

Selectboard Meeting Minutes

Monday, November 22, 2021 at 7 pm, Town Hall and via Zoom conference call

Present: Denise Wheeler (Chair), Sharon Winn Fannon (Vice Chair), John Brabant (Member), Rick Kehne (Member), Marc Mihaly (Member), ORCA Media*, Katie Lane-Karnas* (Recording Secretary), Clif Emmons*, Fred Duplessis*, Sandra Ferver (Town Treasurer)*, Grace Vinson*, Leslie Matthews*, Richard Hyde*, Ryan Edwards*

**Indicates attendance by Zoom video call*

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: Clif Emmons noted that the Friends of the Calais Town Hall have found an insurance option (Isham Berwick Agency) and it looks like they will be able to move forward securing coverage. Once the management agreement has been presented by the Friends and approved by the Selectboard, it then authorizes the Friends to act on behalf of the Town. Therefore, insurance and management agreements both need to be put in place to proceed. The Board will review the previous meeting's notes (October 2020), invite the Friends to a meeting, review the final documents, and then return it to the Board for final approval.
4. Review and Sign Warrants: The Board reviewed and approved processing of invoices and orders.
5. Town Treasurer/Delinquent Tax Collector Report: The Town Treasurer updated the Board based on the most recent report (end of October, 2021): we are in the first third of the fiscal year and everything is on track. We are coming to the end of tax collection now. We continue to look good from a revenue standpoint and expenses are on target for the General Government and Highway. ARPA funds have begun to be received.

We have one tax delinquency outstanding from 2020 (approx. \$2700). This is a taxpayer the Delinquent Tax Collector (DTC) has referenced at the last couple of meetings. The delinquent taxpayer has been seen at and around their home, but all correspondence has not been responded to (certified mail was not picked up). The DTC questioned if the person possibly did not file income taxes for 2020 because they lost the property tax adjustment credit, so their 2021 tax bill is substantially higher than the previous year's delinquent amount owed. This situation meets all criteria for turning the parcel over to the Town Attorney. Since they have not paid any 2021 taxes, it is the practice to combine all outstanding taxes to turn over for collection. The Chair commented that the Town has reached out thoroughly and a letter from an attorney may spur some action. When a property is turned over to attorney Gloria Rice, the ability to negotiate a plan with the Delinquent Tax Collector is terminated, and costs of

attorney fees and other costs are added and the delinquent resident must pay the entire amount to the attorney. This will be warned on a future agenda for the Board to make a decision.

The Town Treasurer reported the Highway Department budget is in great shape and there is an opportunity to make the best use of surplus funds; they are working with Rick Kehne in planning this. The grader that has been funded through a State of Vermont (low rate) loan will be complete in the next fiscal year; the Town will then be eligible to reapply for that loan for another purpose.

6. Sullivan & Powers Annual Audit: Fred Duplessis reported that this is the regular audit that gets done every year, per state statute. It is more strict than private audits, and results in two reports and a list of records and notes. Discussion started about two qualifications regarding the Cemetery Funds. Fred Duplessis explained the recommendation is that there should be records to maintain in perpetuity about perpetual care versus committed/restricted/consigned. This is a matter of breakdown of the total funds reported. All the remaining information was “clean.”

Answering more questions, Fred Duplessis explained that Calais is a member of the waste district; if something happened at the CVSWMD, they could assess Calais as their right to assess members. This is a standard note for the audit. Same with EMFD; as a member, Calais is responsible for a debt commitment. The Board asked Fred Duplessis to include a title to each letter so it is more clear what the documents address.

Marc Mihaly asked about the process to proceed with implementing the recommendations, and the roles of the Board and the Town Treasurer. He also asked whether there were sample policies the Town could use. VLCT does have sample policies on their website. The Town Treasurer would work on policies like fraud, investments, etc., and provide drafts for the Board. Sharon Winn Fannon noted that policies wrap around and ensure the good practices the Town currently has do continue; the Board thanked the Town Treasurer for her work. Fred added that the report on compliance and internal controls shows a “clean” result; what we are talking about are really just recommendations, not a control problem. It is also good to have these policies in place in case a state or federal visit ever occurs (not a likely scenario, but a good idea to start this big project). Other town boards and commissions do not have grants of significant enough size to dig in at an audit.

The Town Treasurer clarified that the Calais Trustees have suggested to the Cemetery Commission that they take 4% of the balance of the Fund and apply that to the anticipated Cemetery budget. This would be a check written to the Cemetery Commission for operating costs. Their Fund reached the \$200,000 mark this year, and the Commission has received a request from the Town office for their upcoming budget, and to include the 4% amount (\$9400) to it, relieving taxpayers of a significant amount of funds starting in FY23.

Sharon Winn Fannon made a motion, and Denise Wheeler seconded, to accept the audit as presented by the Town Treasurer and Fred Duplessis. The motion was voted and passed unanimously.

