

Selectboard Meeting Minutes

Monday, November 8, 2021 at 7 pm, Town Hall and via Zoom conference call

Present: Denise Wheeler (Chair), John Brabant (Member), Rick Kehne (Member), Marc Mihaly (Member), ORCA Media, Katie Lane-Karnas* (Recording Secretary), Jordan Keyes*, Barry Bernstein*, Bill Powell, Karlyn Proloux, Alfred Larrabee (Road Commissioner), Grace Vinson*, Betty P*, David Delcore*, Paige McGaheran, Paul Guare, Randy Fitch, Jonathan Fitch, Tracy Sudhalter*, David J Healy*, Larry Brown

**Indicates attendance by Zoom video call*

Absent: Sharon Winn Fannon (Vice Chair)

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. Review and Sign Warrants: The Board reviewed and approved processing of invoices and orders.
5. Review and approve minutes: Denise Wheeler moved and John Brabant seconded to approve the minutes of the 10/25/2021 meeting, with the changes as noted; the motion passed 4-0.
6. Curtis Pond Association: As discussed and agreed upon at the last meeting (10/25/2021), the MOU regarding the Curtis Pond Dam was brought back to the Board with the edits they requested. Denise Wheeler moved and Rick Kehne second to approve the MOU with the Town for Curtis Pond Dam. The motion was voted and passed 3-0 (Marc Mihaly abstained).
7. Brook Field Service: Marc Mihaly moved and Rick Kehne seconded to approve the Brook Field annual maintenance agreement, and to authorize the Chair to sign on behalf of the full Selectboard. The motion was voted and passed 4-0.
8. FY 23 Budget Preparation: In prior years, the Board met on evenings or weekends for budget preparation ahead of Town Meeting. Last year, Clif Emmons and Denise Wheeler met several times and brought versions back to the full Board. John Brabant commented it was great to reduce the quantity of meetings and proposed the Board take the same approach this year. John Brabant made a motion that the Selectboard appoint Denise Wheeler and Marc Mihaly to be our point folks to put together a preliminary budget to present for the full Selectboard for their augmentation. Marc Mihaly seconded, and the motion was voted and passed 4-0. The Chair reported that the Northeast Region CPI is at 5.9% at this time and members discussed the remarkable rate of increase in many sectors.
9. Winter Roads Contingency Plan: The Road Commissioner reported that an extra pile of gravel has been added due to forecasting of an upcoming predicted warmer year and freeze-thaw

patterns that call on extra gravel for roads. The Chair offered to assist the Road Commissioner in getting the draft plan written down (for road plowing contingency scenarios) and he agreed to get back to the Board with next steps in the plan.

10. Road Crew Hiring: There have been two potential candidates for two open road crew positions, both holding CDLs, and the Road Commissioner is scheduling interviews. He will communicate the sign-on bonus details with the candidates.
11. Benjamin Uris Curb Cut Application: The Road Commissioner visited curb cut #CC-2021-9 and met with the applicant. A 15” culvert is required; site distance meets the Town standards; the B71 standards will be met with some earthwork needed. There is a potential tree removal that the applicant must contact the Tree Warden about in advance of any cutting. Denise Wheeler moved to approve the curb cut for Benjamin Uris with the conditions as noted on the permit; John Brabant seconded, and the motion passed 4-0.
12. Update on E. Calais Stormwater Project: Grace Vinson (CVPRC) reported that the update at the previous meeting remains where things currently stand. She will be back in touch with Calais when action is needed.
13. Kent Hill Rd. Culvert Grant Application: The Town is asking CVRPC to handle project management and provide an estimate. Grace Vinson (CVRPC) is working on the application and is in touch with the related entities but does not have specific numbers to provide to Calais yet. She commented that FEMA allows for a max of 5% of the total grant cost for grant administration (which FEMA calls “management costs”). She anticipates having a budget to present at the next Selectboard meeting.
14. Drainage Culvert on Apple Hill Rd.: The Road Commissioner explained that the lack of a culvert at this location (Apple Hill and Robinson Cemetery Roads) has been a problem for years, with water building up on the side of the road; he is proposing a culvert ending in a stone lined catch basin. He added historical context: years ago the Board installed and then removed the culvert because of a request from a landowner; this landowner has since sold the property. The Road Commissioner continued to see water sitting there, and after the property changed hands, he pursued the possibility for consideration of re-installation of a culvert there. New property owner Paige McGaheran (with input and support from her son Jordan Keyes) supports installation, and the Road Commissioner is returning to the Board for approval of this installation. A concern was raised from neighbor Karlyn Proulx who remembered the historical objection of the previous landowner and is concerned about the McGaheran property dealing with a culvert that turns their yard into a swamp. John Brabant suggested a noted understanding that if the culvert is installed and significant water happens, the Town may consider another fix.

Jordan Keyes (on behalf of the McGaheran property which is the one that the culvert empties into) commented that he met with the Road Commissioner onsite and discussed the catch basin; they don’t want to get in the way of mitigating the issue as it stands. It sounds like a modest stone-lined catch basin would likely address current stormwater events; in the event of flooding, a more substantial solution to move the water to the swamp, in cooperation with the Road Commissioner, is their desire. Paige McGaheran agreed with the comments of her son

Jordan Keyes and thanked the Board for considering her input and the condition of her property.

John Brabant explained that the email received with concern about this project was from Karlyn Proulx whose objection was to the Town installing the culvert without speaking with the new neighbor (property owner), Paige McGaheran; so it was a misunderstanding, as the Road Commissioner and Board have been in communication with Paige McGaheran.

