

Calais Selectboard Meeting Minutes
Monday, August 8, 2016

Approved 8-22-16

Present: Selectboard Members Denise Wheeler, John Brabant, Rose Pelchuck, Toby Talbot.

Others Present: Janice Ohlsson and John McCullough, Listers and Planning Commission; Donna Fitch, Town Clerk; Alfred Larrabee, Road Commissioner; Paul Rose, Planning Commission; Dan Currier, Central VT Regional Planning; David Morse.

Call to order: Denise Wheeler called the meeting to order at 7:05pm.

Administrative work and changes or additions to the agenda:

- “Robinson Cemetery Rd” on the agenda should read “Robinson Hill Rd.”
- Site visit at McCullough gravel pit in East Calais is scheduled for Thursday August 18. Time to be determined.
- Special Selectboard meeting on conservation easement on Armstrong Farm on Monday, August 15, 7:00 pm at the Town Office.

Renewal of website domain name registration: Rose Pelchuck brought this to the attention of the board; she gave the registration renewal paperwork to Donna Fitch. Rose will be reimbursed the annual cost.

Board of Abatement (BOA) Hearing 8/22/16: The BOA will meet at 6pm on August 22 at the Town Hall (before the Selectboard meeting) to hear several abatement requests. Donna will create an agenda and warn the meeting.

Ratify ROW permit for Robinson Road beef farm water line: Toby Talbot moved to approve the ROW permit as permitted and discussed at the previous Selectboard meeting in July. Seconded by John Brabant, this motion carried unanimously.

Appointment to CVSWMD: Denise moved to appoint John Brabant to the Central VT Solid Waste Management District’s Project Advisory Committee. Seconded by Toby, this motion carried unanimously. The term of this appointment is for the duration of the project.

Review and Approve Minutes:

- July 19, 2016: John Brabant moved to approve the minutes. Seconded by Rose Pelchuck. A few edits were suggested. John’s motion carried unanimously with noted edits.
- July 22, 2016: John moved to approve the minutes of the joint meeting between Selectboard and Conservation Committee. Seconded by Rose, this motion carried unanimously.
- July 25, 2016: John moved to approve the minutes of July 25, 2016. Seconded by Toby Talbot, this motion carried unanimously.

Road Commissioner update: Alfred Larrabee briefly updated the Board about current projects. Denise asked whether the road crew were satisfied with their raises. Alfred said they were after some confusion about the amount that would be reflected in their paychecks. The confusion has been cleared up.

Operations Manager update

- **Town Garage Addition:** Toby provided a brief update. Board members support Toby's plan to put out to bid the structural components of the project and have Singleton Concrete do the foundation. Denise asked John McCullough to provide an invoice for the architectural work he has done on the addition.
- **Grants (TH 33 Jack Hill Rd. & TH 27 Apple Hill Rd.):** Toby moved to accept the grants to begin the work on Apple Hill and Jack Hill Roads. Seconded by John, this motion carried unanimously.
- **Dave Antone (Municipal Publics Works Consulting, LLC) work agreement and site visit on Tuesday, 8/9/16:** Toby moved to approve the work agreement for highway training on road design and drainage at a cost of \$500. Seconded by John, this motion carried unanimously.

David and Morse request to meet with Selectboard regarding 2016 tax bill: Mr. Morse shared his property appraisal from April 2016 (\$39,000) as compared to his tax bill which reflected a higher assessment (\$74,900). He had asked for clarification at the Town Office. Denise explained the process of grieving a reappraisal notice. Mr. Morse had not received the reappraisal notice to inform him of the higher amount. Mr. Morse stated he would not have purchased the property if he knew the appraisal would be so high. He says he will have to sell the property, and he does not believe he will get the price that it is assessed for. Denise asked the listers to explain. Jan Ohlsson explained the assessment procedure and the assessment which is in accordance with the Calais land schedule. The updated appraisal corrects an error from last year; the lot was not valued as a separate lot after Mr. Morse purchased it. She agreed that it was an error that he had not received a reappraisal notice. Jan suggested, in order to follow the statutory grievance process, the listers send him an up-to-date appraisal notice. He can then appeal to the listers and make the argument that the land is not worth its stated value. If he disagrees with the listers, the next step is to go before the Board of Civil Authority. Jan explained the process of determining the land's value. Denise said the other option is to appeal to the Board of Abatement and ask that the assessment be lowered to the amount stated on the previous appraisal. Mr. Morse stated his desire to have the tax bill reduced to reflect what he had been expecting to pay based on the previous assessment; given this new information, he intends to sell the property before next year's tax bills. Mr. Morse was presented with the form to fill out to request an abatement. An abatement hearing is already scheduled for August 22 and his request could be added to the agenda for that hearing. The first tax payment on the property will continue to be due on August 22 with the additional two-week grace period. Jan suggested he ask on the abatement request form for a grace period for payment. Mr. Morse left the meeting at 7:48 p.m.

