

Selectboard Meeting Minutes

*Monday, August 23, 2021 at 6 pm, Town Hall and via Zoom conference call**

**Zoom access cancelled due to no internet at location*

Present: Denise Wheeler (Chair), John Brabant (Member), Marc Mihaly (Member), Rick Kehne (Member), ORCA Media, Jay Copping (Health Officer), Alfred Larrabee (Road Commissioner), Jeremy Weiss (Town Clerk), Lisa Wilson, Reed Cherrington

Absent: Sharon Winn Fannon (Vice Chair)

1. Call to Order: Denise Wheeler called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. The Chair explained due to an unforeseen problem, there is no internet, and the Town's webmaster cannot get it to work this evening. The Board decided to continue without the Zoom component.
2. Selectboard Rules of Procedure: The Board continued discussion and revisions to this working document, which began in March, and since then, two new members have joined the Board. The second item about designation of a point person was discussed. Denise Wheeler explained she would like to be involved in any question to the Town Attorney or other entity, as each person might interpret information differently. Marc Mihaly interpreted the item as able to meet the concerns of the Chair; designees are clearly "liaisons" and must report back to the full Board, the individual, elected members of which cannot be "bound" in any case. John Brabant pointed out that the Rules should help work get done outside of meetings to reduce meeting length and increase efficiency. Members agreed historical detail of communication on an issue before the Board should be documented for transparency and future reference. Marc Mihaly identified any member's communication with the Town Attorney as a special situation in which there is need for all communication with him to be copied amongst the full Board. Further tweaks were made to the working document word choice.

In the section on committees and subcommittees of the Selectboard all agreed they are still to be warned as meetings of the Board. The role of the Chair including responsibility for managing the meeting was discussed and newest member Marc Mihaly emphasized the (recently demonstrated) need for chair to preserve order. Conversation moved through the document: challenges of allotting enough time for each agenda item and how that is executed; the process for agenda item request; point person duties; adjustment to noticed agenda; meetings and meeting format. Many of the specifics discussed included the entire Board considering how to preserve, for the current and future Boards, the highest levels of transparency, order, public access and participation, and effective work. The group planned to wait until Vice-Chair Sharon Winn Fannon is present to continue work and see if it is close to a vote.

3. Regular Meeting: The Chair began the regular portion of the meeting (it had already been called to order at 6 pm).

4. Public Comment: Lisa Wilson noted she is disappointed the Moscow Woods Road item is not on the agenda (this item deals with her ability to satisfy the buyer's title insurance company, so she may sell her property). Marc Mihaly explained that as planned Sharon Winn Fannon has been working on this issue but the Board is not prepared to take action on it; Sharon Winn Fannon is not able to be present at this meeting, and the Town Attorney will need to be present as well. The Board is checking availability for a special meeting for Thursday night to take up the issue. John Brabant clarified that the Town owns a piece of land, and if the Town is going to convey a property interest, the Town Attorney must be present. Marc Mihaly suggested Lisa Wilson may want to have the buyer's attorney present as well; she provided photo documentation and maps of the property. The Chair will follow up with Lisa Wilson.
5. Review, Additions/Changes to Agenda: None.
6. COVID-19 Protocols: The Chair attended a municipal and first responder COVID-19 update. At this time there are no plans for the Governor to have an emergency order that would allow virtual meetings. Local mask mandates may be implemented. The Town Clerk said he is requesting that people coming in the office be masked regardless of vaccination status; use of the office remains by appointment. He added they remain as customer-oriented as possible and they are able to work with people. The Town Clerk shared he had a long conversation with Jay Copping, Health Officer, who continues to suggest people keep a mask on. The Chair noted that the Board does not have to do hybrid meetings (it is the Board's choice).
7. Town Office Update: The Town Clerk thanked Bill Davis, Toby Talbot, and John McCullough for clearing out the storage container. Documents have been sorted and the Town Treasurer will review old financial documents and follow a retention policy. The container should be removed in September. Tom Frost has been contacted for external building cleaning; document recording is up-to-date; Donna Fitch, Calais Historical Society Chair, assisted in creating more space by relocating historic items. The Town Clerk confirmed use of continuing education funds for his attendance at the municipal clerks' conference. Our firewall is functioning but needs updating to be current (firewall and installation, total \$839 quoted from rbTech). The Clerk will check with Town Treasurer about the remaining available funds in the technology budget, for which this item would qualify. A new roller shelf and map cabinet are both needed; the Board clarified that if there is money in the budget, the continuing education and these items are within his realm of decisions and purchases for Town Office, and thanked him for keeping them updated.

The Town Clerk discussed areas he has identified for ARPA fund requests, primarily COTS and continuing to digitize records. Currently, COTS is digitized back through 2011 by name; after that, there is another COTS system back to 1941 (book 23) indexed by card instead of name. There is no computer enhanced search function for the pre-2011 dates; creating this system is a labor-intensive data entry process (\$15,000 per book). The Board asked him to learn the cost of a simple scanning (not data entry) of books 1-23. They are currently duplicated in microfiche format. The Town Clerk continues to work on updating of cemetery plot records.

