

Selectboard Meeting Minutes

Monday, March 22, 2021 at 6 pm via Zoom conference call

Present: Denise Wheeler (Chair), Sharon Winn Fannon (Vice Chair), John Brabant (Member), Clif Emmons (Member), Rick Kehne (Member), ORCA Media, Katie Lane-Karnas (Recording Secretary), Gail Graham, Alfred Larrabee (Road Commissioner), Town Treasurer (Sandra Ferver) Rose Pelchuck, John McCullough, Pam DeAndrea, Christian Meyer, Rick Winston, Scott Bassage, Michelle Braun

1. Call to Order: Denise Wheeler called the meeting to order at 6:07 pm.
2. Public Comment: None.
3. Review, Additions/Changes to Agenda: None.
4. Organizational Rules of Procedure: The Board continued discussion on rules of procedure for the newly organized group, the adoption of which is a yearly process. Last year was an anomaly because the COVID-19 pandemic hit just at the time for organizing. Sharon Winn Fannon prepared a draft document (using the VLCT document as a starting point) which was reviewed. Discussion considered designation of a “point person” to gather information (research and present to the full Board the options with costs, risks, etc. and a recommendation) for the purpose of good time and resource management. The Chair stressed the importance of each Board member having all the information for making independent decisions .and not having information filtered and an opportunity to ask questions Rick Kehne pointed out that this will impose a kind of discipline on all members, to prepare materials properly so all members are prepped to make a decision, with all materials needed in the shared folder, and receive any inquiries from other members. John Brabant added that the Board already does take this approach successfully and has agreed to it informally (such as delegating IT and staff communication work); this allows the Board to be more consistent and efficient in applying this approach. Clif Emmons stated his support for putting in writing what the Board currently does and taking the opportunity to be more efficient in how we flesh out duties on things; he clarified he would not support members being appointed to each of the Town commissions seeing how this might be perceived as a form of micromanagement, He also noted that Board members are free to sit in on any of the public committee meetings. Members agreed about the value of public involvement and inquiry at meetings and discussed structuring Board meetings to invite it while maintaining clarity about how the Board functions and how meeting are structured.

Sharon Winn Fannon noted that her proposal, putting structure and discipline in writing in the document shifts the board toward intention and awareness in its practices. Rick Kehne noted that putting it in writing creates a performance standard. The Chair encouraged garnering the balance between a written standard and flexibility in response.

Sharon Winn Fannon suggested that each member have a connection to each Town commission to act as a liaison. The purpose of this will be to clarify with them in advance of any meeting agenda item (time, materials in advance, defining the “ask”) and be their primary contact on the Board. John Brabant agreed that we are not delegating down our individual authorities but making this a more effective use of Board time, allowing each member to efficiently direct feedback and concerns to the appropriate point person. This would also support the public understanding that concerns should not all be directed at one person, but that the Board shares and spreads responsibility. All agreed that each member should continue to be responsive to the calls they receive as elected officials, and open lines of communications must be maintained for people to use whatever line they feel most comfortable using.

Agenda items are expected to be in by Thursday morning before a Monday meeting, with items planned/scheduled by the Chair for that meeting and future meetings (some are time-sensitive, some are extensive and others short, etc.). Future agenda items will be “owned” by members who have been delegated as the point person. The group discussed having a scheduled time for agenda items requiring a vote, or a critical policy matter/expenditure; the group would like flexibility for re-ordering agenda items at the beginning of the meeting, if that’s permitted under the statutes. John Brabant suggested that even if discussions move, the vote on items scheduled for votes should be locked in at a specific time. Sharon agreed to research this item and redraft the language to accommodate flexibility to the extent that’s allowed, but also honor the public’s interest in being able to rely on the agenda.

5. Updates/Reports: Treasurer/Delinquent Tax Collector: The Town Treasurer reported that the bottom line is that we are in great shape: everything is on track both in the GG and Highway side. Our budget does not get spent equally in every month (there are a number of expenditures that are made primarily at the beginning of the fiscal year, which does skew the percentages spent at any given time). The George Road grant reimbursement came in at roughly \$130,000 and will show up in next month’s report. The primary source of outstanding revenues are delinquent taxes which are coming in nicely. We are down to approx. \$63,000 and the DTC expects another couple thousand to come in before the end of March. We are doing better this year than in past years at this time. Election expenditures reimbursements from the Secretary of State’s Office have come in as well. The Board thanked the Town Treasurer for preparing so well for their meetings (she prepares the Board’s monthly statements in the first days of the month and attends the last meeting of every month).

