

## Selectboard Meeting Minutes

*Monday, August 24, 2020 at 7:30 pm via Zoom conference call*

**Present:** Denise Wheeler (Chair), John Brabant (Member), Rose Pelchuck (Member), Clif Emmons (Member), ORCA Media, Katie Lane-Karnas (Recording Secretary), Sandra Ferver (Town Treasurer), Alfred Larrabee (Road Commissioner), David Delcore (Times Argus), Peter Harvey, Toby Talbot (Operations Manager), Nick Emlen, Jay Copping (Town Health Officer)  
**Absent:** Sharon Winn Fannon (Vice Chair)

1. Call to Order: Denise Wheeler called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm.
2. Public Comment: None.
3. Review, Additions/Changes to Agenda: None.
4. Updates/Reports, Treasurer/Delinquent Tax Collector: The Town Treasurer, Sandra Ferver reported the auditors are nearly complete with their work. Before they can finish, the Town needs to resolve the negative balance on the Town Hall renovation project (-\$19,865). Sandra continued to explain that there are two options: use the General Fund (GF) balance or use the Town Hall Reserve Fund (THRF) (\$19,291 includes the FY21 appropriation), or some combination of both funds. The auditors suggested utilizing the General Fund balance for this purpose because it is so healthy. The Treasurer reminded the Board that historically it has been preferable to keep \$10,000 in that Reserve Fund.

The Board noted that having completely renovated the building, it is unlikely to require reserve funding for repair this year. The group recalled two potential expenses that are unclear if they need funding or how they will be resolved—a heat exchanger and snow removal (further notes on this item below). Discussion ensued, comparing the benefits of leaving some money in the THRF or using it entirely and in consideration of the lingering financial impact of COVID-19 in the upcoming fiscal year. John Brabant noted that the Town Hall use is increasingly directed by the larger community rather than solely the Selectboard, and it is worth using the THRF; it is also a matter of semantics as it is all in the end Town money.

The payment for the exterior painting that is currently happening was an amount approved at Town Meeting and is not included in this conversation. If there is a necessary expenditure for the Town Hall, the decision can be made then to fund a critical need and it would be indicated in a budget line in the General Government budget. A heat exchanger, for example, would have to be an expense that comes from a budget line in the general government budget. The Board noted that the painting of the Town Hall came in under what was approved at Town Meeting and provides some savings that may be used if the Town Hall requires expenditures. In February, Town Hall renovation project manager John McCullough had explained that snow falling from the now-standing seam roof of the heated Town Hall needed to be removed somehow so as to allow access and prevent window damage. This item may need to be addressed in the upcoming months. John Brabant commented that an empty THRF balance

may encourage creative solutions (if the pandemic situation permits use of the building this winter).

Denise Wheeler made a motion to authorize the Town Treasurer to use the balance in the Town Hall Reserve Fund to pay off the current negative balance in the Town Hall Renovation Project in its entirety with the shortage to be covered by the General Fund Balance. We will revisit this item before the end of the fiscal year and keep a close eye on the Town Hall expenses for the remainder of this fiscal year. John Brabant seconded, and the motion was voted and passed 4-0.

The Board celebrated that the delinquent tax balance is down to approx. \$9,000. Many of the remaining balances, including four delinquent taxpayers at \$1,000+, have committed to paying by November. The Town Treasurer updated that approx. \$160,000 was deposited into the Town's accounts since the most recent tax bills were mailed and reported that tax collection is "fairly brisk right from the get-go." We don't know how cash flow is going to be affected by COVID-19 events. The Board appreciated the Delinquent Tax Collector's hard work.

5. Updates/Reports, Operations Manager: The Operations Manager updated on the status of solar powered speed signs in E. Calais. They are ordered and will arrive in 3-4 weeks; he has applied for the state right-of-way permit and communicated with the school superintendent with the information he requested regarding paying for half. East Calais residents are very grateful that this is finally going to happen and the group appreciated everyone's work on making this happen now.
6. Updates/Reports, Road Commissioner: The Road Commissioner reported that roadside mowing/trimming continues and there was a negative comment on Front Porch Forum about the appearance of trimming. John Brabant noted that East Montpelier uses their mower to mow higher branches; they cautioned from experience that they only do that kind of mowing in the spring before leaf out and no one notices as there is no contrast. The Board asked the Road Commissioner to plan in future years for completing higher trimming when trees are without leaves (spring and stick season) and left this year's trimming calendar to the discretion of the Road Commissioner. Peter Harvey thanked for the mowing of Old West Church Road and asked about it taking a number of passes. The Road Commissioner explained that the brush takes more than one pass and invited Peter to call him.

The mower is working, but water got in the headliner inside the cab and has developed black mold that irritates employees' respiration. The Road Commissioner will remove this molded liner before any other mowing gets done. The woodchipper arrived this morning and started very hard. Upon testing it got really hot, blew black smoke, shut down, and will not start. The Road Commissioner noticed the head bolts have been off and he suspects the head gasket; something is certainly wrong with the motor. The full invoice was paid ahead of shipment. John Brabant will follow up with the seller.

George Road has been open as of last week (following the road work and culvert). The grant-funded project is waiting on the last item, guardrails (barrels are currently in place). The Road Commissioner approved the company's request for payment of 75% of the project with the remainder held until guardrails are installed.

