



TOWN OF CALAIS

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SELECTBOARD MEETING Monday, October 9, 2023

MINUTES APPROVED October 23, 2023

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Attending: Anne Winchester, Jamie Moorby, Anne Toolan and Jordan Keyes.

Anne Winchester called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm at the Town Office. Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to go into Executive Session for the purpose of interviewing a candidate for the Town Treasurer position under 1 V.S.A. § 313 (a)(3) regarding the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee and invited the candidate to join the Selectboard. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 4-0. The Selectboard came out of Executive Session at 5:05 pm and had nothing to publicly report.

Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to go into Executive Session under 1 V.S.A. § 313 (a)(3) regarding the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee and invited Toby Talbot to join the Selectboard. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 4-0.

PUBLIC MEETING

Attending: Anne Winchester, Jamie Moorby, Anne Toolan, Jordan Keyes, Barbara Butler, John McCullough, Mark Whitman, Teegan Dykeman-Brown, Scott Bassage, Ben Knudtson, Stephanie Kaplan, Sage Kennedy, Nick Emlen, Cindy Gardner-Morse, Janice Ohlsson, Toby Talbot, Juanita Nunn, Daniel Keeney and Rose Pelchuck.

Anne Winchester made a **motion** to come out of Executive Session at 6:07 pm at the Town Hall. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 4-0. Anne Winchester reported the Selectboard interviewed a candidate for Town Treasurer and discussed the hiring of a Road Foreman. The Selectboard has nothing to report, and will have to regroup and decide how to move forward to fill a Road position.

Changes to the Agenda and Administrative Business

- Approval of September 25 and 26, 2023 Minutes – Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to approve both sets of Minutes as written. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 4-0.
- Sign Board Orders – The Selectboard reviewed the town invoices presented for payment during the meeting and signed the orders authorizing payment.
- Traffic Study on County Road – Anne Winchester reported the town had planned to do more traffic studies this summer with the Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC), but the July flood changed all that. CVRPC was able to conduct one traffic study on our paved road, County Road, from Sept.15 through September 22, 2023. Data review was done and the top speed of 85% of the traffic was 51 mph. To determine what the speed limit should be, you throw out the top 15% and that's what the posted speed limit should be. Anne Winchester noted the data do not support lowering the speed limit from 50 mph to 40 mph and noted that enforcement officers will not enforce a speed

limit that is not based on the data unless there is a compelling reason to set a lower speed limit such as presence of a school or a dangerous intersection. There still are other roads the Selectboard plans to study next summer when all the gravel roads will be back to normal.

- Appointment of New Hiring Committee member – Tom McArdle, retired Department of Public Works Director for the City of Montpelier, has agreed to serve on the Town Administrator Hiring Committee. Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to appoint Tom McArdle to the Committee and remove Donna Fitch and Judy Robert per their request. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 4-0.

Public Comment – In response to the CVRPC traffic study, Rose Pelchuck commented about the current Highway Road & Bridge Standards and if the version adopted back in 2014 and approved by the State AOT are still in use or if the town has in subsequent years just adopted the State Standards. The Selectboard noted that Calais still has our own version of Highway Road & Bridge Standards in use.

Knudtson Curb Cut Application

Benjamin Knudtson requested a curb cut permit at 208 Jack Hill Road for a new residential curb cut. Anne Winchester reported the Road Crew did a site visit and recommend a 15” culvert be installed with drainage directed to the northeast side of Jack Hill Road, with the ditch cleaned out approximately 150 feet to the nearest cross culvert. Sage Kennedy asked the Selectboard to delay, pause or deny the issuance of this curb cut permit because she believes there are a lot of unknowns. Jordan Keyes said we cannot reasonably deny access to their property by not giving a curb cut permit. Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to approve the curb cut permit with the condition of installation of a 15” culvert where the new curb cut meets Jack Hill Road with the understanding the ditching will be adequate to accommodate the water drainage and with the ditch cleaned out approximately 150 feet to the nearest cross culvert as the Road Crew recommends. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 4-0.

