



TOWN OF CALAIS

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SELECTBOARD MEETING APPROVED MINUTES

Monday, November 27, 2023

6:00 pm Calais Town Hall

Attending: Anne Winchester, Jamie Moorby, Anne Toolan, Jordan Keyes, Donny Mucherino, Barbara Butler, Kari Bradley, Scott Bassage and Rose Pelchuck. Via Zoom: Teegan Dykeman-Brown, Sandra Ferver, Rob Brigham, Peter Harvey and Toby Talbot.

Actions:

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

Changes to the Agenda and Administrative Business as follows:

- Anne Winchester welcomed Donny Mucherino as the newly appointed Selectboard member.
- Approval of November 13th Meeting Minutes – Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to approve the Minutes. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 4-0-1. Donny Mucherino abstained from the vote.
- Ratify the vote taken at last meeting to sign the Dept. of Public Safety addendum to Kent Hill Scoping - Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to ratify the vote taken at the last meeting to sign the Dept. of Public Safety addendum to the Kent Hill Scoping. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0.
- Elect a new Selectboard Vice Chair - Anne Winchester called for nominations for Selectboard Vice Chair. Jamie Moorby made a **motion** to nominate Jordan Keyes and Anne Toolan seconded. Jordan accepted the nomination and was elected as Vice Chair with a unanimous vote 5-0.

Public Comment – none.

Annual Audit Review from Sullivan Powers & Co., P.C. - Rick Brigham, an Auditor with Sullivan Powers & Co., presented primary findings from the Town's FY'23 Audit. An auditor's opinion can "grade" the municipality in three (3) ways: Adverse, Qualified, or Unmodified (highest grade). The Town's "score" was exceptional, with 5 out of 7 opinions rated as "Unmodified". Two categories received "Qualified", both related to the basis of accounting for the Cemetery Fund, consistent with recent years. Rick continued to give a brief overview of the 46-page Independent Auditor's Report. Jamie Moorby made a **motion** to approve the Audit report results. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0. Based on that, Rick will complete the Audit into final form and submit it in the coming weeks for formal approval.

Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to sign the agreement presented by Sullivan Powers & Co. for an annual of financial statements to be performed in FY'25 and FY'26 (at a cost of \$18,400 and \$18,900 respectively) with a single audit cost of \$6000 and an additional \$4000 for each additional major program. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0.

Vermont Internal Control Checklist - Town Treasurer, Sandra Ferver, explained that the Internal Control Checklist has its roots in Vermont statute, and must be presented by the Treasurer to the Selectboard annually to demonstrate that the internal controls are being used to manage the town's

finances. Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to accept the Internal Control Checklist as submitted by Sandra Ferver. Anne Winchester, Selectboard Chair, made a friendly amendment to add that Sandra Ferver has taken a VLCT financial training. Jordan accepted that amendment, and Jamie Moorby seconded. The motion as amended was voted on and carried 5-0.

Commission Appointments - Jarrod Weiss has expressed interest in serving on the Historic Preservation Commission with endorsement from HPC Chair, David Schütz. Jamie Moorby made a **motion** to appoint Jarrod Weiss to a vacant seat on the Calais Historic Preservation Commission for a term ending in 2025. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0.

Jarrod Weiss has also expressed interest in serving on the Planning Commission. Anne Winchester noted the Calais Planning Commission currently has five (5) seats and all of them are filled. Anne suggested that the Selectboard can increase the number of seats on the Planning Commission, noting the extensive work ahead in the next few years to update The Town Plan. Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to increase the Planning Commission from five to seven seats, and to appoint Jarrod Weiss to fill one of those new seats with a term expiring in 2025. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0.

Selectboard, Town Clerk and Administrative Reports:

Town Clerk: Teegan Dykeman-Brown

Town Administrator: Kari Bradley

- Today's wet, heavy, snow storm was very challenging, complicated with many trees and power/telephone lines down. Added to that, the Road Crew was down one truck.
- Last Wednesday (Thanksgiving Eve) was also difficult with VT Route 14 closed by AOT for culvert work and 18-wheelers and other big, heavy trucks were causing problems at the Marshfield Road / Back Street detour. Some drivers ignored the detour and drove up Moscow Woods Road. Added to that, Tyler worked long, overtime hours repairing a truck that was down.
- Anne Winchester noted that CVRPC did a study of the Back Street intersection back in 2004 and offered the Town three (3) reparative options, each more expensive than the other. The Town opted to do nothing. Teegan knows where that file is in the Town Office and she will pass it on to Kari tomorrow.
- The Town Garage has ongoing, consistent equipment challenges.
- Kari Bradley has taken payroll and direct deposit training. He hopes to do AP training with Sandra Ferver this week.
- FEMA work is at a new stage. It is now time to download the flood recovery work done on every road segment into the FEMA portal. Toby Talbot will do the initial major road segments but will need assistance beyond those. Scott and Charlotte Bassage will do some and Teegan has also offered to help.
- Kari and Sandra met last week to start work on the Curtis Pond Dam bond application, which will be discussed later in the meeting during the Curtis Pond Dam update.
- The Selectboard wants to decide whether or not to purchase the boom mower Toby Talbot said at the last meeting may still be available. Once Toby joined this meeting via Zoom and reported the boom mower is still available, the pros and cons of an outright purchase (vs. renting equipment) was discussed. In a straw poll, it was determined that the Selectboard favors an outright purchase. Toby will put this potential purchase into action, and will hopefully have everything in line for the Selectboard to make a final decision and vote at its next meeting.

