



# TOWN OF CALAIS

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## SELECTBOARD MEETING Monday, September 25, 2023

### MINUTES APPROVED October 9, 2023

**Attending:** Anne Winchester (via Zoom), Jamie Moorby, Gabrielle Malina, Anne Toolan, Jordan Keyes, Barbara Butler, John Stafford, Marianne Miller, Scott Bassage, Dana Huoppi, Andy Seaman, Charlotte Hanna, Nick Emlen and Rose Pelchuck.

The meeting was called to Order at 6:01 pm by Gabrielle Malina, Selectboard Vice Chair.

#### Changes to the Agenda and Administrative Items:

- Approval of September 11, 2023 Meeting Minutes – Anne Toolan added new text under the Highway Department & Roads section. Anne Winchester made a **motion** to approve the Minutes as amended. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0.
- Sign Board Orders – The Selectboard reviewed the town invoices presented for payment during the meeting and signed the orders authorizing payment.
- Grand List Changes & Sign PVR Certificate – The Selectboard reviewed an Errors and Omissions form submitted by the Listers to amend one or more 2023 tax bills. Without a Lister present to explain, this was tabled until the next SB meeting to be held on October 9.

#### Public Comment

- Scott Bassage expressed sincere gratitude for the town road crew and town office staff as they have done an amazing job this year. Volunteerism is alive and well in Calais! Memorial Hall is incredible, The East Calais General Store is ready to be open soon, the Trails Committee is doing a great job. Scott noted how proud he is to be a citizen of Calais.
- John Stafford inquired if he and other residents of Route 14 can get a property tax reduction due to truck traffic on Route 14, most notably the garbage trucks that start going through at 3:00 am. Gabrielle Malina thanked John for bringing this up. Jamie Moorby said the first step is to see if Hardwick does this and possibly get a copy of their policy. The Selectboard will start exploring this interesting issue.
- Scott Bassage pointed out the newly installed high speed internet service from CVFiber is up and running. Scott gave the mps speeds.

#### Purchase of Road Equipment

Dana Huoppi came before the Selectboard to report on the status of the Highway Department Equipment and planning for replacement of some equipment. Of note is the 2016 truck that was scheduled to be replaced in 2021, and our 2017 truck was scheduled to be replaced in 2023. The John Deere grader was scheduled to be replaced two or three years ago. All are now past warranty and the 2016 truck is in need of \$7,000 worth of repairs. It takes a year or more to receive a truck after it is ordered. Dana provided a fleet update as follows:

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- The roadside Tiger Mower is not in service, needs repair or replacement
- New 2023 Western Star truck is using 2 qts of oil a day and needs to go back to dealer
- 2019 Western Star truck is fine and in service
- 2017 Western Star truck is at R.R. Charlebois in Milton for three months waiting for clutch and engine parts
- 2014 Western Star is at Buzzi in Barre for DEF pump low pressure and rear axle mount
- 2019 International CV is at HP Fairfield in New Hampshire to get an estimate on repairs needed to prepare for winter use
- 2016 Ford pickup is at McGee Ford in Montpelier with a repair bill quote of \$6,944 not including the cracked windshield and winter tires. The trade in value is \$7,000 towards a new pick up.
- Wood chipper
- 1997 John Deere Grader needs to be replaced, cost estimate \$350,000
- 1997 Caterpillar Grader
- 2010 Caterpillar Pay-loader
- 2014 Volvo Excavator
- Hydro-seeder and Trailer – the trailer needs inspection

Dana said Toby Talbot was hoping to replace the 2014 Western Star dump truck and keep the 2017 as a spare. He spoke about replacing the 2019 six-wheeler truck (IH) with another six-wheeler instead of a F-600 Ford; an all-wheel drive vehicle. Anne Toolan reported that Keith Cubbon from CVRPC can describe the programs available to municipalities and pots of money for such purchases. The town may qualify for a 30% savings. The 2019 six-wheeler IH truck used to plow and salt on the County Road. Jordan Keyes said it makes the most sense to replace the six-wheeler and pursue it since it once had prior approval. Anne Winchester stated that for a couple of years we'll have to put more money into replacing capital equipment.

Jordan Keyes made a **motion** to approve the acquisition of a new F-250 diesel pick-up truck for up to no more than \$65,000.00 and to table all other truck acquisition until the Road Crew has an opportunity to meet with CVRPC to discuss additional funding sources and for potentially the outfitting of a new 10-wheeler dump truck. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0.

Anne Winchester said the Selectboard will discuss in November putting the new road grader on the Warning for next year to replace the John Deere.

### Curb Cut Applications

- Andy Seaman and Sophia Emigh requested a curb cut at 1419 Worcester Road. It was reviewed by Anne Toolan and Road Crew members. Anne Winchester made a **motion** to approve the permit for construction as detailed in the curb cut plan from Chase & Chase Surveyors & Septic Designers, Inc. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0.
- Brian Stern requested a curb cut at 520 Collar Hill Road to improve access to their buildings and will install a culvert to minimize erosion and assist drainage. The Road Crew did a site visit and they see no problem with this proposed curb cut. Anne Winchester made a **motion** to approve the curb cut with no conditions from the town. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0.