The VLCT Lockout Tagout Program (LOTO) training is required for road departments and the Operations Manager reported Calais's has been completed. Lockout/Tagout (LOTO) is a safety procedure which is used to ensure that dangerous machines are properly shut off and not able to be started up again prior to the completion of maintenance.

7. EMFD Second Power Cot Request: Fire Chief Ty Rolland emailed with a request for a second cot. At the [August 13 joint EMFD meeting](#), the Chief explained about the Department's opportunity to buy a power cot at a discounted price, which they contracted under the provision that permits costs under \$20,000 to not need Board approvals. He is requesting Board approvals to add a second cot at the same discounted price (paid for with raised insurance revenue generated through the ambulance service, not taxpayer dollars). He explained that the Department has a lot of female EMTs who can't lift a 250-pound person on a regular cot, which is not an unusual transport situation. It would be a monthly payment. John Brabant made a motion to authorize the EMFD to invest in this approx. \$17,000 power cot. Denise Wheeler seconded, and the motion passed 4-0.
8. Public Meetings/Events at Town Hall During COVID-19: After gaining the advice of the Town Health Officer (THO), Jay Copping, at the July 13 meeting, the Board decided to use remote technology for all Town meetings. The THO again joined the Board and noted that his thoughts remain unchanged at this point. Vermont is #1 in the nation for limited COVID-19 impact, and there is a good reason for that. The CDC advice for opening any space is pretty extensive and may make sense for a large town that has capacity for the materials, staff, and time to fulfill disease prevention requirements fully; we are in a good, safe place at the moment, and he still recommends continue to do what we are doing, in an effort to end this thing. He reiterated that the general recommendation is to stay the course as we are doing. He added that CDC procedures are extensive and necessary because of the asymptomatic potential of infected people, tracking everyone who's been at a meeting, etc. Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission's spreadsheet indicates that nearly all towns in this region are doing remote meetings. The group thanked Jay for his work.
9. Town Hall/Friends of Town Hall Update: The Friends meetings have been on hiatus and at their upcoming meeting plan to revise the Consideration of Friends Management Agreement, incorporating the Selectboard's comments. Exterior painting is progressing and lots of higher parts of the building are completed. A piece of the soffit on the lower, parking lot side of the building is severely damaged due to dry rot and had to be replaced (approx. \$1,000 additional cost).
10. IT Update: Tomorrow the relay backup system between the Town Hall and Town Office will begin to be installed. The Seacoast alarm system issue may still require a second phone line installation; further investigation is planned.
11. Other Updates: Nick Emlen, Calais Emergency Management Director, presented information about a Local Government Expense Reimbursement (LGER) grant, funded by the Coronavirus Relief Fund. Nick Emlen attended a training hosted by the Regional Planning Commission, where he learned that Calais may apply for reimbursement for an upgrade to the Town Office phone system to accommodate staff working from home. The Chair will circle back with the

Office Staff to learn what will be best for them and communicate back to Nick. This grant may encompass setup costs, tech support, and fees through the end of the year (after which the grant stops), laptops for staff who don't have the audio or computers to participate in remote calls, and Zoom account subscription. The Town Health Officer may utilize the grant for a digital camera to take photos for Town purposes. If any material needs to be involved in a court proceeding, this will ensure the THO's personal device would not be subpoenaed. Nick Emlen will also consider whether he has need of a Town camera. Nick reminded the Board they received "GETS" cards in the spring which need to be pin code activated by a phone call to Homeland Security.

Denise Wheeler made a motion to authorize the purchase of a digital camera using the Town credit card, following a conference between Jay Copping and Clif Emmons. Clif Emmons seconded and the motion was voted and passed 4-0.

12. UVM Roads Study: The Chair contacted the Professor who led the UVM engineering study about winter roads in Calais, and he is willing to meet with the Board for a review of their findings. The group planned to schedule such a review at an upcoming meeting and to have the Road Commissioner and Operations Manager to join the conversation.
13. Appointments/Reappointments: Clif Emmons made a motion to reappoint Denise Wheeler to the DRB as an Alternate. John Brabant seconded and the motion was voted and passed 3-0 (Denise Wheeler abstained).
14. Review and approve minutes, warrants
  - a) The Board reviewed the invoices and orders were processed for payment.
  - b) Clif Emmons moved and Denise Wheeler seconded to approve the minutes of the 8/10/2020 meeting, with the changes as noted; the motion passed 4-0.  
Clif Emmons moved and Denise Wheeler seconded to approve the minutes of the 8/13/2020 special meeting, with the changes as noted; the motion passed 4-0.  
Clif Emmons moved and Rose Pelchuck seconded to approve the minutes of the 8/13/2020 special joint meeting, with the changes as noted; the motion passed 4-0.
15. Executive Session for Personnel Matters: Denise Wheeler made a motion to go into Executive Session at 8:58 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 9:20 pm. The Chair had nothing to report publicly.
16. Other Business/Old Business/New Business: None.
17. Adjournment: Rose Pelchuck made a motion to adjourn at 9:20 pm. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 4-0.

Date: 8/26/2020 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas, Recording Secretary  
*Approved by the Selectboard at the 10/5/2020 meeting*

*Click on the link below to view documents associated with this agenda:*

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ngPhz9eQ6bWbqXCyl1FOsQOiIzda7o7k?usp=sharing>