

## Selectboard Meeting Minutes

*Monday, March 8, 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), Stephanie Kaplan, Judy Fitch Robert, Bill Powell, Nick Emlen, Jan Ohlsson, Chris Cochran, Alfred Larrabee

1. Call to Order: Denise Wheeler called the meeting to order at 6:04 pm and noted the Board's appreciation of having new member, Rick Kehne, join them.
2. Public Comment: None.
3. Review, Additions/Changes to Agenda: John Brabant suggested changing the order of the agenda so the organizational meeting discussion happens at the start of the meeting and election of officers at 7 pm.
4. Selectboard Organizational Items: Sharon Winn Fannon requested consideration of how we put in place a framework that anchors each member as an equal on the Board, in which each member is leader or "owner" about each aspect of business the Board takes on with the Board structurally delegating the actions best suited for each member. She proposed crisp and focused meetings and more time on Town policies and governance structure. The Board discussed contexts for delegating work. Denise cautioned care be taken that any subject being decided on be fairly represented to members especially so individual biases be checked. They discussed the Board's relationship with Town committees and groups and talked about the idea of a schedule within the yearly calendar for creating a bigger arc of organization.

Sharon Winn Fannon requested to hear from the person nominated as Chair that a framework will be put in place that allows each to have one or several areas on which he/she takes "ownership" so that board work can be effectively delegated from the entire board, and the entire board is not working to be an expert on every issue that comes before it. Denise Wheeler was in agreement that it would be good to have other members commit to and follow through on Board efforts. Sharon Winn Fannon is also seeking confirmation from a nominated Board chair that he or she commits to hiring a Selectboard administrator/assistant. Denise added that the position could include grant tracking and IT organization, two areas really needed by the Town; the Town Office staff may need to be consulted for times they have performed duties outside their job arenas due to the absence of an administrator. Sharon noted that grant tracking is also an area of substance that a Board member could take on.

Role of the chair was discussed, including: moderator, creating agendas, facilitating meetings. Role of an administrator will need to be defined in terms of responsibilities. They discussed expectations for preparation and running meetings succinctly, delegating more work to be done outside of the meeting so that discussions at the Board can be succinct. John Brabant suggested delegating work to individuals or pairs of Board members who are tagged as point

people who would check in regularly with the Selectboard administrator. He underscored the need to get the position in place and many of the issues raised will be resolved with a competent and experienced administrator. Denise Wheeler spoke to the importance of continuity between people in the community and elected local government. She added that she represents everyone and that if someone calls her she will talk to them regardless of the issue. People are people and they will call whomever they want and have perhaps have developed a relationship and trust. Clif Emmons summarized that we are in agreement that workload could be shifted around and distributed more evenly, amongst members of the Board and possibly by bringing in an assistant. The Board already voted to allow this position to happen by including this in the budget. There is always room for improvement and potential to work toward streamlining processes and efficiencies, potentially shorter meetings. With regards to an assistant, we can look at the tasks that got distributed when the previous administrator left (2017). A question may remain about if this can be a part-time position (as budgeted) or if a discussion is needed for a full-time position.

Sharon Winn Fannon restated requests: for a framework where the Board works together with each as equals (particularly in time spent working outside of meetings) through delegated functions and ownership; to reset the Chair back to a peer on the Board and facilitator of meetings; prioritizing a Selectboard assistant position. Denise Wheeler commented that she sees herself as a peer on the Board. Clif Emmons suggested rephrasing a request as “redistribution of workload;” he believes Denise Wheeler is a peer on the Board. John Brabant reiterated that this situation is largely the result of having lost the administrator and Denise’s work is largely having taken up those extra duties; the friction point is not a person but the same issue prior to hiring that assistant: there is a lot more workload than there was a few decades ago and simply is not an amount that can be absorbed by one volunteer board. Sharon noted that when the Chair role also assumes select board assistant function, the roles get very “muddied.” The select board assistant is an employee function that should report to the entire board. It’s difficult to maintain that separation when the chair function is assuming selectboard assistant duties. John pointed out that’s why the Board decided a full-time assistant was needed years ago. He encouraged focusing on hiring for this position as soon as possible (after three+ years of vacancy). Denise Wheeler agreed and stated that over the past couple of years Board members have said they would do something and have not followed through - if this structure is going to be successful Board members need to be committed to doing what they say they will do. Sharon Winn added that all members of the board are guilty of taking on a task and not completing it.

