



# TOWN OF CALAIS

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

## SELECTBOARD MEETING

August 7, 2023

### MINUTES APPROVED 8/14/23

**Attending:** Anne Winchester, Jamie Moorby, Gabrielle Malina, Anne Toolan, Jordan Keyes, Barbara Butler, Daphne Larkin, Luke Bennecker, John McCullough, Donna Fitch, Linda Gray, David Healy, Mary Rogstad, Syver Rogstad, Karen Bunnewith, Teegan Dykeman-Brown, Reed Cherington, Betty Copeland, Jennifer Whitman, Donald Mucherino, Caisey Kunek, Ann Wheelock, Millie Brumback, Hasso Ewing, Jeff Dean, Rodney Buck, Willa Farrell, Charlotte Hanna Bassage, Paul Hannan, Sharon Winn Fannon, Cathy Kashanski, Sandra Ferver, Shams Ferver, Jacob Aho, Colleen Bloom, Marge Sweeney, Rose Pelchuck.

**Zoom Attendees:** Scott Bassage, Jane English, Jennifer Chambers, ORCA, Bill Powell, Clif Emmons, Leslie Matthews, Julie Hand, Holly/Jarrold Weiss, Betsy Parah, Reenie DeGeus, Sandy Hyde and Judy Fitch Robert.

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 pm by Anne Winchester, Selectboard Chair.

### **Public Discussion About the Future of Calais Town Government**

Anne introduced the purpose of the public discussion regarding the "Future of Calais Town Government", explaining that Calais governance has historically been handled by volunteers. However, it is getting harder and harder to find volunteers who can keep up with the demands of navigating the increasing legal hoops required by regulations. The Selectboard wants to be smart about organizing themselves and the huge volume of work that goes into Town governance in the 2020's. Anne introduced Donna Fitch, former Town Clerk and Treasurer, whose family has been actively involved in Calais governance for more than three generations.

Donna Fitch provided a detailed presentation of the current town government structure and other options, including having a town manager or a town administrator. Regardless of the title, there is a need for someone dedicated to handling the day to day operations of the town. This could create a new position that would take on tasks currently done by the Highway Grants Administrator, Road Commissioners, Treasurer, and Selectboard. Donna explained why there is a need. A Town Manager job description is detailed in state statute. Donna's presentation was followed by an opportunity for those in attendance in person and via Zoom to ask questions.

Sharon Winn stated, "you are entering the road of delegation, you have shaped what you want to delegate allowing the leadership of the Selectboard to work on other important issues; I support that." Anne Winchester spoke using the example of the recent flood and how having a Town Administrator and all they could have done to gather the necessary information and come to the Selectboard with the data in hand. Donna said this is why we have an assistant position put into the organizational charts.

Paul Hannan stated in the past 15 years things have gotten totally nuts. Paul does think, knowing this town, that we don't need a town manager, but something has to change; it's just crazy what the Selectboard has to deal with. Paul believes a Town Administrator with some pretty good assistance would be good for the town.

## Selectboard Minutes

August 7, 2023

Page 2

Jennifer Whitman noted that if the town were to move forward with hiring for this position, it needs to be recognized that putting all of those aforementioned items on that one person's plate could be stressful — and we would want to hire someone who found the job rewarding/fulfilling so that they would commit to the position and not get easily burned out.

Donna Fitch said that budget-wise there is \$146,000 for unfilled positions in the current budget. The next steps are to come up with a job description, figure out the tax impact and define the responsibilities between a Road Commissioner and other positions. Jordan Keyes spoke about a Road Foreman and what things they would be doing; Anne Toolan envisions the Road Foreman being a working road crew member when not doing paperwork. Donna said the Selectboard now knows what it takes to run the highway department. The end consensus was the Town should go in the direction of hiring a Town Administrator.

