



# TOWN OF CALAIS

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## SELECTBOARD MEETING APPROVED MINUTES

Monday, December 11 and continued December 18, 2023

6:00 pm Calais Town Hall

**Attending:** Anne Winchester, Jamie Moorby, Anne Toolan, Jordan Keyes, Donny Mucherino (late arrival), Barbara Butler, Kari Bradley, Teegan Dykeman-Brown, Marc Mihaly, Jeffrey Kantor, Steve Gray, Nick Emlen and Rose Pelchuck. Via Zoom: Andy Felice.

### **Actions:**

The meeting was called to Order at 6:00 pm by Anne Winchester, Selectboard Chair.

The first order of business was a Public Informational Hearing with Jeff Kantor and Marc Mihaly to explain the objectives and final results of implementing the Community Development Grant the Town received for the purpose of rehabilitating the East Calais General Store building. It was built in 1850 and was completely renovated over the past four years, brought up to current codes and made ADA accessible in one apartment and the general store. The building has three apartments and the store. The cost was 2.7 million dollars with 21 funding sources. The general contractor, E.F. Wall, was mindful of the historic nature of the building. The underground gas tank(s) was removed. The Community Development Grant the Town received was for \$428,000 with \$3,000 used for administrative costs. Marc Mihaly believes this is the only general store in Vermont that is 100% fossil fuel free. The store has a gasoline-powered generator and has priced out backup power for the entire building around \$40,000. This will likely happen sometime in the future.

State Representative, Marc Mihaly, was invited to give a brief legislative update in advance of the new legislative session that begins in January.

### Changes to the Agenda and Administrative Business as follows:

- Approval of the Meeting Minutes from November 27, 2023 and December 4, 2023 – Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to approve both sets of Minutes. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 4-0.
- Town Invoices and Sign Orders – The Selectboard reviewed the town invoices presented for payment during the meeting and signed the orders authorizing payment.
- Reminder: Washington County Budget Planning meeting, December 15<sup>th</sup> at 10am at the Kellogg-Hubbard library in Montpelier.

Public Comment - Barbara Butler reminded the Selectboard that all town officials should have a paper copy of the town's Emergency Management Plan and she distributed one to each Selectboard member. Nick Emlen, Emergency Management Director, reported the town hall generator ran 40 hours during a recent outage and worked perfectly. Nick fielded a call from East Montpelier's emergency management committee to co-use a shelter with us in the future. Nick reported talks will be coming up.

Nick is hoping that the three radio antennae (school, town garage and Maple Corner Community Center) cost of \$1,454.89, which the town has already expended, will be covered by the ARPA funds. Sandra Ferwer told Nick that she will provide an update on the accounting for this fund later in December. Nick also said a professional electrician is needed to run the cables from the antennae in the bell tower down to the meeting area in the town hall.

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Mt. Tamers Snowmobile Club Annual Request - Snowmobile clubs must receive permission annually to ride on certain town roads during the winter to access the VAST Trail. Steve Gray, Trail-master, spoke about possibly allowing snowmobiles access to the Maple Corner Store. Steve spoke about the things to consider, including necessary signage. Jamie Moorby provided some background info noting she would be happy to talk to Steve further about this possibility. Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to authorize the Mt. Tamers Snowmobile Club to use a portion of certain Town roads on their snowmobiles to gain access to the VAST Trail for the 2023-2024 winter season as outlined in their listing and further add a portion of Kent Hill Road from the current trail crossing westerly to the Maple Corner Store for 0.2 miles to access the store. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0. Donny Mucherino arrived in time to vote.

Obligate Remainder of available ARPA funds for the Curtis Pond Dam project - Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to obligate the Town of Calais' remaining ARPA funds in the amount of \$69,886.38 to the Curtis Pond Dam Reconstruction Project, and authorize the Town Treasurer to transfer these funds from the ARPA Fund (Fund 99) to the Curtis Pond Dam Reserve Fund (Fund 32) for this purpose before the close of the calendar year. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 4-0-1. Jamie Moorby abstained from the vote.

Authorize WCUUSD to Mail its 2024 Ballots to Calais Voters - Jordan Keyes made a **motion** that the Town of Calais shall allow the Washington Central Unified Union School District to distribute ballots for the WCUUSD Annual Meeting via USPS mail to all active, not challenged, registered voters on the Town of Calais checklist. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0.

Authorize Town Clerk to Mail 2024 Town Meeting Ballots - Jamie Moorby made a **motion** to authorize the Calais Town Clerk, Teegan Dykeman-Brown, to arrange for the mailing of 2024 Town Meeting Ballots via USPS mail to all active, not challenged, registered voters on the Town of Calais checklist. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0.

Draft of Selectboard Report for the 2023 Town Report – The Selectboard discussed the draft report. Some members would like to review it again and forward it to Barbara Butler as soon as possible. Barbara thanked the Selectboard for their prompt effort on it.