The Board gave the Road Commissioner approval to move forward with the noted understanding that if this becomes an issue because of pooling water on the property, the Road Commissioner shall bring it back to the Board to revisit with a new proposal.

15. Roadside Ash Tree Cutting: The Road Commissioner reported that he spoke with Tree Warden Neal Maker about the road crew's ability to cut large ash trees in the roadside as they work along the Town roadways and is now seeking clarity from the Board on this action. Due to the arrival of the Emerald Ash Borers, ash trees are now exempt from the tree warden statute that controls steps that must be taken to cut trees in roadsides (Calais is in an EAB infected area). He explained that brush will be chipped and large pieces are left on the side of the road for the landowner to handle. The Tree Warden will be requested to make a post to Front Porch Forum to make the public aware of this effort around Town; the Road Commissioner is the contact on this effort.

John Brabant suggested a town-owned piece of land for stockpiling sand, woodchips, etc. for residents to access. The Road Commissioner had an idea of a location and the Board asked John Brabant and the Road Commissioner to check it out.

16. EMFD Request: Paul Guare and Larry Brown joined the meeting to explain EMFD's request to purchase a Stryker "auto loader" with use of capital funds (East Montpelier has already approved). They are seeking approval from the Calais and East Montpelier Selectboards to release contingency funds for the auto loader. E. Mont. SB has already approved the request.

Paul and Larry explained the number of shifts per month and that in general, it is two emergency ambulance personnel on a shift. Loading and unloading the stretcher of 300-500 pounds is an understandable challenge. With the proposed power system, a single person can lift a patient. This power unit allows any member of any size in the department to safely lift a patient with one finger. It is state of the art for securing the stretcher in the ambulance as well: rather than a pin, two arms lock on to the stretcher. Larry Brown explained the Department's knowledge of how to transport folks who exceed the capacity of a standard ambulance weight limit, and the extent to which the ambulance team must go to find innovative ways of moving, transporting, lifting, and caring for a person who the team can't lift using their standard methods. He explained how this power lift is needed in our community for ensuring the Department can transport people of all sizes, and ensuring the safety of patients and EMFD staff.

Connection to the Zoom meeting was temporarily lost at 8:07 pm; reconnection at 8:10 pm.

Denise Wheeler moved to authorize EMFD to purchase the Stryker “auto loader” and service agreement not to exceed \$30,000 to be withdrawn from the capital fund. Rick Kehne seconded, and the motion passed 4-0.

17. WEC Request for Funds for Fiber: Bill Powell, Barry Bernstein, and the Selectboard discussed this WEC request that is to get high speed internet to the Town Office and the Town Hall. Bill Powell explained that WEC is providing 100% access to poles in each of the 41 towns that are working on with CVFiber. The project to bring fiber to the office and neighbors is a CVFiber effort, but WEC is working along with VELCO to support it as partners. There are no contracts signed with partners yet, and Bill gave Barry Bernstein were given credit for championing this project. The Chair noted there is \$10K budgeted in FY22 for this project. Bill Powell noted this stage cost is approx. \$30K.

The Chair noted that ARPA funds are something the Town is encouraged by VLCT to proceed slowly and carefully - there is no rush.. Last year the town budgeted \$10K anticipating there might be an opportunity like this, and at this time the Town has a really good fund balance. The Chair would feel very comfortable authorizing this expense. Barry Bernstein explained that we are working at Kents Corner and therefore this moment is the time when the project phase (running the line from Kents Corner down to the Town Office) can be completed at the least cost, since we have work already happening there.

John Brabant reminded the group that about a year ago, the Town had been considering upwards of \$87,000 to pay a cable company to install high speed internet to get the Town Office internet appropriately supported. This is by far a better option and is part of a bigger buildout that will support the whole town.

Denise Wheeler made a motion to approve the deployment of high-speed fiber from Kents Corner to the Town Office, and to pay WEC to do that, not to exceed \$35,000 (\$10,000 as budgeted in FY22 and the remainder to come from the existing budget). Rick Kehne seconded. John Brabant made a friendly amendment to allow for an additional expenditure as necessary to extend the line from off of the final pole at the Town Hall to the Town Office building; so that if the contractors are there and facilitating at that time, and could save us time and money, we could have that option available to us. Denise Wheeler accepted. The original motion and the friendly amendment were voted and passed 4-0.

There are three “sections” to this fiber project: from Kents Corner to the final pole at the Town Hall; from that final pole to the Town Office exterior; and then the actual connection from the final pole into the Town Office. Bill Powell gave a ballpark estimate of \$1500 to make the *final* connection from outside the office to inside the office (light the line).

18. Conservation Commission Appointment: Tracy Sudhalter joined the Selectboard meeting after having met with and attended Conservation Commission meetings. She is a professional wetland and wildlife biologist and has been in consulting for a decade. Her educational background is in conservation and biology. Denise Wheeler made a motion to appoint Tracy Sudhalter to the Conservation Commission to fill a 2022 vacant term for a term of four years. John Brabant seconded and the motion passed 4-0.

19. Executive Session for Personnel Matters: This item was not needed.

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

21. Adjournment: Marc Mihaly made a motion to adjourn at 8:32 pm. The motion was seconded, voted on, and carried 5-0.

Date: 11/9/2021 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas, Recording Secretary
Approved by the Selectboard at the 11/22/2021 meeting

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

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1xxaTpyYCPyLBlyq3E9HGWNxGqW1wZUer?usp=sharing>