### **Other Concerns – Anne Winchester opened the public discussion to other issues**

The East Calais dam is in need of repairs; how important is it to the village and town? It was stated that the owner doesn't want to participate in any committees about the dam; he is inclined have the state remove the dam. The owner doesn't live here full time. Before the July floods, it was a low risk dam and now has been upgraded to significant risk. Jamie Moorby said the State usually gives some leeway if a committee is working on it. Jamie went on to say that the Curtis Pond Association formed a few years before they started working on the dam. It started with two or three people and has grown to about 12. Jamie suggests emailing everyone who spoke on FPF about the East Calais dam and see if there is enough interest from local people to see this dam get fixed. Charlotte Hanna Bassage said historically the dam was a commercial entity. A downstream factory did depend on the mill for power; there is significant history with the dam.

### **FY'24 Tax Rate and Line of Credit**

Sandra Ferver, Town Treasurer, provided a very detailed summary of information leading to the calculation of the town tax rate for 2023. Sandra recommends the town tax rate be set at 0.8062. Questions were answered. Gabrielle Malina made a **motion** to set the town tax rate at 0.8062 for the 2023 tax year. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0.

The Treasurer reported infrastructure damages in town are estimated at 1.7 million dollars from the recent flood. Sandra was able to obtain a line of credit proposal from Community Bank NA for 3.99% interest. This will provide a great deal of flexibility to draw on, only if needed. The town has one year from the time you open the Line of Credit to pay it back. Sandra explained the town's software program and the ability to track flood expenditures/FEMA separately. Interest is not reimbursable from FEMA. The Selectboard has the authority to take a loan on its own motion with a one year limit. Gabrielle Malina made a **motion** to authorize Anne Winchester to sign the documents to accept the line of credit proposal from Community Bank NA for 1.7 million dollars at 3.99%. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0. It is expected the town will be reimbursed within one year.

Sandra noted the reimbursement rate from FEMA is 75% and the State pays an extra 10%. She noted the town will be reimbursed for every hour the road crew worked on flood damage/repairs and noted that Toby Talbot is doing a terrific, detailed job documenting it all road by road.

### **Purchase of Radio Communications Equipment**

Jake Aho presented information about purchasing HAM radio communications equipment with money left from the EMPG grant from which the town bought a generator for the town hall. Jake forgot to add power supply/batteries to his proposal and will come back to present a new proposal at the next meeting. Gabrielle Malina would love to have this in collaboration with other nearby towns.

## Selectboard Minutes

August 7, 2023

Page 3

### Curtis Pond Dam Project

Jamie Moorby reported that DuBois & King engineering and consulting firm has presented the Town with an addendum to our contract for services, which adds an additional \$90,000 to the cost of repairing the dam. The town has been working with this firm about the dam for several years. Our understanding had been that these services were covered in the original contract. Therefore, we have delayed the release of an RFP until the Curtis Pond Association can meet with DuBois & King in order to discuss this. The previous Selectboard signed a contract with them to get everything ready to go out to bid. Confusion and lack of communication, the current contract D&K provided an addendum to take us through 6950.00 to manage the RFP, two phases of construction assistance 44,100.00 and 38,450.00 for oversight of the construction process. That total is \$89,900.00. Jamie stated we thought the original contract covered all of this. The Curtis Pond Association has had some conversations to have them cut this into two different amendments. Then have a larger conversation to bid on the work to oversee the construction. We can sign this amendment or ask them to split it out to two amendments.

Marge Sweeney, CPA member, is in favor of splitting the addendum out. Important to get the RFP out for construction and do this first part. Colleen Bloom, CPA member, feels the same as Marge does. Jordan Keyes suggests to see if we could get a “not to exceed amount”. Gabrielle Malina made a **motion** to authorize Jamie Moorby to ask DuBois & King and to draw up a new contract amendment #1 for only task #9 and release of the RFP as soon as possible and further authorize Jamie Moorby to sign it. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 4-0-1. Jamie Moorby abstained from the vote. Colleen Bloom, Marge Sweeney, Jamie Moorby and Gabrielle Malina will meet with D&K soon.