Interlocal Agreement with Calais, East Montpelier and East Montpelier Fire Department - The Calais Selectboard will be meeting with the East Montpelier Selectboard and EMFD Board of Directors on Thursday, Dec. 14, 2023 to renew the Interlocal Agreement with respect to Fire Suppression, Ambulance and other emergency response services, review the EMFD budget for FY'25 and get general updates. The Selectboard expressed a bit of dissatisfaction with not having received the six documents that EMFD should have provided to the Selectboard by December 1<sup>st</sup> as stated in the Interlocal Agreement. Anne Winchester spoke to Fire Chief, Albert Petrella, today who reported staffing changes this year in the department and he is trying to get caught up. Jordan Keyes may not be able to attend the meeting.

Vermont Childcare Payroll Tax - Act 76 of 2023, an act relating to child care and early childhood education, tasks the Department of Taxes with the implementation and administration of a new Child Care Contribution (CCC), composed of a 0.44% payroll tax on wages and a 0.11% self-employment income tax. Collection of the Child Care Contribution shall begin on July 1, 2024. Employers are required to pay a 0.44% payroll tax on all employee wages earned in Vermont. An employer may choose to deduct and

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withhold a maximum of 25 percent of the required contribution (i.e., 0.11%) from employee wages. Kari Bradley said we have not spoken to the bargaining unit about this potential impact. The full amount is in the FY 2025 budget. Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to set the Town's share of new Child Care Contribution payroll tax for all wage earners at 0.44%. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0. The Selectboard decided not to have employees contribute.

Reconsider ARPA allocations to Traffic Calming Design and Invasive Species Studies – The Selectboard reviewed the value of these studies and considered whether to reallocate funds for the purchase of a boom mower, a more pressing need. Kari Bradley communicated with Rick Kehne, former Selectboard member, who told him that there was not anything firm regarding traffic calming design plans. Larry Bush, Conservation Commission Chair, said the commission was not currently planning for an invasive species study. Jamie Moorby also spoke to Larry Bush and is interested in working with the Conservation Commission to try to control invasive species in town. She pointed out that a boom mower would be an important tool in helping to control invasive species that grow in the town right of way.

Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to obligate the Town of Calais' ARPA funds in the amount of \$45,000 previously designated for an Invasive Species Study and a Traffic Calming Road Design Study to the Highway Capital Equipment Fund and authorize the Treasurer to transfer these funds from the ARPA Fund (Fund 99) to the Highway Capital Equipment Fund before the close of the 2023 calendar year. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0.

Review Documents for the Purchase of a Boom Mower for Roadside Mowing - The Selectboard discussed the purchase and loan documents regarding the Massey Ferguson boom mower. Kari Bradley spoke about the three different financing options. Donny Mucherino made a **motion** to go with option A, to take \$50,000 out of the Highway Equipment Fund for the down-payment of the Massey Ferguson boom mower and that the town make the first payment this calendar year, annual payments of \$18,324; and to authorize Anne Winchester to sign the purchase and loan documents. Kari will inform Sandra of this decision and request the payment. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0.

Continued Review of FY'25 Budget – The Selectboard and Town Administrator began with the Highway Budget review. Anne Winchester and Kari Bradley don't see many areas to cut from the highway budget, although there was agreement to eliminate the allocation for temporary workers. Kari noted five road crew positions is enough (currently this includes two part timers). The union contract says the town pays for CDL license renewals. Rose Pelchuck noted that Calais' municipal drivers have always been exempt from a DOT physical and medical card in Calais. Rose explained the difference between license renewals at DMV and requiring a DOT physical and medical card from a certified provider.

Social Service funding requests – Barbara Butler said we are down about \$1,000 from last year's requests. The Cemetery Commission is struggling with the old fence at the Old West Church Cemetery Jamie Moorby reported. Barbara Butler will find out if they met last week. The Cemetery Commission has not yet presented their annual funding request article for the Warning.

Authorize Town Administrator to Review and Approve Invoices in second half of December - Anne Toolan made a **motion** to authorize Kari Bradley, Town Administrator to release checks to pay bills that would usually be authorized at the second meeting of the month for December (which is canceled due to the holidays). The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0. The Selectboard will review and approve them at the January 8, 2024 meeting.

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### Selectboard, Town Clerk and Administrative Reports:

Curtis Pond Dam Renovation Project - Jamie Moorby spoke about the Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC) through the Agency of Natural Resources, Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation that looks at preserving public recreation. Jamie noted this project fits very nicely and we are asking for a \$500,000 grant. Jamie noted we won't know about the award until mid-March, which would cover the funding gap to renovate and rebuild the Curtis Pond Dam. Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to authorize Anne Winchester to sign the letter of support for the VOREC grant as presented. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 4-0-1. Jamie Moorby abstained from the vote.