Curtis Pond Dam Renovation Project - Jamie Moorby reported that she does not have much information to share about a new, lower-cost design, but she and the D&K engineers remain optimistic they will come up with a good design that will bring the cost under \$1M. They are, in fact, optimistic enough that they have instructed Sandra to begin work on the Municipal Bond Bank application, which is due December 18, 2023. The Selectboard reviewed six different Illustrative Debt Service Schedule options presented by the Vermont Municipal Bond Bank for various loan terms. Sandra Ferver and Kari Bradley recommended the 20-year bond with no first-year deferral.

Jamie Moorby made a **motion** to authorize the Town Treasurer, Sandra Ferver, to proceed with the bond bank application for \$450,000 as approved by the voters at Town Meeting for a term of 20 years with no first year deferment using the recommended terms. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0. The distribution from the Municipal Bond Bank comes in February; you don't have to accept the distribution at that time, Sandra Ferver stated.

The Curtis Pond Association has been working diligently to fund-raise for the Curtis Pond Dam renovation project. Jamie Moorby reported this will be the first cash transfer to the town raised by the CPA for the Curtis Pond Dam project. Ultimately everything raised will go to this established reserve fund. Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to accept donations of \$40,000 from Curtis Pond Association and \$140,000 from the Maple Corner Community Center to the town's Curtis Pond Dam Reserve Fund to be used only for the purpose for which it was established. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0.

Jamie Moorby spoke about needing a letter of support for a grant from VOREC (Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaboration) that Marge Sweeney is working on for the dam project. Anne Winchester will put this item on the next agenda.

Town Budget Development for FY 2025 - Anne Winchester requested that Town Administrator, Kari Bradley, lead the budget discussion. Over the past several weeks, the Selectboard heard from both local Fire Departments/Ambulance Service and town committees and commissions to develop the proposed budget for the next fiscal year beginning July 1, 2024. Kari reported the first draft of this budget represents a 13% increase over the current budget. The Selectboard agreed this was more than the taxpayers could shoulder. Kari spoke about the key drivers, including increases in wages and benefit expenses, some of which are established in the Highway Department's union contract. Kari asked the Selectboard to consider a target budget increase. Jordan Keyes spoke about "right-sizing" the budget, noting that over the last couple of years the budget has been underfunded. "We have an obligation to pay for the things that run the town," Jordan said. Jordan stressed that an unrealistic, underfunded budget is financially irresponsible, and that with proper education and communication with community members to help soften the blow, now is the time to present an accurate budget that does reflect the true cost of doing business. Jamie Moorby said, "The vast majority is investing in our people."

Wages & Benefits - Kari Bradley believes some savings can be found in town office wages and benefits but needs a little more time to think that through. Kari will be working on a new "office staffing model" to improve efficiency, workflow and obtain cost savings. Kari will bring it to the Selectboard for their next meeting. Jordan Keyes would like to have a "professional services" budget line item that would include bookkeeping services, high level financial training and grant administration.

Highway Department - The town has four full time road crew members plus adding a Road Foreman to serve a supervisory role with personnel management, will become five full time positions. Oversight duties of the Road Foreman was discussed as well as being able to operate trucks and equipment, too.

Anne Winchester inquired if the used Massey Ferguson boom mower was still available. Per Toby Talbot it is and could be paid for by a 5-year lease of \$26,000.00 per year. Toby explained how the payments would be paid by not coming out of this current year's budget. Sandra Ferver wondered if you can lease used equipment or only new. Anne Toolan noted it's a quality machine that holds up well and will save time and money by not renting a boom mower every year. Anne Winchester said the clear sense is to move forward with this purchase and asked Toby Talbot to call the dealer tomorrow.

Donny Mucherino spoke about saving money by putting winter sand out to bid. Toby said it could be put out to bid but must be hauled by 10-wheelers and not trailer dumps to be able to get to our sand pile location. Sandra Ferver can provide all the invoices paid by that one line item (winter sand). Toby can figure out what we purchased last year and through that formulate a bid request for next year's sand.

Jordan Keyes stated the Selectboard may have the ability to put less in the Technology Reserve Fund next year. This reserve fund is meant to cover the cost of replacing computer equipment and the town's server in the Town Office.

Sandra Ferver spoke about the electronic town map system that the Listers would like to purchase at the initial cost of \$6,500. Sandra said this can come out of the Reappraisal line item in the current fiscal year budget and the \$3,000 annual maintenance fee will need to be budgeted every year going forward. (*See 10/23/23 Minutes for details.*)

Professional Assessor – Listers wages are up next year since they will be participating in the reappraisal work. Barbara Butler mentioned that Wilson Hughes is up for re-election in March 2024 and he is not running for another term and John McCullough's term ends in March 2025. As noted in the Minutes from 10/9/23, Jan Ohlsson stated a professional assessor will be needed. The draft budget includes \$6000 for the final quarter of FY2025.

Anne Winchester noted the Selectboard will continue this budget discussion at the next meeting.

IT Update - Jordan Keyes spoke of the need to schedule a training, work session for shared documents and records retention. Teegan will ask rbTech for a scope of work and cost for TEAMs roll out for the Selectboard and office staff.

Town Invoices and Sign Orders – The Selectboard reviewed the town invoices presented for payment during the meeting and signed the orders authorizing payment. Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to approve the board orders. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0.

Status of Shedd v. Calais: Jordan Keyes reported the need to go into Executive Session to discuss this ongoing litigation. Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to go into Executive Session at 8:55 pm in accordance with 1 VSA Section 313 (a)1 (E) pending or probable civil litigation to which the public body is a party and invited Kari Bradley to join them. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0.

Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to resume Regular Session at 9:15 pm. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0. There was nothing to publicly report.

Anne Winchester declared the meeting adjourned at 9:16 pm.

Rose Pelchuck
Interim Recording Secretary