



TOWN OF CALAIS

3120 Pekin Brook Road
East Calais, Vermont 05650
802-456-8720

Selectboard Meeting Minutes

Monday, July 11, 2022 at 7:00 PM

Location: Calais Town Hall (note no Zoom option)

Present: Sharon Winn Fannon (Chair), Denise Wheeler (Member), Rick Kehne (Member), John Brabant (Member)

Absent: Marc Mihaly (Vice Chair)

ORCA Media, Alfred Larrabee (Road Commissioner), Patrick Finnie, Cindy Gardner-Morse, Doug Lilley, Tim and Ann Wheelock, Peter Harvey, Heidi Thompson, Stephanie Kaplan, Erik Oberlin

1. Call to Order: Sharon Winn Fannon called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Public Comment (for items not on the agenda): Sharon Winn Fannon invited public comment; she noted that this time is typically for items not on the agenda; however she invited comments from those who expressed interest; she set a timer for 4 minutes per person.

Patrick Finnie expressed concern around the lack of notice about the new position “Director of Public Works.” He stated that a lot of people didn’t know anything about this, and that he himself did not know until he saw it on FPF. He thinks this deserves special notice - it involves creating a new position and he believes this should have been discussed with community input, and should be brought to town meeting for the Calais taxpayers to vote on this item.

Sharon Winn Fannon stated that she had responded to his email and that a public meeting had been warned specifically for this item.

Cindy Gardner-Morse asked whether there is a budget in mind for this position.

Cindy Gardner Morse asked that the speed limit be changed from 50 to 40 on County Road. She noted that people had petitioned in 2019 or 2020 for this - she noted that the speed limit changes from Montpelier to East Montpelier to Calais. She noted that there are people walking, some with dogs, there are horses, bicycle riders, etc. along this road.

Doug Lilley stated that he would like to put some speed bumps on the road. He stated that he has posts on his lawn that keep the town trucks from interfering onto his lawn. He noted that he thinks the position of Director of Public Works is a necessary position; he stated that we need some “new blood.” He spoke about the ditch by his home; he stated that he is tired of the

speeding, and that it needs to stop.

3. Review and Sign Warrants: Board members circulated and signed the board warrants.

4. Consent Agenda:

Denise Wheeler suggested that June 27 and June 28 minutes be moved to the next regular board meeting's consent agenda. The Board removed the Minutes of June 27 and 28, 2022 to the next meeting.

Denise Wheeler moved to approve the consent agenda as follows. Seconded by Rick Kehne, this motion carried unanimously.

- Adopt Edited Minutes of June 13, 2022 Regular Meeting
- Adopt Edited Minutes of June 27 and June 28, 2022 Regular Meeting (these will be adopted at the next meeting.)
- Approve and sign additional Community Bank documents related to the loan for the EMFD firetruck. (Loan is for \$66,667.00, to be paid over 5 (years) at 3.19% interest, and subject to other terms as outlined in the May 31, 2022 letter from Robin Ware of Community Bank to Denise Wheeler. This action is consistent with the town's approval of a warned item at the 2022 Calais Town Meeting.) NOTE: Entire board must sign.
- Approve State of Vermont Better Road grant agreement for Peck Hill Road ditching and crowning project and authorize Rick Kehne to sign
- Approve State of Vermont Class 2 grant agreement for Moscow Woods Road to address clay boils and recurring mud spots and authorize Rick Kehne to sign
- Approve Law Enforcement Contract with Washington County Sheriff's Department for July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023; \$4000.00 budgeted. Sheriff's rate is \$31.25/hour, contract is for 128 hours of service in the fiscal year, or 2 to 2.5 hours per week. Entire board to sign.

5. Speed Carts and permanent electronic speed alerts/Lightening Ridge traffic calming:

Rick Kehne noted that County Road and Lightening Ridge are not the only areas that have speed concerns. He stated that the speed sign near Maple Corner needs to be moved to a more effective placement; he stated that he has checked prices for speed signs. He had shared details with board members. He reviewed some possible scenarios with speed signs: for example, a semi-permanent speed sign below Tucker Road. He noted that this type of sign not only provides speed warning but it captures the speed of drivers with a time stamp. He stated that the data is useful in determining patterns and it could hypothetically help decide when to ask for the sheriff's support. He would like to purchase two - one for this location and the other can be moveable, for example, on Lightening Ridge Road. He suggested moving the sign periodically, as there are residual effects even after the sign is gone. He explained that one type of sign will require concrete plugs in the ground. He shared that there is another, more portable sign, which can be used on any road in town.

