

## Selectboard Meeting Minutes

*Monday, December 10, 2018 at 7pm at the Calais Town Offices*

**Present:** Denise Wheeler (Chair), John Brabant (Vice Chair), Rose Pelchuck (Member), Sharon Winn Fannon (Member), Clif Emmons (Member), Katie Lane-Karnas (Recording Secretary), Jerome Lipani (ORCA), Seth B. Gardner (East Montpelier Selectboard), Kim Swasey (East Montpelier Selectboard), Amy Willis (East Montpelier Selectboard), Bruce Johnson (East Montpelier Town Administrator), Jim Barlow (Town Attorney, arriving 8:04 pm)

1. Call to Order: Denise Wheeler called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm. Seth Gardner called the East Montpelier Selectboard meeting to order at 7:05 pm.
2. Public Comment: None.
3. Review, Additions/Changes to Agenda: None.
4. Joint meeting with the East Montpelier Selectboard: The Calais and East Montpelier Boards met to discuss the FY2020 ambulance & emergency services proposed budget request by the East Montpelier/Calais Fire Department. Denise Wheeler stated that last Thursday night the Boards met with the EMFD; the budget as presented at that meeting was reviewed. Insurance, dispatch and equipment repair were identified as significant increases outside of the EMFD control. The cost of heating the building housing the trucks was raised. Discussion included the budget and the ability (or not) to control costs. Seth Gardner commented on the absence of areas where reduction can be made in the proposed budget.

Board members discussed the EMFD current compensation rate of \$18-20 per hour, which does not include benefits. The Boards commented that they have in the past permitted the Department to use their reserve fund; they discussed spreading cost of the ambulance service more equitably (using a formula based on population) across the four towns which utilize it: East Montpelier and Calais (host towns), Marshfield and Plainfield (contract towns). Denise Wheeler pointed out that nearly every group coming in front of the Board is going to get their proposed budget trimmed and reminded the group of factors that are exerting pressure on Calais' property tax rate this year (Act 46 and an increase from the Woodbury Fire Department). Sharon Winn Fannon expressed her concern over bringing a 4% increase to Calais voters and pointed out that presenting a budget that is equitable is easier to defend. The challenge presented by dropping rates of volunteerism and the possible near-future need for salaried fire and ambulance staff was discussed, and the significant salary increase that would result. John Brabant commented on Calais' unique position of funding two fire departments, and the need to consider this decision as part of a bigger picture. The Boards considered the aging population needing ambulance services and the changing landscape for small towns paying for costs.

Many members discussed the method of budget creation and allocating costs between the ambulance and fire departments. They clarified how costs should be allocated across the two departments (ambulance and fire) to bring transparency for the towns utilizing services.

Every month when ambulance revenue comes in, there are certain expenses that are paid, and the balance of the revenue is allocated as follows: 25% to contingency fund and 75% to the capital reserve fund.

The Boards discussed the possibility of using an amount out of the ambulance revenue to offset costs for this year and acknowledged that this would inevitably decrease the amount of funds in the capital reserve fund available for future equipment purchases (fire trucks especially). Discussion continued around establishing a formula to make the cost sharing more equitable and uniform next year. Seth Gardner commented that another comparison tool could be to gain a quote on hiring ambulance services. They discussed the growing percentage of taxpayers moving into retirement and the unsustainability of a 4% increase.

Denise Wheeler commented on the collaborative approach needed for the three entities to create a budget together.

Topics discussed included: the need to have Marshfield and Plainfield's portions be reconsidered because their contracts are up for negotiation; the future likelihood that Plainfield and Marshfield are going to want to see cost increases justified with transparency between ambulance and fire services' costs (currently, the fire side carries the building and administrative costs); the need for a documented long-term plan for the capital reserve fund. Denise Wheeler commented on the enormous amount of effort the Department puts in and the amount of trust the Board has in the Department, and appreciated the challenges they face and the Boards' charge to bring a palatable budget to their voters.