Authorize Jamie Moorby to review the Curtis Pond Dam Bond Application prior to submission – Jamie Moorby just received an updated quote from Hebert Construction for \$982,000, which leaves a funding gap of just over \$300,000 for the dam project. Jamie reported the CPA has fundraising underway and hopes to close the gap soon. The Bond Bank application is due next week. Jamie Moorby made a **motion** to authorize Sandra Ferver, Treasurer, to submit the bond bank application for \$450,000 for a total estimated full project cost of 1.2 million dollars. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 4-0-1. Jamie Moorby abstained from the vote. **NOTE: This motion was already made at the Nov. 27, 2023 meeting.**

IT - Jordan Keyes had nothing to report.

Status of Shedd v. Calais Legal Matter - Anne Toolan and Jordan Keyes had nothing to report.

Town Clerk Report - Teegan Dykeman-Brown provided a first draft of the Town Meeting Warning which she and Barbara Butler worked on together. The absolute print deadline for the town report is January 12, 2024. The Selectboard would like to add an Article about the annual remaining balance in the highway budget getting transferred to the Highway Capital Reserve Fund every year going forward.

Status of Personnel Policy revisions – Teegan noted that updates to language in the Personnel Policy were made and it is now aligned with the Road Crew labor union contract. Teegan will send it to VLCT for legal review.

Teegan reported how much the school children enjoyed seeing and learning about a big, town truck last year. John Stafford has agreed to bring a town truck to the elementary school for a civics lesson and give the children a chance to name the truck.

Town Administrator Report - Kari Bradley reported a Road Crew member was injured on Friday, requiring medical attention, and that they returned to work and are doing ok. Kari, Donny and Toby Talbot will be interviewing people for the Road Foreman and Seasonal Road Crew positions later in the week. A top priority is the bond bank application then preparing for Sandra Ferver's transition out as Treasurer. Sandra will leave as Treasurer in March but may stay on as delinquent tax collector. As far as getting a bookkeeper, Kari has been discussing it with Wendy Wilton from NEMRC, who is very familiar with our town and stepped up when we didn't have a Treasurer. Kari noted the need to retain Toby Talbot to help with grants and Highway Department administration.

Anne Winchester noted at 8:30 pm that this meeting will be continued to next Monday, December 18<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm for final budget discussion.

Rose Pelchuck  
Interim Recording Secretary

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**Minutes for Meeting Continued December 18, 2023**

Via Zoom

Anne W., Anne T., Donnie, Jamie, Jordan, Kari (notes), Nick Emlen, James Dailey

Anne W. called the meeting back to order at 6:00pm.

Jamie provided an update regarding the Curtis Pond Dam which is close to overtopping. Dam Safety and downstreet residents are being alerted. Nick and Jamie are managing the situation and they will monitor through the night.

Anne asked Kari to provide an overview of the budget. He shared that the current draft calls for a 9% increase over the current year budget and described the categories of expenses which are contributing to that increase.

There was discussion of the feasibility of staff taking Selectboard meeting minutes and about the adequacy of the Bookkeeper's wages.

Kari shared information about the Woodbury Fire Department budget which recently increased due to insurance premiums. Jordan said he thought it would be wise for Calais to consider alternative insurance carriers. James from Woodbury FD joined and explained that the funding formula has changed as of this year such that Calais's contribution will be one third of the budgeted operating expenses instead of a third of the past year's actual expenses. James also spoke to their decision to change insurance carriers. Jordan asked about the distribution of calls from the two towns and James said that the majority come from Woodbury; details will be in their year-end report.

Anne shared information about the East Montpelier ambulance budget increase. Most of that increase is for staff since volunteers are more difficult to secure these days.

Kari described the source of increases in Highway Equipment, Long-Term Debt and the Single Audit categories.

Donny and Anne T. thought we could reduce material expenses since there are grants available for roads connected to waterways. We can carry forward unspent grant funds from the current year and combine them with next year's grants which have already been awarded. Specifically, they suggested reducing bridges & culverts by \$3500, gravel by \$10,000, and \$2000 in erosion stone. This would require a solid plan to focus on the road segments to which the grants can be applied.

Kari reported that Toby Talbot was comfortable reducing the allocation for East Calais bridge by \$5000. Anne W. suggested considering reducing the interactive map as well as the IT and Town Hall reserve funds. Jamie suggested considering reducing the Selectboard stipends.

Anne W. suggested possibly having a plan B ready for Town Meeting in case voters require further reductions. The board discussed and generally agreed. An additional \$5000 was removed from the highway materials budget. The board will vote to finalize on January 8.

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Jordan moved, Anne T seconded and board voted to go into executive session under 1 VSA Section 313

(a) (3) (B) 1A for the purpose of discussing the potential hiring of an employee.

(b)

Jordan moved, Anne W seconded and the board left executive session. No action was taken.

Jamie provided an update on the Curtis Pond dam.

Jordan moved, Jamie seconded and the board voted to adjourn at 7:42pm.