample property would have been \$5,065; in 2020, the estimated property tax *without* the "other expenses to be voted on" would be \$5,112, and with the "other expenses to be voted

on” the estimated property tax would be \$5,258. If all articles with additional expenses pass, this is an additional \$145.61 of taxes per \$200,000 of assessed property value.

The *Town* Treasurer explained that the Grand List reflects the previous year and as such is an estimate that changes from year to year; the Grand List won't be set by the listers again until between April and August of 2020.

Regarding the Memorial Hall, the state tax department issued an opinion stating that the current ownership configuration in the deed and related documents indicate to the tax department that its use is consistent with the existing exemption in state statute. As a result, the select board will not ask the voters to exempt the building from taxes (the group noted the need to gain this guidance documentation to file at the Town Office with the deed).

6. Local Hazard Mitigation Planning Team Committee: The Board considered potential Calais representatives to serve on this Committee. The Chair will check with Planning Commission, Conservation Commission, the Operations Manager, the school principal, encouraging participation by members rather than all chairs. Denise Wheeler is willing to serve representing the Selectboard.
7. Greeter Grant Program: Based on a recommendation from Noreen Bryan and Colleen Bloom, who organized the Greeter Program in recent years, the Town will not apply for the program this season. There were several complications and extensive reporting requirements.
8. IT Update: Last week, the Town Clerk and Clif Emmons met with the owner of rBtech, signing the contract. They have begun the process of updating the backup device for the server, not a minute too soon, as it had just begun to show signs of being overloaded. Office staff have provided very good feedback about the responsiveness of IT support. With regards to server replacement, which must be done: hopefully the article for the loan gets approved, but if it does not, the Town must still find the money elsewhere in the budget. rBtech is getting backed up on projects and would like to schedule the work on their calendar at this time, for as soon as the loan is obtained. (The loan amount is estimated at \$18,000, and its term is longer than one year so it must be voted on by the Town.) Clif Emmons made a motion that the Board approve purchase of a replacement server. John Brabant seconded. Sharon Winn Fannon made a friendly amendment to add “in the new fiscal year” and the friendly amendment was accepted. The amended motion passed 4-0.
9. Friends of the Town Hall Committee: Clif Emmons, who serves on the Committee representing the Selectboard, explained that a website will be built, modeled like the Plainfield group, with a calendar for scheduling cultural events. Space reservation forms will be located on the website, likely managed by Artie Toulis. His role will include checking against the Town calendar for conflicts with Town functions. Municipal functions will always take priority over cultural events. The group noted that there surely will be a period of learning and adjustment. The Friends Committee will have a table at Town Meeting. As an incentive, new members joining before the end of March will have a year of membership at no cost. A question was raised about how to responsibly book events in advance, while allowing prioritized use of the space on weeknights by Town commissions. The Board noted that the

rules and policy should be really clear and well written, so the Board can leave the function of management of the calendar to the Friends Committee (not in the lap of the Selectboard).

Town Meeting will be an opportunity to increase awareness of this new group and encourage fundraising; the Committee is meeting weekly up until Town Meeting Day and working with a graphic artist to create a design. The Board plans to have the cleaning services that are already utilized for the Town Office for the Town Hall; a reserved private event will incur a fee that includes professional cleaning. The Friends group continues to look into considerations such as insurance implications, damage fees, and a policy for confirmation of appropriate post-event cleanup. Clif Emmons noted that these questions were on the Friends' radar, and fees charged for rentals will be designed to cover these incorporated costs. Finally, a grand opening will be planned to follow the certificate of occupancy, in coordination between the Selectboard and the Friends group, and possibly in conjunction with a regional art event.

10. Discussion of Cannabis Resolution and S. 54: The group discussed a VLCT publication.

11. Sign Certificate to officially close the 2019 Grand List: This can only be done if there is no pending legal action (grievances) for 2019, of which there are none. John Brabant moved to authorize Denise Wheeler to sign on the Board's behalf. Clif Emmons seconded, and the motion passed 4-0.

12. Chair Update

- The Board learned that the Town already had a Technology Fund, approved by the voters a number of years ago, and a new one does not need to be created, as had been considered in the 12/14/2019 budget development meeting (see minutes [here](#)).
- The UVM Roads project is anticipating a springtime presentation.
- The Board would like to nominate the Conservation Commission for the Vermont Tree Steward Award, in the Community Group category.
- VLCT's newsletter includes announcement of some trainings in cybersecurity.

13. Review and approve minutes, warrants

a) The Board reviewed the invoices and orders were processed for payment.

John Brabant moved and Denise Wheeler seconded to approve the minutes of the 12/9/2019 meeting, with the changes as noted; the motion passed 4-0.

Clif Emmons moved and Denise Wheeler seconded to approve the minutes of the 12/14/2019 meeting, with the changes as noted; the motion passed 4-0.

Sharon Winn Fannon moved and Denise Wheeler seconded to approve the minutes of the 12/16/2019 meeting, with the changes as noted; the motion passed 4-0.

14. Executive Session for Personnel Matters: Sharon Winn Fannon made a motion to go into Executive Session at 9:00 pm per 1 V.S.A. subsection 313 (a) (3), personnel matters. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 4-0. The Board resumed Regular Session at 9:15 pm. The Chair had nothing to report publicly.

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

16. Adjournment: Clif Emmons made a motion to adjourn at 9:17 pm. Denise Wheeler seconded, and the motion was voted on and carried 4-0.

Date: 2/12/2020 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas, Recording Secretary
Approved by the Selectboard at the May 4, 2020 meeting

Click on the link below to view documents associated with this agenda:
<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1e6gZmJrPIdt4Lda3UHcy3QOJpd0B9442>