Preliminary discussion with CVRPC regarding creation of a Stormwater Masterplan (Dan Currier, CVRPC): Dan Currier suggested that Calais consider working with East Montpelier and Woodbury to create a Stormwater Masterplan. Grants are available. He suggested creating a team to include a paid consultant. Denise asked whether East Montpelier and Woodbury have expressed an interest in working with Calais on this plan. Paul Rose contacted the towns, but has not heard back from them yet. Paul stated that when looking at shoreland and stormwater management, the focus is on water and sediment as opposed to habitat. He believes that if the Conservation Commission were present at the master planning meetings they could contribute to a discussion about the interplay between stormwater, shoreland and plant/animal habitat. Two grants are appropriate for this endeavor:

- Eco System Restoration Grant (also called "Clean Water Fund") through Agency of Natural Resources. The next round will be announced in September 2016. (No requirement for town's share; however bonus points are appointed for the town taking a share.)
- Road Erosion Planning Grant (also called "Better Roads") through Agency of Transportation. Deadline April 15, 2017. Requires 20% match from the town, either in cash or "in kind."

Dan suggests contacting East Montpelier and Woodbury as well as applying for the grants. John asked whether Dan could be a point person to help bring together representatives from the three towns (East Montpelier, Calais and Woodbury). Dan stated that he would.

Denise moved to support the creation of a Stormwater Masterplan in collaboration with East Montpelier and Woodbury; CVRPC will be the point of contact for filling out grant paperwork and administering grants. This effort will include Calais Planning Commission, Calais Selectboard, Conservation Commission, the Road Commissioner, and the Roads Committee. Seconded by John Brabant, this motion carried unanimously.

Dan stated that at some point he will ask for a letter of support from the Selectboard. Paul will continue to reach out to the other towns and will keep the Board apprised of any communications toward collaboration around this effort.

Review Town Treasurer job duties and responsibilities: Donna Fitch intends to resign as Treasurer as soon as the Selectboard appoints a replacement. This is a voted position; the Selectboard can hire a bookkeeper, but cannot appoint a treasurer until the actual date the current treasurer resigns. The town voters will elect a candidate to the position at town meeting 2017; the appointed candidate can run for the office then. Donna has written a job description and sent it to the Selectboard. She will draft an advertisement for the position vacancy and share with the Board.

Review FY 2016 end of fiscal year budget v. actual: Donna shared that at the year's end, the town is \$70K over budget, not including legal fees. Discussion followed about where these overages occurred, including technology related expenses. Denise reminded the Board that a budget is a best guess estimate for the year.

The Board discussed property tax bills briefly, including the issue of a property tax sale. The Board discussed the steps in a property tax sale, and the opportunity for a year after the sale for property owners to reclaim the property.

The Board discussed a logistical solution for the Cemetery Commission Orders – that the Commission appoint one representative to sign off on bills.

Reports/Updates:

- CVSWMD has hired a new General Manager: Bruce Westcott who will schedule a “meet and greet” with the Selectboard for a future date.
- Draft reserve fund policy: Scott will follow up on this.
- Cemetery Commission: Some discussion followed about cemetery workers now being treated as employees for the purpose of workers comp and labor laws. Cemetery subcontractors will be sent the documents required by the town's insurance company. Denise will review the Personnel Policy. John suggested the Cemetery Commission have a “point person” designated to address questions or issues that arise in light of new employees.
- Some discussion followed around delinquent tax collection precipitated by the fact that small delinquent amounts (under \$10) will be on the agenda for the Board of Abatement hearing later this month. Donna explained the NEMRC Tax Administration program provides the ability to “abate small amounts due” or “eliminate small credits” and that at a VLCT workshop she attended, the practice was discussed. However it is the delinquent tax collector's prerogative to use this function. The Board would like to invite the delinquent collector to attend a meeting to discuss. Could a policy be put in place that credits and debits under a certain amount will be automatically abated? Donna explained that for current taxes, she uses an amount of \$5.

- Updates to zoning: Gary Root, Planning Commission, has suggested that the shoreland section in the proposed changes to the zoning regulations be removed so that other changes contained in the document can be ready to be voted on at March 2017 town meeting. The Board agreed this would be prudent. Discussion would continue on the shoreland section.
- There was discussion about whether there is money in the budget for hiring note takers for Conservation Commission and possibly Planning Commission as it is difficult to participate and take minutes at the same time.
- In an effort to clear up some long-standing issues, Denise initiated a conversation about GAR Road and Curtis Pond Dam.
 - Regarding the dam, John suggested inviting DuBois and King to a Selectboard meeting to discuss the plan they engineered. The Board agreed the responsibility for dam issues, which is a problem throughout the state, currently lies with the state. It was decided to hold a meeting to share information to date with the public to have the discussing on record and to decide the next steps. It will be scheduled during the month of October and Dubois and King will be invited.
 - Regarding GAR Road, Toby stated he has not been able to find any evidence that the road belongs to the town. Discussion followed about parking and access to the war memorial. John suggested the Selectboard discuss this with the interested parties. Toby will follow up with Peg Bowen who owns land on the road and is a member of Stow Women's Relief, the organization that maintains Memorial Hall.

Other Business: Rose asked whether the air quality issue on Max Gray Road had been resolved. Denise stated that it had; it was chicken manure.

Executive Session: John Brabant made a motion to go into Executive Session at 9:24 pm in accordance with 1 V.S.A. subsection 313 (a) (3) for the purpose of discussing personnel matters. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried 5-0. The regular session resumed at 9:27 pm. Denise Wheeler stated there was nothing to publicly report.

The meeting adjourned by consensus at 9:28.

Respectfully submitted,
 Lisa Stoudt, Board Recording Secretary