

Town of Calais, Vermont

CHARTERED 1781

Calais Selectboard Meeting
Monday, September 11, 2017 at 7pm
at the Calais Town Hall
Approved Minutes

Approved 9-25-17

Selectboard Present: Denise Wheeler, John Brabant, Sharon Winn Fannon, Rose Pelchuck

Others Present: Alfred Larrabee, Road Commissioner; Selectboard Administrator Jon Williams, Jerome Lipani of ORCA, Scott Bassage, Andrea Braasch, Nedene Martin, Jan Ohlsson, John McCullough

Call to Order: Denise Wheeler called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

Public Comment: John Brabant brought a tire to show evidence of angular stone chips on the roads causing flat tires. He asked that the board address this issue at some point. Rose Pelchuck suggested that the board have an informational presentation on the sieve analysis, as in the past. Alfred Larrabee explained some of the factors that he thought contributed to the road gravel being so heavily mixed with larger, sharper stones in the road. Sharon Winn Fannon stated that she has been hearing comments about the stone on the roads too.

Scott Bassage shared a thorough update about the Town Hall. He reviewed recent history around the proposed restorations: in 2010, the selectboard asked the Historic Preservation Commission to think about restoring the Town Hall. In 2011, a company was hired to do a full assessment regarding restoration; this resulted in an approximately 33 page document which has been the basis of the project planning. In 2013, a grant was sought to repair the windows upstairs. In 2014, a grant was sought to assess the community's tenor about this proposed project. He reported that at first it was thought that the building sat in a floodplain; more recently it has been assessed that the building is not in a floodplain. He noted the culvert replacement/ upgrade suggestion, which would affect floodplain status. He reviewed the grant which had been used to create parameters around inviting RFPs. He stated that the Historic Preservation Commission has considered the three RFPs to date that range from in the 40 thousands or the 60 thousands (dollars.) He

shared the “hyper-local” approach that he has proposed. He has been contacting some local contractors to informally pursue this. He spoke about an idea to have local contractors replace the building foundation. He explained the logistics involved in lifting the building several inches, onto a new foundation. Mr. Bassage stated that having the ability to have year-round meetings at the Town Hall would improve the space limitations at the Town Office. He shared that he had asked John McCullough to do some of the work involved in foundation replacement. Mr. Bassage suggested that some work would need to be done to revise the \$20K grant. He shared that the hopes from the Historic Preservation Commission are that by selectboard budget development time in January 2018, an accurate budget amount will have been developed for this proposed project.

John Brabant strongly encouraged looking at the Woodbury Church, to see the historic restoration of the building’s foundation.

Scott Bassage stated that the building maintenance fund could probably cover the preparation for RFPs for foundation work as discussed, if needed.

Denise Wheeler asked whether someone from the Historic Preservation Commission will be able to update the Selectboard at the next meeting.

Review of Agenda/Correspondence: Jonathan Williams shared some documents with the Selectboard. He noted that “review and possible selection of bids for bridge” should be included on tonight’s agenda.

Selectboard Vacancy: Denise Wheeler stated that she hopes that the selectboard is able to appoint a selectboard member at the September 25, 2017 meeting. This appointment will be until Town Meeting Day in March 2018. The seat expires in 2019; so the vote in March would be for the one remaining year.

Recurring Items, Presentations, Reports:

a) Review, discussion, and approval of minutes: 8/28, 9/05:

August 28, 2017 draft minutes: Some discussion followed around the requirement for a sign to be 911-compliant- how many houses create this requirement? Three houses/ three residences/ families? The board will research this requirement and clarify. The board agreed to approve these minutes at the next board meeting.

September 5, 2017 draft minutes: Rose Pelchuck moved to approve the minutes of September 5, 2017, as presented. Seconded by Sharon Winn Fannon, this motion carried unanimously.

b) Warrants for Payment: These were circulated and signed by board members. Sharon Winn Fannon asked for clarification about one payment regarding Town Hall, i.e whether the selectboard agreed to cover expenses in modifying the Town Hall for use by the Blue Barn Players. Jonathan Williams will follow up and email selectboard members with more information.

c) Curtis Pond Homeowners Association: this item was not addressed at tonight's meeting.

Business Items for Possible Vote:

a) Transportation Items:

i. Doug Lilley Road Name Approval: this was discussed earlier (August 28 minutes discussion). The board will address this at a later date, after clarification is sought.

ii. East Calais Falls Erosion Issue: Sharon said Charlotte Hannah Bassage contacted her and requested that Sharon join Charlotte to look at an erosion issue that threatens the East Calais Falls and may be related to culvert drainage from Moscow Woods Road. Sharon, Charlotte, and Rob Richert did a site visit on Tuesday, August 29. Sharon will ask Rob to join the selectboard on September 25 to share observations from the site visit.

iii. Review and approve bids for bridge: Alfred Larrabee shared that he had solicited bids to the best of his ability; two were received. Jonathan Williams asked whether the town advertised this RFP process. Mr. Larrabee stated that in this case he made phone calls to request proposals; an advertisement was not placed. Jonathan Williams suggested uploading the documents related to bid proposals onto the board website for the ease of prospective bidders.

Alfred Larrabee suggested that the Board accept the lowest bid of the two: Hutch Concrete.

Rose Pelchuck moved to award the bid to Hutch Concrete in the amount of \$35,400. Seconded by John Brabant, this motion carried unanimously.