The Town Treasurer explained that the fiscal year closes June 30, and we do not start collecting taxes until September; the Board has worked hard to achieve and maintain the healthy “fund balance” recommended by Sullivan & Powers that allows the Town to be very stable, not borrow money and incur interest, and pay for Highway summer expenses until taxes begin coming in the fall. This is thanks to the Town Treasurer and the Selectboard for their due diligence.

6. Updates/Reports; Operations Manager: The Operations Manager presented the 2021 Capital Plan and the expiration date for each truck/piece of equipment. The budgeted replacement costs were identified and Rick Kehne inquired about an annualized reserve fund. John Brabant stressed that voting to buy a new truck be initiated by physical need and not by a replacement

rhythm; Town trucks are bigger than they've ever been and he agreed that this means there are less return runs to pick up material; but there is a concern across Town that this is pressing us to widen roads and incur damage to trees. Rick Kehne has worked on municipalities on truck replacement in the past and the cost/benefit of lost manpower, cost of the fix, lost trade in value, all add in to give you a poor return on value to run trucks beyond the schedule. Our trucks take quite a beating with plow frames on them. John Brabant commented that the truck that failed beyond warranty had a severe defect (such that they stopped making that truck); truck performance in salted paved towns cannot be compared to gravel roads; and anecdotes cannot be trusted for decision making, facts and figures are needed. The Road Commissioner commented that the Town buys the extended seven-year warranty (the longest available, there is no longer option); when that warranty is gone, you are not covered for big expenses. John Brabant requested the Road Commissioner provide data on warranty extension on a truck purchase. Sharon Winn Fannon noted this as a follow-up thread that would be strengthened with the delegation for involved parties to work on outside of the meeting.

The Schedule of Indebtedness document was presented by the Operations Manager. He explained how the budgeting resulted in the Western Star payment coming up short this fiscal year. Sharon Winn Fannon made a motion to approve the Operations Manager's Annual Financial Plan—Town Highways, prepared by Shauna Clifford (District 6 VTrans contact), and that Rick Kehne be authorized to sign on behalf of the Board. Denise Wheeler seconded, and the motion passed 5-0.

The Road and Bridge Standards is the document that must be formally reviewed regularly in order to be eligible for grants. Denise Wheeler made a motion to approve the Certification of Compliance for Town Road and Bridge Standards and Network Inventory, confirming that they have reviewed the previous Road and Bridge Standards, and to authorize Rick Kehne to sign on behalf of the Board. Rick Kehne seconded; the motion was voted and approved 5-0.

7. Road Commissioner: Road crew members support the Green-Up Day effort on the first Saturday in May. Green-Up Day organizers request that the May 1, 2021 time be extended an hour, resulting in two road crew members being available until 1 pm (rather than 12 pm). He checked with the Board about this overtime question. Sharon Winn Fannon made a motion that the Board authorize a total of eight hours of overtime to support Green-Up Day on May 1. Denise Wheeler seconded the motion. John Brabant commented that this is a standard effort every year and it is the Road Commissioner's job. Sharon Winn Fannon and Denise Wheeler rescinded the motion and left the decision with the Road Commissioner. Denise Wheeler noted this is within the Road Commissioner's discretion.

The Town of Woodbury's grader is out of commission and they requested to borrow Calais's grader. The Road Commissioner noted this is an effort of mutual aid and asked the Board to be aware; the Chair advised the Road Commissioner to send the Board an email if the grader is shared.

8. Curb Cut Application #2021-01 Gail Graham (Leonard Rd.): The Road Commissioner has visited the site. The project meets sight distance requirements under the town's curb cut policy; a Town cross-culvert (Adamant Road) is uphill from the curb cut, which will result in its exiting water going to the applicant's new road. The Road Commissioner is therefore

recommending the applicant include a culvert to deal with that water. Gail Graham indicated on the application that the curb cut is agricultural. There will ultimately be a house built on the other side and it gives access to that building (once a permit is gained) so the Board asked Gail Graham to resubmit the first page of the application with “residential” indicated; no additional fee will be charged.

