

Town of Calais, Vermont

CHARTERED 1781

Selectboard Meeting

7 pm, September 24, 2018 Town Office

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Present: Selectboard members: Chair Denise Wheeler, Vice Chair John Brabant, Clif Emmons, Rose Pelchuck; Treasurer Sandra Ferver, Road Commissioner Alfred Larrabee, Fred Duplessis of Sullivan and Powers accounting firm, Calais Trustee of Public Funds Rodney Buck, Jerome Lipani from ORCA, Town Clerk Judy Robert (and minute recorder)

Absent: Selectboard member Sharon Fannon

1. Call to Order: by Chair Denise Wheeler 7 p.m.
2. Public Comment: None.
3. Additions/Changes to Agenda: None.
4. Updates/Reports (as needed or requested) None.
5. Decide on truck lease options: The Selectboard discussed options for leasing a truck, comparing 5 and 7-year contracts and reviewing warranty policies. A motion was made by Denise Wheeler to approve the Municipal Leasing Consultant's 5-year quote with EW4 engine warranty, TC2 truck coverage, and towing coverage. Cliff Emmons seconded. Passed unanimously.
6. Road Commissioner and Operations Manager: Road Commissioner Alfred Larrabee updated the Selectboard on the process of selling the 2012 International truck. Denise Wheeler requested a preliminary highway budget for review by October 22. John Brabant mentioned that the tree warden should inspect a tree on Bliss Pond Road that is overhanging the road and needs to be cut. Alfred Larrabee will contact Tree Warden Neal Maker. Alfred Larrabee requested clarification on the town-purchased cell phone use. The Selectboard encouraged him to use the town cell phone only for work-related communication with minimal private use.
7. Town Clerk: Town Clerk Judy Fitch Robert reported that early voting had started for the General Election and absentee ballots were being mailed out.
8. Town Hall Renovation Committee: None.
9. Appointment of Town Health Officer (Jay Copping): Jay Copping's extensive training, experience and knowledge was commended by the Selectboard. A motion was made by Rose Pelchuck to appoint Jay Copping as Town Health Officer. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.
10. Reauthorize Chair's role and compensation: A motion made by Rose Pelchuck to reauthorize Denise Wheeler's role as administrative liaison for the Selectboard with compensation of \$550

per month *before* taxes for a term of six months. John Brabant seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Cliff Emmons was acknowledged for his work and support of the office in terms of technology.

11. Treasurer: Denise Wheeler stated that Treasurer Sandra Ferver has been working 50 plus hours per week, although hired for 32 hours per week. Compensation should be reviewed in order to be fair. The Treasurer updated the Selectboard on the NEMRC financial module installation and computer issues related to frequented crashes due to anti-virus problems. RbTech has worked diligently to sort out the issues with the NEMRC program, and returned the treasurer's computer to factory setting and reloaded programs. There was a problem reloading the QuickBooks program. Fred Duplessis made suggestions related to the QuickBooks program and formats for historical information that could remedy the issue.
12. Review results of FY 17 and FY 18 Audit and Management Letter (Sullivan Powers & Co., P.C.): Fred Duplessis provided an overview of the audit process, stating that the purpose of an audit is to help the town improve systems and efficiencies. He discussed the change from accrual basis accounting to modified cash basis accounting. Trustee of Public Funds Rod Buck asked questions related to investments, including the recommendation of enacting an investment policy. Mr. Duplessis said the VLTC has model policies for municipalities. He reviewed details of the 2018 audit. He stated that Calais is ahead of most towns by completing the 2017 and 2018 audits. He reviewed the town's fund balance and the elimination of the deficit. The town will not need to borrow in anticipation of taxes in the current fiscal year, having funds to cover the two months prior to taxes received. All funds have positive fund balances. In summary, the town is solvent. There were no violations of laws or regulations. Mr. Duplessis said the audit went very smoothly, both for 2017 and 2018.
Mr. Duplessis summarized the Management Letter that identifies two material weaknesses: 1) the need for segregation of duties related to cash, check signing, and bank reconciliation functions, and 2) the need for internal controls related to fund balance entries of all cash receipts and disbursements. These processes need a "second set of eyes." These issues are being addressed by creating an accounting manual and hiring an auditor of accounts to routinely perform tasks.

A recommendation was highlighted to have an employee work session to assess financial risks and internal control. The VLCT can facilitate such a session. An accounting manual is needed and can be developed over the coming months. He suggested posting the full audit on website, and publishing the Management Letter in town report.

The treasurer reviewed the General Fund balance that secures a healthy cash flow, allowing coverage of grant-related costs for highway projects that need to await grant reimbursements. She discussed the highway surplus and the annual process, as directed by a voted article, that transfers surpluses to the highway capital fund.

Sandra Ferver expressed appreciation for working with the Sullivan and Powers firm. Mr. Duplessis said he was met with cooperation and had a good working relationship with the treasurer throughout the audit process.

13. Chair update, projects, etc.:

Joint Selectboard/Cemetery Commission Meeting: Denise Wheeler announced that there will be a joint meeting with the Cemetery Commission on Monday, October 1 to explore and discuss options related to the future of the Poplar Hill Cemetery.

Planning Commission update: Denise Wheeler reported on the Planning Commission meeting she attended in Adamant related to a proposed Shoreland Overlay zoning regulations and the existing Adamant Village District and possible changes.

Crime Report: Denise reported on an incident in which a resident living on County Road had a man impersonating a road crew worker knock on the door of the home and lie about a ditching project and ask for permission to park in the driveway. After the man left, the State Police appeared at the scene and confirmed the man, identified through his description and license plate number, had a criminal record. The Selectboard discussed whether town employees needed identification cards, and there was no consensus. Cliff Emmons suggested that if ID cards are provided, a policy would need to be enacted to clarify procedures for employees when approaching homes and providing identification.

Plea for Selectboard to check email: Denise Wheeler requested that Selectboard members check email a few times a week in order to schedule meetings. This would be extremely helpful.

Future Selectboard meetings and budget planning: Town Meeting preparation will include a budget planning schedule to meet with town departments and meet jointly with the East Montpelier Selectboard. Denise Wheeler will present a draft schedule for upcoming budget meetings. The board discussed meeting on Columbus Day, and did not confirm.

Central Vermont Internet: David Healey, the Calais representative to the Central Vermont Internet communications union district, will present at the next Selectboard meeting to update on the progress of this initiative.

Act 46: Denise Wheeler announced the Washington Supervisory Board Meeting and Calais School Board meeting will be on Wednesday, September 26 at U-32 High School. The meetings will focus on Act 46.

Road-side mowing: Denise Wheeler shared that issues have arisen in terms of some disagreement of neighbors related to road-side mowing (to mow or not to mow) and the need for communication. The Selectboard discussed whether the town should purchase town equipment for roadside mowing to decrease invasive species.

14. Consideration of "draft" road naming policy (time permitting): Postponed to next meeting.
15. Review and approve minutes, warrants:
Minutes of 9/10/2018 were edited on Googledocs by Denise Wheeler and Sharon Fannon. Rose Pelchuck noted that the level of detail in the minutes may create legal issues if every statement is not verified, particularly related to Act 46. Denise Wheeler said she appreciates a level of detail in the minutes. A motion was made by Denise Wheeler to approve the 9/10/2018 minutes with edits. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.
16. Personnel Matters (as need) – None.
17. Motion to adjourn: The motion was made by Rose Pelchuck, seconded, approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy Fitch Robert, Town Clerk

Approved by the Selectboard at the 10/15/2018 meeting