7. Road Crew Hiring: The Road Commissioner reported he has received two applications for the open position and met with an applicant. He was impressed with his abilities and qualifications. He can't start until mid-January, would move here from out of state, and the Road Commissioner recommended waiting for him. The candidate proposes to forfeit the sign on bonus in trade for two weeks paid vacation to use after six months' service; the Chair noted this could be a condition of employment. Sharon Winn Fannon noted this is a request the Board would handle on a case-by-case basis; it does not set any precedent. The Road Commissioner has a temporary employee secured for the meantime, Dana Hoppi. Dana and Ed will hold us over until January.
8. Sign-On Bonus Form: This draft form will be revisited at a subsequent meeting.
9. Winter Roads Contingency Plan: Rick Kehne and the Road Commissioner are scheduling meetings for working on budget and this plan; an update will be presented at the 12/13/2021 meeting.
10. Truck Purchase Update: The Road Commissioner reported that the Town from whom we are buying the truck has their new truck in, allowing the sale to Calais to move forward. But, the company doing the body work for the truck Calais is buying has just moved from VT to NH and this may interrupt the work somewhat. (This is the 2014 10-wheel Western Star dump truck.) The purchase of the used, new-to-Calais truck is between Calais and Charlebois. An undercoating will be needed, and the best time for that is in the spring; it will be utilized for plowing as soon as it arrives.
11. Calais Kent Hill Road Culvert / BRIC Application: Grace Vinson (CVRPC) reported she has been developing a draft budget and schedule for the BRIC application; \$41,900 total, with cost share for Calais (in-kind or cash matching) at \$10,479. She will present the final draft at the December 13, 2021 meeting. This application is due to the state 12/17; the state submits it to FEMA January 2022, and ideally we hear back from FEMA August 2022. Grant award could happen in the fall of 2022 and CVRPC would manage the project until completion in 2023. This is only to pay for the scoping study—it is not a timeline for work to take place.
12. Notice of Road Closure: Old West Church is holding Christmas Eve services outside this year. They are contemplating closing the road for some amount of time, with cones provided by the Road Commissioner and public notice posted on Front Porch Forum. The Old West Church Association must contact the Road Commissioner for road closure approval and conditions if they wish to proceed. This is within his discretion to figure out if and how to make this work.
13. Mountain Tamers Snowmobile Club Road Use 2021-2022: Steve Gray joined the meeting and described the one minor (and temporary) change (the rest of the road crossings are identical to previous years): due to a logging operation, there is a request to open a small section of Long Meadow Road. Only two road crossing requests are for VAST (Vermont Association of Snow Travelers) trail; the rest are from Calais residents who need a way to access the system. A sign will be in place to notice travelers about the traveling plans at Long Meadow Road. Denise Wheeler made a motion that the Board approve the request from the Mountain Tamers Snowmobile Club Road Use 2021-2022. The request was seconded, voted, and approved.

14. Historic Preservation Commission Member Appointment: Ryan Edwards, who serves on the DRB and the DAB, has requested to serve on the HPC to fill a vacant term. Denise Wheeler appreciated his attention to procedural details. Ryan commented that in the last few years, he has not encountered a conflict of interest between these three boards. He understands the expectations of Open Meeting Law and is aware of situations in which one may need to recuse themselves. He agreed to attend any training on OML. Marc Mihaly made a strong recommendation for Ryan's appointment. Marc Mihaly made a motion and Rick Kehne seconded to appoint Ryan Edwards to the Historic Preservation Commission, for the vacant term expiring in 2023. The motion was voted and passed unanimously.
15. Town Plan Amendments Public Meeting: The Planning Commission (PC) held their hearing on October 19, 2021, and there is a schedule outlining next steps. The Selectboard is to hold a public hearing with 15 days' notice published in the newspaper and the usual places. Sharon Winn Fannon made a motion to hold a public hearing to allow comments and questions on the proposed amendments to the 2016 Town Plan, to be held Monday December 13, 2021 at 6:30 pm, and include a Zoom participation option, and authorize Denise Wheeler to take care of noticing it. Rick Kehne seconded. The motion was voted and passed unanimously. Without any proposed changes, the Plan moves forward; this is a narrow amendment that allows North Calais to address some needs of the Memorial Hall with N. Calais being designated as a village center allowing more opportunities for grants.
16. Town Report Schedule: The Assistant Town Clerk has prepared a schedule for the Board to be aware of. December 13 will be a vote to approve mailing ballots.
17. Review and approve minutes, warrants
 - a) The Board reviewed and approved processing of invoices and orders.
 - b) Marc Mihaly moved and Denise Wheeler seconded to approve the minutes of the 11/8/2021 meeting, with the changes as noted; the motion passed 4-0 (Sharon Winn Fannon abstained).
18. Executive Session for Personnel Matters: Marc Mihaly made a motion to go into Executive Session at 8:51 pm per 1 V.S.A. subsection 313 (a) (3), personnel matters. The motion was seconded by Denise Wheeler, voted on and carried 5-0. The Board resumed Regular Session at 9:35 pm. The Chair had nothing to report publicly.
19. Other Business/Old Business/New Business: None.
20. Adjournment: Marc Mihaly made a motion to adjourn at 9:35 pm. Rick Kehne seconded the motion which was voted on and carried 5-0.

Date: 11/23/2021 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas, Recording Secretary
Approved by the Selectboard at the 2/14/2022 meeting

Click on the link below to view documents associated with this agenda:
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1QbNHclzLSAKsTtsNueK3CCGutzcXOZlp?usp=sharing>