8. Town Treasurer and Delinquent Tax Collector Update: This item was tabled until a subsequent meeting.

9. American Rescue Plan (ARPA) Funding: The Chair updated that the first installment was received by the Town (approx. \$83,900). The state still hasn't determined how they are going to allocate the county funds. The Board delegated the Town Treasurer and Denise Wheeler to have a preliminary discussion with NEMRC to get an estimate about doing the bookkeeping and accounting of these funds, and to establish guidelines around requests being made for APRA funding. They will bring a draft will back to the Board.
10. Road Commissioner Update: The Road Commissioner has signed for the woodchipper purchase, and it is expected to be available in the fall. Washington Electric Coop (WEC) has asked the Board to approve their permit application to replace an underground line on Kent Hill Rd. to intersection and proceeding south down Old West Church Rd. (This is a permit because it is work in the Town's right of way.) Denise Wheeler made a motion to approve the WEC request and attach the minutes. Discussion ensued and conditions were defined:
- WEC will work with the Tree Warden before cutting trees
 - WEC will meet with the Road Commissioner to be clear on work dates
 - WEC is only changing the "primary" line
 - WEC will confirm with the Road Commissioner on how deep they are digging (state law is three feet underground, minimum)
 - WEC will have the work location marked
 - The Town requests as-built plans of where the lines are installed to keep on file.

John Brabant seconded the motion; it was voted and passed 4-0.

The Road Commissioner commented that Ed Rowell is considering full time employment. John Brabant suggested the Town Treasurer help him consider how to hire him without impacting his VMERS retirement and that he contacts someone at the retirement office if possible. The Road Commissioner will communicate with Ed Rowell and get back to the Board (to help set up an optimal employment contract). The Road Commissioner will continue to seek a person to fill the part time position. The Board planned to review the employment application for the highway department. The Town is purchasing a used dump truck from town of Fayston, but due to COVID delays, Fayston's new truck is taking a long time for delivery. The Road Commissioner found a buyer for Calais's old dump truck, for \$2K more than the dealer (a private buyer). The Road Commissioner will post the truck for sale ahead of accepting a contract on it. The Board delegated John Brabant to work with the Road Commissioner on the post.

The Road Commissioner reported that mowing on Kent Hill Road was interrupted as two residents were trying to stop the roadside mowing (the road crew member did leave); the Road Commissioner asked the Board to require all residents go through the same process as Peter Harvey has been held to; the Board agreed. The Road Commissioner's role is to communicate to residents that they need to go directly to the Selectboard to request roadside mowing exclusion for their property, and to meet any further requirements of the Board (such as Peter Harvey has done). The Board directed the highway department to continue to mow the roadsides except where it is in relation to Bassage and Krazanski (giving them an opportunity to request attendance at the next Selectboard meeting), and also excluding in front of Stephanie Kaplan's property. If there are residents on Peck Hill Road who do not want their

property (that has road frontage) mowed, they must communicate with the Selectboard. The Road Commissioner reiterated he can't have random residents telling him not to mow sections of roads throughout the Town.

11. Discontinue Process for TH #7: The Chair updated that she has been planning with residents Gary and Jill Schultz for October 2, 2021, at 9 am. Adjoining property owners will be invited.
12. Time Extension MOU for existing EMFD Agreement: The August 12, 2021 special meeting resulted in a draft provided by East Montpelier Town Manager Bruce Johnson. Rick Kehne made a motion to approve the MOU to extending the existing contract through December 1, 2021, and to allow the Chair to sign. Marc Mihaly seconded the motion which was voted and passed 4-0.
13. Hybrid Meeting Process: The Chair explained that hybrid management of the last meeting was especially challenging and she and Katie Lane-Karnas chatted briefly about ideas. Webmaster Clif Emmons has some ideas and offered to work with Katie on ideas. John Brabant pointed out the primary problem of acoustics in the Town Office could be solved with rugs, quilt, or soft surface room dividers. Rick Kehne offered to make a cherry quilt hanger, and Denise Wheeler offered a king size handmade quilt for display.
14. Review and approve minutes, warrants
 - a) The Board reviewed and approved processing of invoices and orders.
 - b) Approval of the minutes was tabled for a subsequent meeting.
15. Executive Session for Personnel Matters: John Brabant made a motion to go into Executive Session at 8:35 pm per 1 V.S.A. subsection 313 (a) (3), personnel matters. The motion was seconded by Marc Mihaly, voted on and carried 4-0. The Board resumed Regular Session at X pm. The Chair had nothing to report publicly.
16. Other Business/Old Business/New Business: None.
17. Adjournment: X made a motion to adjourn at pm. X seconded the motion which was voted on and carried 4-0.

Date: 8/25/2021 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas, Recording Secretary (recoding minutes from ORCA Media video, not present at meeting)

Approved by the Selectboard at the _____ meeting

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

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