The Boards looked in detail at the proposed budget, and identified Calais' share of cost increases: Fire, \$5,500; Ambulance, \$4,500 (combined 7% increase). A 3% increase would be a total increase of \$3,995.51. They considered the difference between a two and three percent increase.

A consideration discussed was that Marshfield's services utilized may end up bringing in more income than anticipated this year. Equitable sharing of dispatch cost was considered.

The Boards agreed on the value of a supportive environment for having a discussion and partnering with the Department to look at equitable costs going forward, and decided to create a letter to the Department to begin communication on creation of a more equitable formula for working out costs over the four towns. They discussed communicating about a transparent system of documenting delineated costs between fire and ambulance.

East Montpelier Selectboard: Kim Swasey made a motion to authorize the use of \$18,000 of FY2020 ambulance service revenue as a FY2020 EMFD budget income source and to include an appropriation of \$274,220.00 in the FY2020 general Selectboard budget for the provision of

ambulance and emergency services by EMFD. Amy Willis seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Calais Selectboard: Clif Emmons made a motion to authorize the use of \$18,000 of FY2020 ambulance service revenue as a FY2020 EMFD budget income source and to include an appropriation of \$137,110 in the FY2020 general Selectboard budget for the provision of ambulance and emergency services by EMFD. Rose Pelchuck seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Rose Pelchuck made a heartfelt comment from having worked within the EMFD for years that the work being provided by the Department is endless and ever increasing, and the budget is a real challenge. Members discussed their commitment to open and supportive communication with the Department and appreciated Rose's perspective.

Bruce Johnson explained the recent use of the original bond fund for repairing overhead door trim at the fire station.

Kim Swasey made a motion to adjourn the East Montpelier Selectboard Meeting at 8:34 pm; Amy Willis seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Updates/Reports

- a) Road Commissioner and Operations Manager: This item was not needed.
- b) Treasurer: This item was not needed.
- c) Town Clerk: This item was not needed.
- d) Town Hall Renovation Committee: This item was not needed.
- e) Act 46 Update: This item was not needed.

6. Approval of expenditure from Technology Fund: The Chair reported on FY19 funds remaining for technology, which town staff would like to use to have a laptop available for public use. Clif Emmons will be looking into the public research needs that this computer would fulfill. The Board considered the budgeted amount for the Town Clerk's computer replacement in FY20 and noted that the Town Clerk's current computer cannot be utilized as a hand-me-down as it is functioning well now; also, a long term plan is being considered for realizing savings of the current office computers by having them be utilized by other Town departments over the next few years.

John Brabant made a motion to use \$2,100 to set up a computer station for the public in the Town Office, using money out of the technology fund. Rose Pelchuck seconded the motion. Clif Emmons amended the original motion to be \$2,200. The motion was voted on and passed 5-0.

7. Budget/town report items – working session

- a) Budget and Warning: This item was tabled until a subsequent meeting.

8. Computer support discussion: This item was tabled until a subsequent meeting.

9. Chair updates:

- The Town Attorney, Jim Barlow Esq., informed the Selectboard the auditor and assistant town clerk are incompatible positions according to Vermont State Law. Therefore, Barbara Butler cannot serve as town auditor.
  - Town Treasurer will be in attendance next meeting to do budget work.
  - Reminder: the Board has scheduled a 12/27 special meeting.

10. Review and approve minutes, warrants

- a) The Board reviewed the invoices and orders were processed for payment.
- b) Approval of the minutes was tabled until a subsequent meeting.

11. Executive Session for Personnel Matters: Rose Pelchuck made a motion to go into Executive Session at 8:45 pm per 1 V.S.A. subsection 313 (a) (3), personnel matters, and invited the Town Attorney Jim Barlow to join them. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried. The Board left Executive Session at 9:25 pm and resumed its regular meeting to take up one last item on the agenda, Act 46. The Board asked Town Attorney Jim Barlow, Esq. to perform a title search of the Calais Elementary School.

12. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 9:28 pm.

Date: 12/12/2018 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas, Recording Secretary  
*Approved by the Selectboard at the 12/17/2018 meeting*

*Click on the link below to view documents associated with this agenda:*  
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