Some discussion followed about some turnover with the road crew. Calais is currently advertising for a road crew position. The board discussed with Alfred Larrabee whether the road crew member who is moving to Montpelier's road crew is interested in having an "exit interview" with the board. Mr. Larrabee stated that he did not think this individual is interested in this. Rose Pelchuck suggested that Mr. Larrabee could have an informal conversation with this person in lieu of an "exit interview," to ask for feedback.

b) Reports from Various Municipal Officials

i. Discussion with Delinquent Tax Collector: Nedene Martin shared some specific cases regarding delinquent property taxes. She shared that, for eight properties in question tonight, she has sent notices more frequently than quarterly. They have been delinquent since December 2016. John Brabant asked some questions of clarification around the properties. Nedene Martin shared that she feels that property taxes in Calais are crushing for some. Jan Ohlsson asked whether the tax notifications are sent to property owners via certified mail. Ms. Martin replied that she does not send notifications via certified mail, until the case moves to a tax sale. John Brabant asked, generally, are the people that are unable to pay property taxes receiving income sensitivity adjustments? Ms. Martin stated that she does not know income sensitivity details. The board agreed that this would be a good topic to discuss with Janet Ancel, our local state representative.

John Brabant made a motion to forward for tax sale the eight properties, as presented by Delinquent Tax Collector tonight, and to hire Gloria Rice, Esq., to assist. Seconded by Denise Wheeler. Discussion: Sharon Winn Fannon clarified that notice to the property owner of a tax sale is part of the process; it does not mean a person is going to lose his/ her property at this point. John Brabant suggested that one last notice via certified mail be sent to explain the process and to explain the additional fees that the next step will provoke. Nedene Martin expressed her opinion that when people owe taxes and do not contact the Town Office, ultimately the onus of paying the additional fees should fall to them. Sharon Winn Fannon reiterated that she believes sending one last certified letter is worth the effort (and expense of certified mail) on the part of the town. Nedene Martin shared the context of the letters that she had sent most recently, albeit not certified mail. The board agreed to a timeline of requiring ten days from the date of the certified letter. Denise Wheeler thanked Nedene Martin for the work she has done as Delinquent Tax Collector.

John Brabant moved to amend the motion to reflect giving ten days notice from the date of the letter, sent certified mail, return receipt requested, to give one last notice to the eight property owners as discussed earlier. Seconded by Rose Pelchuck. This amended motion carried unanimously.

Nedene Martin suggested considering a delinquent tax collector that is able to work during regular office hours, at the Town Office. John Brabant asked, on average, how many hours per week this job entails. She stated that it varies depending on the time of year. Denise Wheeler stated that she believes the selectboard should at some point consider the Delinquent Tax Collector being a budgeted position, to work during office hours. Ms. Martin stated that she has been planning to continue in this capacity until Town Meeting 2018. Denise Wheeler stated that she would like an opportunity before then to seek feedback from Ms. Martin, for planning the future of this position.

ii. Discussion with Listers: Jan Ohlsson and John McCullough shared their reactions to the document: *What a Lister Does*, a document published by the Vermont Department of Taxes. John McCullough shared that the learning curve is very steep for the position of lister. Some discussion followed around the need to fill the vacant lister position, and create a plan to train new listers, as well as planning for John McCullough's and Jan Ohlsson's end of tenure as listers. Jan Ohlsson suggested looking for resources on job descriptions for listers. Jon Williams will look for job descriptions for a lister and for an assessor, and will share with selectboard members for their consideration. These positions will not be listed before the board is able to discuss. The board discussed the complexity of the positions in town offices. Jan Ohlsson shared some classes that are available to listers. John Brabant shared his concern that we are an increasingly aging population and how this affects town involvement/ engagement as well as the tax burden.

c) Act 46 Letter Review: Denise Wheeler shared a letter from Greensboro Selectboard to the Vermont League of Cities and Towns. She asked selectboard members if they are in support of the Calais Selectboard sending such a letter.

John Brabant moved to create this letter from the Calais Selectboard, and have each selectboard member sign. Seconded by Rose Pelchuck, this motion carried unanimously.

d) Letter of Appreciation and Certificate Approval: The board discussed these documents. Sharon Winn Fannon suggested taking time at Town Meeting to acknowledge volunteers in town; she suggested we attempt to tally all of the volunteer hours that go into town business and share this information to the town as a whole.

e) Draft Direct Deposit Memo Review: John Brabant moved to approve the Direct Deposit memo as presented. Seconded by Rose Pelchuck, this motion carried unanimously.

f) Volunteer Appreciation Dinner Scheduling (Wed. October 11) Denise Wheeler suggested inviting Jim Barlow, Esq., to attend this event, and to ask if he will provide an update of the Open Meeting law. Denise Wheeler stated that she would like to research caterers for the event, and to research some sort of "gift of appreciation" such as a reusable shopping bag, etc. Denise Wheeler will send a personal invitation to Janet Ancel.

Review of Assignments/Upcoming Meetings:

Sharon Winn Fannon and Jonathan Williams have met once regarding "internal controls;" they will follow up with Donna Fitch. The Board reviewed other assignments.

Jonathan Williams shared that the 24 hour work week is difficult at the moment, to complete all of the tasks that are asked of him. The board agreed that this will continue to be an ongoing discussion.

Denise Wheeler shared that she will be meeting with Scott Bassage, Toby Talbot, and others, regarding Town Hall maintenance.

Next meeting: September 25.

Next agenda

- Town Hall update
- selectboard vacancy update
- delinquent tax policy
- issues for Janet Ancel (e.g. speed limit issues)

Adjournment: The Board adjourned by consensus at 9:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Stoudt, Selectboard Recording Secretary

<http://www.calaisvermont.gov/>