Grand List Changes & Sign PVR Certificate – The Selectboard reviewed the Errors and Omissions Form from the Listers to amend one or more 2023 tax bills and approved of its submission to the State. John McCullough explained the necessary changes. Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to approve the PVR Certificate as presented from the Listers. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 4-0.

Highway Department Issues – Toby Talbot, Highway Grants Administrator, informed the Selectboard that the truck we are looking to replace is not old enough to be eligible for a grant, but the road grader replacement would qualify for a \$30,000 grant. The codicil is that the grader has to be permanently taken off the road. The purpose of the grant is to remove older diesel engines permanently from use (and their emissions). If we traded the grader in, we would not be eligible for the grant.

Toby Talbot reported that the R.R. Charlebois' sales rep said it is well over one year or 18 months before delivery of a new 10-wheeler can be expected, therefore it would be 2½ years before we have to start paying for it. The old truck, the 2014 Western Star, is still in service. We have been buying a 7-year extended warranty on the trucks. This allows the town to space out the payments so we don't get payments stacked up. The Town needs to put \$200,000 in the Capital Reserve Plan each year to adequately fund these capital equipment purchases. Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to approve ordering a 2025 Western Star 10-wheeler dump truck from R. R. Charlebois for the town highway department. The motion was seconded, voted on carried 4-0.

Opportunity for Purchase of Boom Mower – Toby Talbot reported a local dealer has a sale on Massey Ferguson boom mowers \$144,000 new or \$133,000 for a used one. The town is renting a mower for \$3,500 per week for eight weeks for a total of \$28,000. If we rented one for eight weeks a year, for five years, it would cost \$140,000. Basically we could buy one and have it paid off in five years with the same cost as renting one. Toby noted it is a boom mower, no multi-use implements go with this. East Montpelier owns a boom mower and he is unsure if Worcester has one or not. There are a lot of safety reasons why we mow the roadsides throughout town. Toby said we will be able to measure data of how long it takes to mow this month with the rented mower.

Culvert Replacement Scoping Study on Kent Hill Road – The Selectboard reviewed the contract with DuBois & King, Inc. for engineering services related to the scoping study for replacement of a culvert on Kent Hill Road near the Town Hall. CVRPC is managing the \$39,000 grant and the town's share is expected to be \$10-11,000.00. Jamie Moorby made a **motion** to approve the contract with DuBois & King, Inc. for engineering services and authorize Anne Winchester to sign contract. The motion was seconded, voted and carried 4-0.

