

Selectboard Joint Special Meeting with East Montpelier Board and East Montpelier Fire Department Minutes

Thursday April 8, 2021 at 7 pm via Zoom conference call

There was not a quorum of the Selectboard. These minutes accurately reflect the meeting attended, as agreed by Denise Wheeler and Rick Kehne.

Present: Denise Wheeler (Chair), Rick Kehne (Member), ORCA Media, Katie Lane-Karnas (Recording Secretary), Toby Talbot, Ty Rolland, Paul Guare, Seth Gardner, Albert Petrella, Bruce Johnson, Jonathan, Jon Jewett, Judith Woodbeck, Amy Willis, Carl Etnier, Sandy Conti, Rose Pelchuck, J Dillon, Don Welch, Bill Powell

Absent: Sharon Winn Fannon (Vice Chair), John Brabant (Member), Clif Emmons (Member)

1. Call to Order: The East Montpelier Selectboard was called to order at 7 pm. Denise Wheeler called the Calais Selectboard meeting to order at 7:01 pm and noted that Calais won't have a quorum tonight due to unforeseen personal issues arising for members who had planned to attend.
2. Public Comment: None.
3. Review, Additions/Changes to Agenda: None.
4. Financial Review FY 21: The group reviewed the balance sheet. Toby brought attention on the "Profit and Loss" itemization to a COVID grant for approx. \$17,000 (for unexpected COVID-19 expenses) and COVID hazard pay for approx. \$42,000 (directly to workers' pay checks). This is income that was unexpected this fiscal year and was expended as it was received. The Profit and Loss vs. Actual spreadsheet was reviewed; the budget line for insurance is workers comp (on the ambulance side), \$30,750. The Fire side is currently under budget. This spring required an extra load of wood pellets (due to delivery timing). Fothergill is providing monthly reports, which has had temporarily increased the bookkeeping line item.

The State of Vermont has reached out to ambulance services and EMS to be vaccinators at state-sponsored sites of delivery; 20 EMFD staff have been trained and a contract has been opened (pay comes directly from the State and doesn't impact the budget).

5. Call Log: The Chief reviewed the Transport Statistics: 348 to current date. Ambulance and fire have had 468 calls total so far, on track to be in the high-600 calls per year range. Barre City has had quite a few fires that have been responded to (mutual aid); Northfield and other areas have as well. Burn permits are from start of the year to now; there was period of time last year primarily because of weather conditions and drought that permits weren't allowed; we are in a two-week period where dry conditions have again made permits disallowed.

6. Community Programs: Masks are available through the Ford Mask Program at no charge and can be delivered to town offices as well. Thirty-eight families were served by the Holiday Program at Thanksgiving and Christmastime; additional donations allowed funds be sent to the food shelves. The Smoke / CO Detector Program allows the EMFD to leave lithium battery smoke detectors at people's homes as needed.
7. Calais Notice of Non-Renewal: This notice from Calais Selectboard was received; an agenda and timeline will need to be established on moving forward on the interlocal agreement (established in 2009). Rose Pelchuck inquired if these meetings will be open to the public; Denise Wheeler noted that contract discussion would be in executive session. Rose offered to share historical information as needed. The contract ends Sept. 1; Calais gave notice as required in the contract's timeline. Seth Gardner noted it would take some time and a few meetings to get a new agreement in place and encouraged Calais to let the group know when that can happen.
8. Capital West: Capital West is an official organized group; meetings are open to the public and minutes are recorded. Steve Whitaker has sent emails raising issues about Capital West, and Calais Selectboard asked for information and feedback from the EMFD about the topic. The Chief explained that there is currently a survey being done of all radio equipment, including towers, and a survey on all radios, to learn what the capabilities and problem areas are for each agency in terms of communication. This includes upgrade to tower capabilities, allowing them to talk to each other and dispatch at the same time. The idea is to create capability for each tower to talk to each other to enhance communication in the field. A solution is changing the frequency so there is not a tremendous amount of traffic overfeed. Canadian use of the same frequency, for example, this means dispatch has to sort through that or even have a situation where a channel is locked out due to overfeed. The FCC is in the works to approve enough towers to get frequencies changed for all pagers, portable radios, base and truck radios. There are potentially federal grants to pay for part of this and other revenues may come from financing long-term; nothing is finalized or established yet. Capital Fire and Mutual Aid is made up of 22 towns and has representation on the Board to meet regularly; within that is a sub-committee to review communications pieces like this. The Chief noted that when there is official information to be released, it will be. Dispatching is out of the Montpelier Police Department. The Chair thanked the Chief for sharing the background information. Rose Pelchuck noted that the emails from Steve Whitaker in her previous capacity on the Selectboard gave her a bad vibe from the kinds of inquiries he posed and lack of intention of how the information will be used.
9. Other Business/Old Business/New Business: None.
10. Adjournment: Calais Selectboard's meeting adjourned at 7:41 pm.

Date: 4/8/2021 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas, Recording Secretary
These minutes did not require a motion and vote for approval because there was not a quorum of the Board to constitute a Selectboard meeting.

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