

## Selectboard Special Meeting Minutes

*Monday, April 15, 2019 at 7 pm at the Adamant Community Center*

**Present:** John Brabant (Vice Chair), Rose Pelchuck (Member), Sharon Winn Fannon (Member), Clif Emmons (Member), Katie Lane-Karnas (Recording Secretary), Alfred Larrabee (Road Commissioner), Todd Eaton (VT Local Roads), Brian Pelchuck

**Absent:** Denise Wheeler (Chair)

1. Call to Order: John Brabant called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.
2. Public Comment: None.
3. Review, Additions/Changes to Agenda: None.
4. Public Informational Meeting, Winter Roads Maintenance: Todd Eaton introduced himself, representing VTRANS's Vermont Local Roads Program. John Brabant introduced the meeting. An emailed statement from Peter Harvey was read (he could not attend due to a conflicting event). He communicated his approval of the road crew's work on the roads and commented on the danger posed by a private resident's ditch that has been dug across Bliss Pond Road and drains into the pond. The Board discussed DRB implications in this situation and the existing culvert which is frozen under the road at that location.

Brian Pelchuck, VT AOT (Middlesex Garage) and with years of previous experience on the East Montpelier road department, pointed out a slight discrepancy in the exact total miles of roads in Calais as stated in the FAQs and Winter Operations handouts. He commented on road conditions from both his experience as both a member of the traveling public, as a former road crew member in Barre Town and sub in East Montpelier during the winter and as a current VTrans employee in the Middlesex District. He acknowledged the significantly higher amount of snowfall this year and the Calais crew's incorporation of two new employees this year. He commented on the overall good maintenance of Calais roads.

The group discussed grading the road on a frozen solid hard packed road, where sand cannot penetrate. The Road Commissioner stated that the grader has an option where ice blades, looking like fingers or teeth, run ½ inch apart along the length of the grader's blade. This leaves grooves in the road, allowing sand to be caught in those grooves and improving traction. This application of the grader can be appropriate at certain times, but reasonably cannot be taken out to cover all the roads every time there is ice.

Rose Pelchuck raised the question of staggered shifts. Brian Pelchuck commented that in his time at East Montpelier beginning in 2010, he was one of three temporary winter road crew employees. The work of the temporary crew was to keep the main corridors open during heavy

snowfalls (10 pm-4 am). In this configuration, the extra overnight crew allowed for a little extra response to calls coming in on the radio indicating where a car had gone off the road and hence, where more plowing may be called for. This extra crew also alleviated the depth of snow the daytime team needed to handle—for example, clearing few inches of snow first thing in the morning instead of 10+. Brian Pelchuck reported that in Barre Town, he worked the night shift (10 pm-6 am), however, finding potential manpower is a real challenge. This requires finding people with CDLs who can be relied on to be watching the plow and sander, avoiding trees and branches, cars and mailboxes, and handling stressful multitasking in the dark. The group conceded that trying to get qualified people to do all this, plus perform consistently and return more than one season is hard. Brian Pelchuck mentioned that it is becoming rarer to be able to find people to do this job, and therefore also more expensive to pay them. The Road Commissioner's efforts in training one new crew member takes a significant amount of time away from his own routes and responsibilities. The Road Commissioner commented that in addition to fulfilling the stressful duties of driving the truck, he is also continuing to balance checking email and phone as well as addressing spontaneous questions from the public when he stops for a coffee.

Todd Eaton reiterated the length and challenges of this winter, and that Calais is articulating the same issues many communities are facing. He stated that public expectations have been increasing over the years, and that many small communities tend to have a breakdown in what the public understands about the nature of road work. His suggestion is to encourage foremen to find a way to partner with the Selectboard to educate the community, and observed that Calais' Selectboard and Road Commissioner have a positive relationship. He further suggested finding ways to educate the community so the public can readily access the winter roads policy. Calais has had its policy online and in the office, and the FAQs have been on Front Porch Forum at least once per year. They discussed the pros and cons of discussions happening on Front Porch Forum.

The group appreciated the members of the public who have attended the winter roads maintenance meeting to continue conversation and communication, and reiterated that the Board has created significant opportunities for public discussion at their meetings and proactive communication on FPF (they noted that this responsibility should be the Operation Manager's). The Road Commissioner pointed out that the road crew size has been the same for thirty years (four employees). Public expectations for road conditions have increased and weather conditions have changed while the employee load has remained constant. Todd Eaton commented that 5-6 hour rodeos are twice as long as they should optimally be.

The Board discussed sitting down with the Road Commissioner and Operations Manager after the final public forum to look at all the ideas that have been put on the table. This would allow the group to include members of the public and to model out and price different solutions. Todd Eaton suggested that the Town articulate a goal about the level of service that the town is aiming for in terms of winter road conditions.

The Road Commissioner added that the Town has a lot of Class 3 roads that are more like driveways to a single house. Todd Eaton mentioned that reclassification may not be difficult, and the Board considered subcontracting smaller trucks to do single home Class 3 roads. Rose

Pelchuck suggested subcontracting out these small road/driveways in order to keep the trucks plowing main roads. Todd Eaton commented that VT Local Roads is trying to encourage partnering between community road crews. He advised that OSHA is promising to be increasing their presence in local work zones; this increasing pressures from OSHA is an incentive for towns to be increasing highway budgets in order to comply as well as to collaborate with neighboring towns' road crews.

5. Adjournment: Sharon Winn Fannon made a motion to adjourn at 8:08 pm. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 4-0.

Date: 4/15/2019 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas, Recording Secretary  
*Approved by the Selectboard at the 5/28/2019 meeting*

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