Rick Kehne spoke about speeding behavior trends based on his professional experience. He also noted that we would benefit from signs in the villages that will remind drivers to slow their speed.

He had shared information about radar signs: two models - TC600 and TC400 (more mobile); he proposes purchasing one of each. Sharon Winn Fannon asked for a one page proposal that will explicitly explain the cost. Rick Kehne explained that the more mobile sign

could be used in a lot of ways, including, for example, bridge work or road work.

The board discussed various ways to calm traffic: signs flashing driver's speed provides driver information as well as slowing drivers down, other visual cues, and road design. Rick Kehne noted that any time you make a road wider and straighter, people increase speed. He stated that more narrow and curving roads create a "shy" behavior in drivers.

Sharon Winn Fannon noted that this has been an ongoing concern for the board for quite some time. She noted that in addition to signs, which are a quicker response, she would like to consider some of the more long term "design" solutions.

Rick Kehne stated that the design (geometric) changes take time and expense, and do not happen quickly. Rick Kehne will prepare a proposal for the board's action at the next regular meeting.

Sharon Winn Fannon stated that she would like to continue to hear details around design ideas and to keep this in the board's consideration.

Denise Wheeler noted that she will check to see if ARPA funds can be used purchase new signage. Sharon Winn Fannon suggested whether it might be possible to use ARPA funds for some of the design ideas as well.

Denise Wheeler suggested that some messaging be done through the school around the speeding issues. (E.g. in a school newsletter or on the school website).

Denise Wheeler reviewed an email from a townsperson regarding speeding concerns in Calais.

The speed of drivers on County Road was discussed. Rick Kehne stated that traffic studies will help.

More discussion followed about the challenge with the change in speed limits between Montpelier to East Montpelier and into Maple Corners.

July 25 board meeting: Rick Kehne will have a proposal for the board's action. Meanwhile Denise Wheeler will look into ARPA funds.

6. County Road speed bump proposal:

Tim Wheelock shared that he recently witnessed a concerning but common incident where a driver was passing another who was going the speed limit, on the road into Maple Corner. He would like the board to consider speed bumps.

Tim Wheelock suggested that if the money is going to be spent on a radar cart, why not purchase radar that takes photos of drivers so they can be ticketed.

Tim Wheelock noted that he believes speed bumps would be an effective temporary fix. He stated that a \$12K cost for the speed signs as presented and discussed tonight, is an expensive experiment. He stated that Washington County Sheriff Department could oversee the ticketing from photo taking radar systems. Some discussion followed around the limited availability of the Sheriff Department.

John Brabant suggested, why not purchase two removable speed bumps and implement them as well. Denise Wheeler stated that she would like to look into the insurance liability related to this; John Brabant suggested that we would also need to consider how statute relates to this idea.

Tim Wheelock indicated that it only takes about five minutes to install the speed bumps; he had spoken to Todd Eaton of Vt. Local Roads.

Sharon Winn Fannon reiterated some of the questions around speed bumps as discussed tonight: whose job is it to install and remove them? whose responsibility when things go wrong? how does this relate to liability?

Tim Wheelock noted that he does not have the answers but is bringing it up for the board's consideration.

Denise Wheeler asked whether Tim Wheelock can provide information about the speed bumps - he will share the information that he has gathered so far (via email) - Denise Wheeler will look into the liability piece. Sharon Winn Fannon suggested that if a proposal is prepared with details, it helps the board have efficient discussions. Tim Wheelock will share information with Rick Kehne (and copy John Brabant).

7. Readopt Calais Road Standards

Stephanie Kaplan had written a letter to the selectboard expressing concerns around ditches being dug along Jack Hill Rd. The purpose of creating the standards was to preserve the integrity of the roads. She stated that the ditches do not conform to the road standards. She spoke about the scenic value of the roads and stated that the ditches ruin the scenic value. She stated that the roads are graded wider and wider; she spoke about the more narrow width of the roads being traffic calming measures. She stated that the standards that were created have not been honored and enforced.