9. Pekin Brook Culvert at Kent Hill Rd.: Pam DeAndrea, CVRPC, and Michelle Braun, Friends of the Winooski River, attended to talk about a culvert that has an “AOP barrier” issue. A picture was reviewed from 1984 when the culvert blew out due to woody debris blockage. Christian Meyer is the new Transportation Planner who may know of funds from VTRANS; there may be funds from Emergency Management (25% match for final design). John Brabant noted it is really undersized, and the idea is to replace the Kent Brook culvert with a larger one. The Chair suggested a small group work on gaining and distilling information (in consultation with Scott Bassage and the Road Commissioner) to present to the full Board. Scott Brabant noted that the Friends of the Town Hall recognized flooding as an issue before they could get funding for renovation; a study was done that identified this issue in 2011 but has fallen between the cracks a number of times and will take a long time and a lot of planning to resolve. It is an issue that the Highway Department is not able to get grants on, but hopefully can get fixed with help from CVRPC and others. Michelle Braun from the Friends of the Winooski River explained that the first step will be a feasibility and design study, for which funding will need to be found. This will help determine what route grant applications will take (depending if there is an erosion, fish, flooding, or other issue). Rick Kehne and John Brabant will work on this with the Road Commissioner, Scott Bassage, CVRPC, and Friends of the Winooski River; Rick and John will connect with the relevant parties and let the Board know when they will return to present to the Board.
10. Appointment/reappointment: Denise Wheeler made a motion to reappoint Bill Powell as the Delegate and John Brabant as our Alternate Representative to CVSWMD Board of Supervisors and to authorize Rick Kehne to sign on behalf of the Board. Sharon Winn Fannon seconded the motion. Rick Kehne made a friendly amendment to authorize Denise Wheeler to sign on behalf of the Board; John Brabant seconded and the motion was voted and passed 5-0. The term is for one year.
11. Adamant Community Club (ACC) Re: 2014 Appropriation Funds: Rick Winston reported that the ACC received an appropriation of \$3,000 from the Town after voters approved a 2014 Town Meeting article “...to obtain grant funding to comply with accessibility requirements and make necessary building upgrades.” Rick Winston noted they had planned to build a ramp for wheelchair accessibility but the ACC realized the building doors and bathroom are still not accessible, and the question became, “What does it take to make the ACC accessible?” Disability access was deemed too costly and the funds were not used.

Recently, thanks to a grant program, the 1772 Foundationp (through PTV) provides funds that would help with exterior painting and sash preservation on the windows but matching grant funds of \$10,000 are needed. He asked if the 2014 appropriated funds could be used as matching money for the 1772 Foundation grant. He suggested they may purchase a modular ramp with their existing money this summer and another generation may find the wherewithal to make the building disability accessible.

The Board considered the language of the Town Meeting voted article and whether it allowed for either/or (accessibility and/or renovations). Sharon Winn Fannon noted that the spirit of the provision the Town approved is aligned with the spirit of the intent of what the Club intends to do now. The check was written directly after 2014 Town Meeting and is in the ACC escrow account. Clif Emmons commented this has already been approved by the voters and is not the Selectboard's job to approve but to agree that the proposed use is in line with the intent of the voters. Katie Lane-Karnas inquired who was advocating for a wheelchair accessible ramp in 2014 and if there are disability advocates in Town to weigh in. Rick Winston explained Cindy Gardner-Morse was the person advocating for accessibility for seniors in 2014 and he has been in touch with her; he wasn't able to get information from VCIL. He reiterated that the Club found it was cost-prohibitive to make the building accessible but is planning to buy a modular ramp with existing funds.

12. Other Updates:

- Town Hall: quotes for water purification system will be presented to the Board soon.
- Friends of Town Hall: They would like to tentatively schedule being on the agenda for the final meeting in April to present the revised operating documents.
- E. Mont./Calais joint meeting with EMFD is scheduled for 4/8/2021 at 7 pm via Zoom

13. Review and approve minutes, warrants

- a) The Board has delegated review and approval for processing of invoices and orders to Clif Emmons, Denise Wheeler, and Rick Kehne.
- b) Approval of minutes was tabled for a subsequent meeting.

14. Executive Session: Denise Wheeler made a motion to go into Executive Session at 8:45 pm per 1 V.S.A. subsection 313 (a) 1a, contracts. The motion was seconded by Sharon Winn Fannon, voted on and carried 5-0. The Board resumed Regular Session at 8:55 pm. The Chair reported that the Board agreed to send a letter to the East Montpelier Selectboard and East Montpelier Fire Department as written Notice of Non-Renewal of the Contract With Respect to Fire Suppression, Ambulance, and Other Emergency Response Services Town of Calais, Town of East Montpelier, and East Montpelier Volunteer Fire Department, Inc. The letter needs to be delivered by April 1, 2021.

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

16. Adjournment: Denise Wheeler made a motion to adjourn at 9:24 pm. Rick Kehne seconded the motion which was voted on and carried 5-0.

Date: 3/25/2021 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas, Recording Secretary

Approved by the Selectboard at the 5/10/2021 meeting

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

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1anrR5nq7ZrZrTijE4z2FqqrDaPSP6OXE?usp=sharing>