

BCA Meeting Notes

Monday, November 9, 2021 at 7 pm, Town Hall + Zoom

Present: Denise Wheeler, Rick Kehne, Marc Mihaly, Jeremy Weiss (Clerk of the BCA), Barbara Butler (Assistant Town Clerk), Scott Bassage*, Judy Fitch Robert*, Janet Pocarobba*, Dillon Burns, Tina Bielenberg, Michael Loignon*, John Brabant*

**indicates attendance via Zoom*

1. Call to Order: The meeting was begun at 6:01 pm.
2. Public Comment: None.
3. Review, Additions/Changes to Agenda: None.
4. BCA Chair and Vice-Chair: Denise Wheeler moved, and Jeremy Weiss seconded, to nominate Barbara Butler to serve as BCA Chair from November 2021 – October 2022. Barbara Butler moved to nominate Denise Wheeler as Vice-Chair; Kristina Bielenberg seconded. Both motions were voted and passed unanimously.
5. Approve Minutes: Denise Wheeler moved and Rick Kehne seconded to approve the minutes of the February 1, 2021 BCA meeting. The motion was voted and passed unanimously (Jeremy Weiss abstained as he was not present).
6. Legislative Reapportionment/Redistricting: The BCA public hearing last week, 11/1/2021, was a discussion with State Representative Janet Ancel about the proposed redistricting changes made by the Legislative Apportionment Board (LAB) as part of statutorily defined process. Denise Wheeler explained that last week the group considered suggesting feedback to the LAB that the new district be an entity that includes the full municipalities of Calais and East Montpelier; the numbers that are used to calculate reapportionment work well with that town combination. Bruce Johnson, East Montpelier Town Manager, found this agreeable when Denise spoke with him. The BCA may suggest to the LAB this recommendation.

Members of the BCA chimed in with their opinions. Janet Pocarobba and Scott Bassage lent support while Michael Loignon and Dillon Burns considered Calais-Woodbury-Worcester (as proposed by the LAB) as potentially a better match. Judy Fitch Robert commented that from her perspective as a former town clerk, a fractured town in different districts adds another layer of complexity to elections. Rick Kehne commented in support of keeping towns whole; if a piece of East Montpelier must be included in our district, it makes most sense to put a piece of Adamant (East Montpelier residents) with Calais as they are already connected with the Calais community. Scott Bassage reiterated that Calais has a history of working well with East Montpelier; we share a fire district and school district already. Denise Wheeler noted it might support the two towns' collaboration if they are in one district. Tina Bielenberg noted we should be shrewd in having at least a second-scenario set of requested configurations sent to LAB.

The group discussed and reiterated the two scenarios they would like to provide as feedback to the LAB:

- If the LAB proceeds with the district they planned, suggest a piece of Adamant be included. (Tina suggested that if some people need to be lopped off some of Woodbury, perhaps it could be the folks who live on the far west side of Woodbury, which is more geographically connected with Hardwick region.
- Suggest a Calais-East Montpelier district with all parts of each municipality included and the reasons why

Tina Bielenberg made a motion and Rick Kehne seconded to appoint Denise Wheeler and Jeremy Weiss to serve as the BCA's representatives to the Legislative Apportionment Board for the purpose of communicating the Calais BCA's feedback as discussed. The motion was voted and passed unanimously.

Feedback to the LAB must be submitted by Monday.

7. Voter Status, Purging: Barbara Butler thanked Judy Fitch Robert for joining and providing insight as former town clerk. First considered were voters who were challenged (this means they were sent a challenge letter) prior to November 2018, never responded to their challenge letter, did not vote for two general elections, and are now eligible to be "purged" (removed) from the Calais voter list, with BCA approval. The group reviewed it in detail.

Denise Wheeler made a motion to authorize the batch purge of non-respondent and non-voting voters challenged prior to November 2018; Rick Kehne seconded. The motion was voted and passed unanimously.

8. Voter Status, Challenged: Barbara Butler provided a list of current "Challenged" status voters dated October 2021 and asked the BCA if, after review of each name, they have any questions or information to provide. Some BCA members provided information that Barbara Butler will follow up on after the meeting.
9. PTTR Information: The BCA reviewed a 2020 and 2021 property tax transfer spreadsheet. Barbara Butler explained that the PTT spreadsheet gives some indication that a person should be challenged on the voter checklist, and the group reviewed and made notes.
10. Voter Status, Active: The BCA reviewed the entire current alphabetical active voter list dated October 30, 2021 name-by-name and made notes on any voters in question. Barbara Butler made notes to follow up on every detail. Denise Wheeler made a motion that based on the responses given to the Assistant Town Clerk tonight, the Town Office send noted voters a challenge letter. Dillon Burns seconded. The motion was voted and passed unanimously.