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### **FY'25 Budget Discussion**

Town Treasurer, Sandra Ferver, presented the Selectboard with a first draft of a FY'25 budget. After the various committees and commissions review their needs and present them to the Selectboard, the Selectboard will evaluate the figures to decide what to put into next year's budget. Sandra reported that the following areas are going up in cost:

- Cost of living increases were discussed; the Selectboard will decide which number to use (CPI for Northeast for example).
- Health insurance rates are going up 13%
- VMERS retirement contribution is going up
- The town is seeing an increase in communication costs with CVFiber; we need to maintain certain hard lines in order to maintain the security system
- Increases in wages and benefits with the addition of positions that are supported by the town
- Town Hall reserve fund is not enough
- Town Garage reserve fund is not enough for that building.

Anne Winchester reported she has made a list of all town employees, including those paid with a stipend. She then developed a flow chart that listed responsibilities to come up with wage data to include in the budget. Jordan Keyes wondered if we should put something in the budget for funding grant oversight in a limited capacity (new grants or for consultation in a period of transition perhaps \$6,000). Sandra said we don't have a lot of non-highway grants that need oversight. Anne Winchester is hoping that Toby Talbot will stay on for another year as Highway Grants Administrator. Anne doesn't see us needing funds such as this for next year.

The budget is a guide; the bottom line, final number is the goal but individual line items can go over or under. Toby Talbot will be working on the highway department budget. Gabrielle Malina asked about reductions that can be made. Sandra responded in the reserve fund, money to commissions but should be based on meaningful data.

The Selectboard reviewed the general government budget and discussed items line by line. Sandra will make any changes to the draft budget and redistribute it to the Selectboard going forward.

### **Town Officer "Meet and Greet"**

The Selectboard agreed to participate in the first day of the Calais Fall Foliage Festival, Friday, October 6, 4:00-5:30 pm at the Town Hall by hosting a "Meet and Greet". The format will be a mix and mingle of tables and chairs scattered around the room. Light refreshments will be available. Barbara Butler suggested having a list of vacant town positions and copies of the town report. The Selectboard reviewed the Draft Warning for this event; edits made and approved to post.

### Selectboard Reports

- **Hiring of Personnel** – Anne Winchester reported on the recruitment of a new Treasurer. The Hiring Committee has recommended one candidate to the SB for interview and consideration. That person will be interviewed on October 9, 2023 in Executive Session.
  - Marianne Miller reported the Town Administrator position has four applicants to date.
  - Anne Winchester made a **motion** to officially appoint the Hiring Committee for the Town Administrator position as follows: Donna Fitch, Judy Robert, Marianne Miller, Cornelia Carey and Toby Talbot. She **moved** the Hiring Committee for the Road Foreman position as follows: Dana Huoppi, Toby Talbot and Marianne Miller. The motion for both was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0.
  - Marianne Miller stated there is a specific, uniform process the Hiring Committee uses in screening applicants. Anne Toolan stated she would like to observe the Hiring Committee process start to finish. The Selectboard agreed that Anne Toolan (as well as any community member, per Open Meeting Law) can attend Hiring Committee meetings and may or may not be invited to any Executive Session. Jordan Keyes would like to have a debriefing with the Hiring Committee in a Selectboard Executive Session to add transparency about the candidate selection process.
- FEMA Report - Scott Bassage reported the FEMA process is moving along fine. FEMA reviewed the town's damage inventory for all that we are asking reimbursement for. The list needs to have all the incidents completed by October 26, 2023. Toby Talbot is working very hard on the list of about 60 infrastructure, flood-damage incidents.
- Highway Department & Roads - Anne Toolan reported new guardrails for Moscow Woods Road have been ordered. Contracts have been sent to all contractors that worked for the town doing flood work to sign and return. The mailing included return envelopes. This is a FEMA requirement that the town have these signed contracts on file.
- Curtis Pond Dam Project Bid Opening - Jamie Moorby noted the bid opening is tomorrow and the town has not received any bids yet. She remains optimistic bids will arrive before 2pm tomorrow.
- IT Needs - Our new Town Administrator will need office space and office equipment. Jordan Keyes will talk to the Town Clerk, Teegan, on Thursday about getting a laptop.
- Collective Bargaining Team - Anne Winchester will draft an Addendum to the Union Contract regarding the hiring of a new Road Foreman.
- Status of Shedd v. Calais - Jordan Keyes said status quo.
- Other - Gabrielle Malina will provide Sandra Ferver with SB requests for changes to the draft budget from tonight's meeting.
- Jordan Keyes will reach out to the Town of Hardwick about property tax reductions on Route 14.
- Anne Winchester reviewed the list of which budgets will be reviewed at the next meeting.

Gabrielle Malina declared the meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm.

Rose Pelchuck  
Interim Recording Secretary