#### **Next steps:**

- Make a list of subject areas and functions to delegate to specific members (for Monday 3/15)
- Articulate larger Selectboard framework guidelines
- Chair to itemize a list of each duties she currently performs
- Selectboard Assistant job description: members to contribute to a shared google document asap (Clif Emmons to create in the Personnel folder)
- Sort Selectboard Assistant tasks into two phases

Denise Wheeler commented that when the Town lost the Selectboard administrator she stepped up for the benefit of the Town, and shared she is feeling no good deed goes

unpunished. Rick Kehne commented to commend Denise's work efforts and support redistribution of duties so she doesn't have to shoulder so much of it. Sharon Winn Fannon and John Brabant commented that the concern is that no one else could step in and do what she as a single person does for the Board, in terms of time and initiative. The concern is not for Denise's intention of good will but a concern for how to replace her functions in the case of her not being able to serve. The same concern would apply to any Board member having excessive work duties and the potential for imbalanced power or the perception thereof. Clif Emmons added thanks to Denise Wheeler for her commitment to the Town for what she does; he agreed that if there is an opportunity to level out the workload, we should do that and make it happen.

5. Call to Order: Denise Wheeler called the main portion of the meeting to order at 7:06 pm. There were no additional changes to the agenda and no public comments.
6. Organizational Meeting:
  - a) *Election of officers*: John Brabant moved and Rick Kehne seconded to appoint Denise Wheeler as Selectboard Chair. The motion was voted and passed 4-0 (Denise Wheeler abstained). Rick Kehne motioned and Denise Wheeler seconded to appoint Sharon Winn Fannon as Vice-Chair. The motion was voted and passed 4-0 (Sharon Winn Fannon abstained).
  - b) *Official meeting schedule*: The Selectboard set the Zoom virtual call as their official meeting place on second and fourth Monday of each month at 7 pm. Sharon Winn Fannon noted an aspirational goal to set meetings to last from 7-9 pm.
  - c) *Official posting locations for agendas*: will be at the Town Office, East Calais Post Office, Maple Corner Store and electronically on Front Porch Forum and the Town website. The newspaper of record for public notices shall be the Times Argus. Denise Wheeler moved and John Brabant seconded to approve items b and c. The motion was voted and passed 5-0.
  - d) *Designation for signing orders*: In the COVID-19 context, the process used has been for one member to pick up orders from the Town Treasurer at the office and review; she notifies the next member for pick up and review; the same is done for a third member's review and signing off. The final reviewer returns them to the Town Office. Sharon Winn Fannon noted how well this has worked and appreciated Clif, Denise, and Rose's work. Sharon Winn Fannon made a motion, and Rick Kehne seconded, until the conclusion of COVID-19 context, to authorize designated Selectboard members (Denise Wheeler, Clif Emmons, and Rick Kehne) to sign orders on behalf of the board (pursuant to 24 V.S.A. §1623). The motion was voted and passed unanimously.
7. Update: Road Commissioner: The new employee has a test date for his license on March 17, and has been legally operating the smallest truck with his permit. An employee has an appointment to be vaccinated next week. The Chair noted the challenging circumstances and appreciates the work the Road Commissioner has done to keep the roads well maintained; the Road Commissioner said Ed Rowell is owed many thanks for that result. The crew is starting to open up the gravel pit for when it melts and is needed. He is still in the search for a used truck; he is working on grant research and the Chair reminded him to provide information for the Board's information ahead of any meeting. Sharon Winn Fannon asked the Road Commissioner to please be aware of the roadside trees when snow plowing. Sharon said there

are trees marked with ribbons on Tucker Road that have had some damage. There has been no response to advertising for a temp road crew position and the group considered posting on neighboring town Front Porch Forums. The Road Commissioner pointed out that it is a challenging position to try and fill because so many towns need the same thing, and it takes a person who is retired or otherwise available.