Sharon Winn Fannon noted that the selectboard has tried to get people engaged in the process of revisiting the road standards (around two years ago.)

Stephanie expressed frustration that people work hard on these issues and then nothing happens.

Sharon Winn Fannon noted that the board recognizes the need for a full time person - the position of Director of Public Works - to help address issues such as these.

Sharon Winn Fannon asked whether Stephanie feels that the board should readopt the road standards now? John Brabant stated that these standards are still in effect. Stephanie Kaplan stated that the road crew is not aware of the standards. She thinks it would be great if the board would reaffirm the standards, with the provision that we are going to designate a few people who will address and update them.

Rick Kehne stated that some of the roads are narrow to the extent that they are not safe.

Denise Wheeler suggested revitalizing the Roads Committee; readopting road standards, hiring for DPW, who can either chair the committee or work with the committee to address and update the standards; sharing standards with the current road crew and asking that they sign that they have received and read.

Denise Wheeler brainstormed from interest expressed tonight: perhaps the following townspeople could create a current and active Road Committee: Tim Wheelock, Heidi Thompson, Cindy Gardner-Morse, and Doug Lilley.

Some discussion followed around the difference between reaffirming or readopting the existing standards.

Sharon Winn Fannon stated that the next board agenda will include readopting the current standards on the consent agenda, and sending standards to the road crew and asking them to sign off that they have read the standards.

Rick Kehne spoke about the need for standards for safety. He restated concerns around narrow roads related to safety.

Alfred Larrabee stated that the town receives grant money that has specific standards to be followed in order to make use of the grant money. It goes beyond town standards if we are using grant funding.

Denise Wheeler stated that the opportunity exists to share local standards with VTRANS and ask them to review and approve; this has been done in the past. Some discussion followed around this issue.

8. Roads Report:

Peter shared that he met with Alfred Larrabee for approximately three hours; they took a ride and considered line of sight; he shared that he had spoken to the East Montpelier road foreman about line of sight issues and roadside mowing related to wild chervil. He stated that he had told Alfred Larrabee, if he will wash his machine before mowing the roadside by his property, then he will rescind his application (and allow mowing).

Some discussion followed around the possibility of meeting with East Montpelier road foreman to understand what measures they are taking around mowing and wild chervil.

Sharon Winn Fannon noted that we have encouraged integrating road maintenance with environmental considerations.

Peter stated that he had checked at the town office and they do not have record of the Joan Garton study about invasive species. Denise Wheeler stated that she has access to the document and will forward to Peter, Alfred and the Board.

Some discussion followed around the difference between East Montpelier Town positions and Calais town positions.

John Brabant reminded Peter that the board had been responsive and had purchased a separate mowing machine for chervil maintenance.

Sharon Winn Fannon noted that she is pleased that Peter and Alfred Larrabee have worked together to resolve the chervil issue. She asked if he is withdrawing his permit application tonight at this meeting. He noted that he is withdrawing his permit application, as per the agreement he made with Alfred Larrabee that he will wash the machine before mowing his property.

Sharon Winn Fannon asked whether Peter would be willing to come back to the board at a later meeting (maybe mid-September) and check in around how this solution works. She noted that this is a way to sustain the conversation.

Peter stated that what he has learned about wild chervil is that he spends hours sharing information with the selectboard and gets no response but that he can talk with other farmers in other towns, or for example, he spoke with Seth Gardner (E. Mont. Selectboard) who was more receptive and willing to talk about wild chervil than this selectboard.

Peter indicated that he will come back at a later board meeting and let the board know how the agreement that he and Alfred made is working.

Peter stated that he would like to let his neighbors know in person, and would like to send an email to neighbors to let them know about the agreement, so they will be prepared for the town mowers to show up. Alfred Larrabee stated that he is ready to mow as soon as tomorrow; Peter indicated that he needs more time than tomorrow. Alfred Larrabee will wait until Monday (July 18), a week from today.

Peter told Sharon Winn Fannon that he would expect to use 15 minutes at the September meeting to report.