Barbara Butler explained that last summer she worked for a number of weeks to go through the voter checklist in Calais to follow up on a few hundred people whose SSN or DLN has not been verified (one of these numbers is required for initial registration to vote, and is utilized

for voters who want to log on to the Secretary of State's office). Everyone can vote, including if their DLN or SSN has not been verified, and they may receive a ballot.

Barbara Butler explained that the Town Clerk's office may challenge voters on its own if the BCA gives the Town Clerk the authorization to do so. Barbara Butler asked for the preference of the BCA. A biennial review of the BCA would still be statutorily required, but the Town Clerk would be able to send challenge letters (this would allow initiating the process before the BCA meets). The BCA approval would still be required to purge any voter (remove them from the voter checklist).

Denise Wheeler made a motion to give the Town Clerk's office a two-year approval to challenge voters (to mail a challenge letter who they believe have moved out of town, usually due to returned mail). Rick Kehne seconded the motion. Scott Bassage commented his disapproval of challenging voters with challenge letters. The motion was passed with the single dissenting vote of Scott Bassage.

11. 2022 Town Meeting Planning: Barbara Butler explained that the BCA votes to decide where and how we hold Town Meeting. Denise Wheeler pointed out the options are the Town Hall and the school; she expects it will be in-person this year. There has been quite a lot of feedback that people had to stand in the back and walk through the Town Meeting proceedings to get to the ballot box. Parking across the street from the Town Hall is not permissible (as a result of conditional permitting from the DRB) and the permit does allow parking around the back of the Town Hall, but springtime is a challenge; childcare cannot be provided at the Town Hall and road conditions are a concern. Portapotties on site in springtime may be necessary (the capacity of up and downstairs is 130 people). Up to 180 people are permitted with portapotties. The average number attending in recent years at the school has been 200-220 Michael Loignon noted COVID-19 may very well impact Town Meeting planning once again. Scott Bassage noted his hope that the Town Meeting could return to the Town Hall in the future. Barbara Butler contacted the principal of the elementary school who noted the school is still closed to visitors; it will be up to the superintendent and the COVID coordinator; the next response was that this is up to the Vermont AOE. Barbara Butler pointed out this is not an issue unique to Calais; this may require a conditional vote. Craig Line asked for clarification on the earlier part of the discussion.

Scott Bassage asked if the DRB permit did not add conditions for a grandfathered use such as Town Meeting, and Denise Wheeler commented that we can check on this.

Tina moved that the Town Meeting provisionally be held at the Elementary School and in the event that the school tell us that the facility is not available to us, that a BCA meeting be called for early January so we can reconsider the location. Denise Wheeler made a friendly amendment to note the response will be from the AOE, not the school district. Scott Bassage seconded and the motion was voted and passed unanimously.

Dillon Burns suggested the BCA make some virtual option available for people who cannot safely attend due to COVID-19. Barbara Butler emphasized the Town does not want to hold a hybrid meeting this Town Meeting. Katie Lane-Karnas asked the BCA to continue to consider some kind of virtual option for attendance if the highest level of disease transmission, defined

by CDC, continues to be active in the community. Selectboard members considered a streaming (no participation) option as most possible.

The BCA discussed the best way to apply pressure to the AOE to issue a decision on use of a school for town meeting day, especially as the statutorily defined deadlines impact many quickly approaching deadlines such as getting the town report to the printer.

12. Tabulator at 2022 Town Meeting: Denise Wheeler moved and Dillon Burns seconded to approve use of the tabulator at the 2022 town meeting election. The motion was voted and passed unanimously. Barbara Butler commented that at the last two elections, technical glitches were addressed in-person satisfactorily and immediately by the manufacturer (LHS).
13. Adjournment: Denise Wheeler motioned to adjourn at 7:37 pm; the motion was seconded by Marc Mihaly and passed unanimously.

Date: 11/3/2021 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas, Recording Secretary
Approved by the BCA at the __June 27, 2022_____ meeting