8. Liquor License Applications: The Board reviewed applications for the Adamant Coop and Maple Corner Store 2021-2022 liquor licenses. Rick Kehne moved and Sharon Winn Fannon seconded to approve the 2021-2022 renewal of the liquor license application for Adamant Coop (with edit to the year date which has transposed digits that the Board will note and correct). The motion was voted and passed unanimously.

Denise Wheeler moved and Rick Kehne seconded to approve both renewals of the 2021-2022 liquor license applications for Maple Corner Store and Whammy Bar (the bar dispenses alcohol including liquor and the store can sell). The motion was voted and passed unanimously. Clif Emmons made a motion to authorize the Chair to sign both applications (for Adamant Coop and the Maple Corner Store/Whammy Bar) on behalf of the entire Board. Rick Kehne seconded and the motion was voted and passed unanimously.

9. North Calais Designation as a Village Center: Chris Cochran announced that a “village center” is a state designation process and he is here to request the Board’s support. There must be at least one public building within a designated village center, and the North Calais Memorial Hall public space will make North Calais eligible to apply for designation. The reason they seek it is to give the NCMHA ability to qualify for tax credits and receive priority eligibility for state grants (there are no strings). The intent is to recognize historical settlements in our communities and to support revitalizing them. They will work with the Regional Planning Commission on the application, which is relatively easy. The application requires Selectboard support. There are no relations to any zoning overlays; Planning Commission members have been made aware of the project. Applications once approved are for a term of eight years and can be renewed at that time. “Downtown designation” is a different and more intensive process and tends to be limited to larger municipalities in the state. Jan Ohlsson reported there was no cost for Maple Corner, Adamant, or East Calais’s applications for village center designation.

Denise Wheeler made a motion and Rick Kehne seconded that the Calais Selectboard support the application for North Calais to be a designated village center (on the condition that any cost is minimal--\$100 or under). The motion was voted and passed 5-0. Chris Cochran will draft a letter of support for the Board to sign to include with the application.

10. Parcel Mapping Contract: The Calais listers put \$3,600 in the budget for FY21 for mapping and are requesting the Board sign the mapper’s contract (no mapping was done last year, so this will be two years’ worth). The mapper has been working with Calais for the last five years and meets all state and CVRPC requirements. This is a pro-forma contract she wanted the Board to sign. John Brabant made a motion to sign the contract as discussed; Rick Kehne seconded. Sharon Winn Fannon made a friendly amendment to authorize Denise Wheeler to sign on behalf of the Selectboard on this motion and all motions this evening; Rick Kehne seconded. The motion was voted and passed unanimously.

11. Executive Session for Personnel Matters: Denise Wheeler made a motion to go into Executive Session at 8:07 pm per 1 V.S.A. subsection 313 (a) (3), personnel matters, and invited Town Clerk Judy Fitch Robert, to join the Board. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0. The Board resumed Regular Session at 8:55 pm. The Chair had nothing to report publicly.
12. Other Updates: This item was tabled for a subsequent meeting.
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. Other Business/Old Business/New Business: The Board's next meeting will be held Monday, March 22, 2021.
15. Adjournment: Rick Kehne made a motion to adjourn at 8:59 pm. Sharon Winn Fannon seconded the motion which was voted on and carried 5-0.

Date: 3/9/2021 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/1QR3HXk-uaVXxs5LGxVeEtAaQmJPbnvMY?usp=sharing>