Sharon Winn Fannon indicated that it is frustrating that we are not conveying to the town how much time and effort the selectboard has spent discussing invasive species. Sharon Winn Fannon asked Alfred Larrabee if he would be willing to speak with the Town Foreman in East Montpelier about their system to address wild chervil. Alfred Larrabee stated that the answer will be that they mow twice a year. Denise Wheeler asked him to compare notes with Guthrie and report back to the board. John Brabant stated that he thinks the town crew is doing a great job with the wild chervil.

9. Personnel Report:

Denise Wheeler noted that we have one applicant for the position of Director of Public Works. The deadline for applicants is July 13th.

10. Board round-robin on items of old business and other business:

Sharon Winn Fannon stated that at the last meeting we reported that we are shifting to bi-weekly payroll using a payroll service, and that she and Denise Wheeler will meet tomorrow to get feedback from attorneys after their review of the contract. Denise Wheeler shared that we will transition to biweekly direct deposit. Sharon Winn Fannon stated that the target date will be October 1st.

Alfred Larrabee asked whether employees will have a choice whether or not they want direct deposit. Denise Wheeler will ask whether paper checks will be an option in addition to direct deposit. Alfred Larrabee noted that biweekly pay will be a huge departure from the way things have been for the past 35 years and that he feels that he and his crew have had no voice in the discussion.

John Brabant stated that the conversation with the town treasurer indicated that she was never able to take vacation for two weeks because she had to do payroll every week, and that biweekly payroll is the norm; weekly payroll processing is a hardship for the town treasurer.

Sharon Winn Fannon noted that we are trying to find efficiencies - shifting to a payroll service will create efficiencies and will allow us to sustain payroll even as town treasurers come and go.

Alfred Larrabee noted that he would like for the selectboard to make more of an effort to talk with the town employees, to provide notice and involve them in discussions about issues that will affect them.

Denise Wheeler noted that at the next board meeting, she would like for the board to meet new road crew members: John, Tyler. She suggested that the selectboard could actually meet with all of the road crew members.

Sharon Winn Fannon noted that the board will be working on ways to “smooth the rough edges” when the transition from weekly to bi-weekly payroll takes place. She reiterated that October 1st is the target date of implementation. Denise Wheeler invited Alfred Larrabee to share some of the concerns from the crew around moving to bi-weekly pay - there may be some ways to mitigate the impact.

11. Executive Session:

At 9:01 pm, Denise Wheeler moved to go into Executive Session according to 1 VSA §313, and to invite Alfred Larrabee, Road Commissioner. Seconded by Rick Kehne, this motion carried unanimously. At 9:43 pm by motion of Denise Wheeler, seconded by Rick Kehne and unanimously approved, the Board resumed regular session with nothing to report.

12. Adjourn

At 9:48 pm by motion of Denise Wheeler, seconded by Sharon Fannon and unanimously approved by Board, the Board adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Grace, Board Recording Secretary

July 25, 2022 Agenda Items

- Meet with Louis Porter, General Manager Washington Electric Cooperative
- Set tax rate and approve property tax timeline, mailing tax bills
- End of FY '22 financial report – Denise
- Next steps Pay Data implementation – Denise
- Meet new road crew members
- Town Hall Usage Policy – Review and Renew July 2022 (Marc)
- Peter Harvey private maintenance public roadside application

Future Agenda Items

- Follow-Up Shade Tree Preservation Plan – (8/8 or 8/27)
- East Calais Tree Removal (Denise follow up with Neal Maker, tree warden)
- Curb Cut Application (NEEDED) and Curb Cut Application Assessment Form (new) (Sharon/Denise) – ACTION ITEM ([Curb Cut Materials](#) at this link; CC has requested input) – August
- Highway Capital Plan – Rick
- County Road Speed Limit -- Rick/Denise
- Immunizing Ash Trees – Rick/Neal Maker
- 2023 Property Reappraisal Process – Marc Mihaly/Jan Ohlsson

Review and Update Existing Policies and Ordinances

- Traffic Ordinance – Rick
- Personnel Policy – Sharon/Denise
- Job Descriptions Review and Update – Sharon/Denise
- Conflict of Interest Policy ([Conflict of Interest Background](#))

Create Ordinance/Policy

- Junk Ordinance – requested

Issues Awaiting Further Development

- East Calais Stormwater Project – Rick