### Contract for Operation of Black Rock Quarry and Other Contractors

The Selectboard reviewed the Letter of Agreement regarding use of the quarry by an independent contractor hired by the town and the purchase of raw stone product from Black Rock Coal, Inc. to be crushed and stockpiled on site. Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to authorize Anne Winchester to sign the letter of agreement with Black Rock Coal, Inc. as presented. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0. The agreement was also signed by Gregory & Rosemarie Pelchuck, owners of Black Rock Coal, Inc.

T&T Leasing Contract – Jordan Keyes reviewed the items contained in the contract with T&T Leasing to operate a stone crushing operation in the Black Rock Quarry for the purpose of making road material for the town. This activity is allowed per Governor Scott's Emergency Declaration through October 15, 2023. Jennifer Whitman, closest adjoining landowner, asked questions regarding the duration of time of the crushing operation. Jordan Keyes noted it is hard to define the actual hammer time and crusher time at this point since it hasn't begun yet and we don't know how quickly they will produce material. Gabrielle Malina made a **motion** to authorize Anne Winchester to sign the contract with T&T Equipment Leasing to process and crush stone to make road material in the Black Rock Quarry. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0. The Road Commissioners and road crew will keep the Selectboard aware of the material stockpiles and if they need to change to making different size stone products.

Anne Winchester provided the contract that all other independent contractors should complete if they are working on town roads. Barbara Butler noted that FEMA requires a procurement policy. Barbara will ask Sandra, Scott and Charlotte to draft a procurement policy for the Selectboard to review.

### Approval of Meeting Minutes

The Selectboard reviewed the Minutes of the July 24, July 31, and August 1 meetings. Jamie Moorby made a **motion** to approve all three sets of Minutes as written. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0.

## Selectboard Minutes

August 7, 2023

Page 4

**Sign Board Orders and Invoices** – tabled until the next regular meeting next week

### **Sign Orr Conditioned Curb Cut Permit**

Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to authorize Anne Winchester to sign the Curb Cut Permit with conditions for Larry Orr on Leonard Road. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0.

### **Sign a letter acknowledging receipt of a Reappraisal Order from the State**

Anne Winchester explained that the town's education grand list coefficient of dispersion is outside of the acceptable parameters. This means that our appraisal numbers are at or below 20% of recent sales. Therefore, we are required to reappraise our properties. The first step is to send a letter acknowledging receipt of the reappraisal order. We have 120 days to file a compliance plan. Prior to receiving this letter we had entered into contract with a reappraisal firm to conduct a reappraisal in 2024, so we will have no trouble complying. We are required to sign this acknowledgment and Anne Winchester signed it.

### **Set August Meeting Schedule**

After some discussion, the Selectboard decided to meet next week on Monday, August 14, 2023 at 6:00 pm, a usual meeting date.

### **Selectboard Reports**

- **Highway and Roads** - Jamie Moorby talked to Toby Talbot who confirmed we are in compliance with the State Highway Roads & Bridge Standards. Gabrielle Malina made a **motion** to sign and file the certification of Town Road and Bridge Standards as being in compliance with the State standards dated 8/7/2023. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0. Anne Toolan reported work is still in progress on Moscow Woods Road, Singleton Road, Wheeler Road, Longmeadow Hill Road and Blachly Road. There are other roads also in need of repair.
- **Curtis Pond Dam** – see above report.
- **IT Needs:** Jordan Keyes, Teegan Dykeman-Brown, Town Clerk – Teegan recommends changing to the new CVFiber. Barbara Butler noted projected savings with not having to call rbTech so frequently to get back on the server. Gabrielle Malina made a **motion** to change from Consolidated Communications to CVFiber for phone and internet service for the town (1 GB) at all locations. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0.
- **Status of Shedd v. Calais** - Anne Toolan and Jordan Keyes had nothing to report.
- **Collective Bargaining Team** - Jamie Moorby, Anne Toolan, Jordan Keyes – tabled to next meeting where they will give a report. The town and union have reached an agreement.

Anne Winchester declared the meeting adjourned at 9:35 pm.

Rose Pelchuck  
Interim Recording Secretary