FY'25 Budget Discussion

- **Town Clerk, Teegan Dykeman-Brown**, is requesting a cost of living adjustment (COLA) in the town clerk wages and an increase of 10% for the Assistant Town Clerk. Teegan noted that the past six months would have been unimaginably challenging without Barbara Butler's guidance, experience, and assistance. Also, Barbara has never been given a raise outside of COLA, despite her dedication, efficiency, and unmatched friendliness to everyone who calls, emails, or visits the Town Office. **Listers, John McCullough**, provided a document with the Listers budget request of \$18,850.00. John noted a town-wide reappraisal is coming up next summer, which involves Lister time beyond the regular stuff, so wages are up, tax mapping is up a little, and software increased. Jan Ohlsson said in March 2025 when John McCullough's term expires, a professional assessor will be needed and should be planned for in the FY'25 and '26 budgets. The Lister requirements and computerization are intense. Jan suggested the town can hire a part time professional assessor and still have one Lister. The estimated cost for a part time assessor is \$25,000. Maintaining the parcel maps are a Lister responsibility. The town would only need to budget for one quarter for an assessor, March to July 1, 2025 and then going forward. John said the Listers are managing the state's data, we are the state's bookkeepers. The town can divide the workload between Listers and a professional assessor. Jan said it may be more cost effective to have the assessor as a contractor and not an employee. Barbara Butler said they (Listers) work a lot with the public. With high speed internet, the Listers can work offsite since so much is digitized.
- **Zoning Administrator, John McCullough**, did not prepare a separate budget for Zoning Administration and only expects expenses of \$600 for certified mail. Jan Ohlsson, Zoning Assistant, said John needs to be paid more, noting there is lots of information John provides before someone even applies for a permit. Any ZA gets much more in other towns. Jordan Keyes noted we need to plan for when John isn't going to be doing this and be able to have a reasonable amount in the budget for someone else.
- **Town Hall, John McCullough** was asked to comment on future expenses in and around the Town Hall. John provided a handout to the Selectboard listing the things that should happen sooner rather than later. The cost of items on the list came to \$9,833.00. John is hoping that the generator move and possibly other items on the list can come out of already allocated funds. Barbara Butler asked about improving acoustics in the town hall. John noted by hanging more things on the walls the acoustics should improve. John suggested putting money in the budget for frames, photos, maps and to hang glass frames tilted downward to deflect sound. Barbara asked that professional acoustic work be prioritized, and noted it is important to consult with Friends of Calais Town Hall before buying anything for acoustics.
- **Development Review Board, Ryan Edwards** said the DRB requests that their usual annual budget line item for \$400 for a secretary stipend remain the same for FY'25. However, that line item should be changed to “general expenses”.
- **Swim Committee, Daniel Keeney** reported the \$1,500 annual appropriation covers water testing, trash disposal, porta potty rental and staff. Staff recruitment continues to be challenging. The main dock needs to be replaced, it is worse than ever Mark Whitman reported. The current dock is 5 feet wide and 24 feet long, around 20 years old with decaying decking and framing. Mark provided a document with two options to discuss. Budgeting (or fundraising) for a new six foot wide dock appeared to be the consensus. Mark is available to answer questions and is open to other ideas. The new 10x10 raft from Dock Doctors in Ferrisburgh will go in Curtis Pond next spring per Mark.

- **Cemetery Commission, Juanita Nunn** reported the current budget is \$49,500 approved by a separate article at Town Meeting in March 2023. The Cemetery Commission will talk to Rod Buck, Trustee of Public Funds, about taking some money out of the Cemetery Endowment Fund to figure out how much they need to request from the town in the next fiscal year budget.
- **Emergency Management, Nick Emlen**, EM Director, requested consideration of creating a \$5,000 Emergency Management Reserve Fund for use by the EM committee during an emergency. Best practice is to have money set aside that can be used in the event of an emergency that requires payments when the Selectboard cannot convene to authorize spending. Nick thinks one Selectboard member and the Emergency Management Director would authorize the expenditures. Anne Winchester suggested starting with creating the fund and putting in \$1,000 and building it up over time. Nick also recommended buying \$500 worth of canned food. Barbara Butler recommended the Emergency Management Director get an annual stipend; he should be compensated as other town officials are (i.e. Constable, Animal Control Officer, Health Officer, etc.). Nick said he would decline payment, but maybe the next EM Director would expect it. Jordan Keyes asked if Nick keeps track of his hours – no he doesn't.

Selectboard Report

- Highway Department & Roads – Anne Toolan and Jamie Moorby had nothing to report.
- Curtis Pond Dam Project Bids – Jamie Moorby reported the two bids received came in higher than we were hoping. This creates a funding gap, with plans to discuss possible alterations or some new creative options for the project. The Curtis Pond Association is in the process of possibly hiring a grant writer to look at other funding opportunities. One bidder offered possible ideas to lower the price. CPA reached out to the other bidder, too. The other idea that has bounced around, there may be pieces of the project they bid on that we may be able to have the Road Crew do to save money. Once a project is awarded to a firm and are working on the final contract, that's when these negotiations will happen. The CPA is relaunching fundraising efforts and is still on track to do the dam reconstruction project next year.
- IT Needs – Jordan Keyes reported that if and when we hire a new Town Administrator we will be able to obtain a laptop for a new employee very quickly so there is no need to act now.

Anne Winchester declared the meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm.

Rose Pelchuck
Interim Recording Secretary