

MINUTES REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING

6:00 P.M. Thursday, January 7, 2021

VIA ZOOM MEETING PLATFORM

Select Board

Eric Remick, Chair
Elizabeth Dow, Vice Chair
Lucian Avery
Shari Cornish
Ceilidh Galloway-Kane

Others Present

Shaun Fielder, Town Manager
Casey Rowell, Business Manager
Aaron Cochran, Police Chief
Alberta Miller, Town Clerk

Others Present

Doug McClure
Emily Lanxner

6:02 P.M. –Select Board Chair, Eric Remick, called the regular meeting to order.

6:02 P.M. – **Set/Adjust Agenda** - none

6:02 P.M. – **Select Board to approve minutes for the Regular Select Board meeting of December 17, 2020**

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to approve the minutes of the December 17, 2020 regular meeting, as written.

6:03 P.M. – **Communication from the Audience** - None

6:03 P.M. – 6:20 P.M. - Town Manager’s Report– Given by Shaun Fielder

Regarding the River Street info noted at previous Select Board meeting, “Select Board voted to authorize Shaun Fielder to take lead contacting a surveyor and finding out the logistics on potentially surveying this land.” Lisa Ginett (Sunrise Surveying) has offered to do some continued research to determine if it is a Town road or not. The estimated cost to check deeds and land record info for a few properties in the area is estimated at \$750. The results can be used to determine if a survey to lay out a public road is needed or not.

Shaun did get a response from NVDA traffic consultant Doug Morton noting that the signage and travel control markings around the Glenside / Mill Street intersection are in order. One suggestion to be considered for the ’21 construction season is the option to clear trees / brush on the Southeast corner of noted intersection that could improve sightline to the West for those stopped at the bottom of Glenside.

Shaun reported that Susanne Gann has stepped down as the Recreation Committee Coordinator and Shaun thanked her for her many years of service. She was a big part of getting the grant for the Mackville playground project. The Town Manager’s office will advertise for the position starting next week. This is a part-time limited services position. On a related note, another recreation committee member did also step down. There is no correlation and two unrelated issues. Anyone interested in serving, please contact the Town Manager’s office. After additional discussion with one of the recreation committee members and Center for an Agricultural Economy, Shaun has now agreed to have the Recreation Committee move forward with the setup of the ice rink at Atkins Field. Once setup, patrons are being asked to follow recommended social distancing practices to include use of masks.

For Water and Wastewater customers, the Town has activated a survey to collect contact information for an instant alert system process being developed. You can access the *self-complete* data entry survey by clicking on the, “Water/Wastewater instant alert notification,” button located in the upper left corner of the Town’s website.

Municipay program also has been activated giving customers option to pay bills online. Thanks to Alberta and Tonia for their efforts getting this set up. See this button, “Pay Taxes, Water & Other Fees Online.”

There were several Water / Wastewater customers that were able to receive grant support to cover unpaid bills at the close of 2020 (as caused by economic impacts due to COVID-19). This amounted to \$6,551 worth of fees being paid via the VT Covid-19 Arrearage Assistance Program.

Please keep practicing social distancing measures to include use of masks.

Eric said that the fee for the deed research on River St. seems reasonable and it would be money well spent to find out more information. Elizabeth agreed as well as the other members of the Board. The Board asked Shaun to proceed with the research and then they can decide if they want to do the survey. This is still the information discovery phase and that is what we need.

Eric reported that the \$1M NBRC Grant that Yellow Barn applied for was approved. This is a significant step for the project. It helps to close the funding gaps. This was the last major piece of funding to come together. This clears the way to finalize some interim loans and final design and go out to bid in Summer, with Fall construction.

Lucian recalled that there was a \$2M gap in financing and he wanted to know where the remaining \$1M was coming from. VT Community Loan Fund is willing to do some financing. The projections show that the rents will support the debt.

6:20 P.M. – 6:22 P.M. Road Foreman Report– Given by Shaun Fiedler

The crew was plowing over the holidays. There were some equipment issues, but the trucks are all back on the road now.

Shaun reported that the well refurbishment work is moving along and should be finished up soon.

Eric asked if we still need to be looking at back-up water sources. Shaun indicated it is on his radar for nicer weather in the Spring.

6:22 P.M. – 6:27 P.M. Hardwick Police Department Report – Given by Aaron Cochran

The Board received the incident report in advance of the meeting. There were 109 incidents.

Chief Cochran reported that Corporal Steven Mitchell, who has been with us for almost 10 years, recently resigned. He has left as of yesterday and moved on to Lamoille County Sheriff's Dept. The position has been posted. There was someone who had expressed interest, but withdrew their application today to go with another agency, rather than waiting for our background check process, etc.

In addition, another Officer is leaving for deployment.

COVID-19 vaccinations were not scheduled for first responders; however, they have changed that guideline and included police officers and fire department personnel. Aaron is not exactly sure when vaccinations will happen, but they are hopeful it will be soon.

6:28 P.M. – 7:03 P.M. Item #1 Town meeting update presented by Alberta Miller, Town Clerk/Treasurer

Alberta shared that Shaun heard today that the Legislature has allocated \$2M for Town's to offset the costs of preparing and mailing ballots to voters, rather than meeting in person for Town meeting. They just went back into session on Monday.

Alberta specifically wants to talk about Act 162 and would like to see us stick with a March 2 Town meeting by Australian Ballot. In addition, preparing to use the voting tabulator would be helpful. Shari asked if we rent it. Alberta indicated that we already own the tabulator. We pay to set up ballots and print them and then to set up the machine to

count them. Shari asked about the ballot and the warning and how that would look. Alberta indicated that the Town report will look the same and then everything that is voted on will appear on the ballot.

Ceilidh asked if there is a deadline for votes if we do the Australian ballot method. What would we set for a due date? Alberta indicated that Vermont uses the Election Day as the deadline, so it must be there by the deadline on the day of voting. Lucian asked about certain positions of Surveyor or Bark & Lumber, etc. Alberta is still researching this about writing in names or putting down names based on people who want to be on the ballot. Alberta said that she can make a post on FPF or put something in the Gazette that indicates what some of the available positions are.

Emily Lanxner said that there is a group of people in the Town (about a dozen) that would like to have a certain question on the ballot. "Shall the Town of Hardwick be required to inform its residents when sources of radiation, such as that from cell towers and 5G antennas, are being proposed for installation within its Town limits?" She and this group of people want to make sure that residents are notified if someone is going to try to put up a cell tower or anything that could potentially harm residents through radiation.

Ceilidh asked what they mean by "inform the residents." What does the group think that should consist of? Emily is unsure, but thought maybe a letter, but she could ask the group what they had in mind and get back to us. Alberta said that the question is too vague and needs to be more specific. Eric said that maybe it would be that any third party that is planning such a project, that they would be the ones to post notices and they already have obligations now that require them to go through a public notice process.

Ceilidh said if communication is the primary concern, then maybe it is about having a conversation about how the Select Board can better communicate these items to the public.

Emily feels that this is a statewide initiative. She will contact Alberta and Shaun to set up a meeting to talk about how they might be able to pursue this further. Emily asked about what she would need for a petition and Alberta said that it would be 5% of the voters and due by the next Select Board meeting.

Alberta needs permission to set up the ballots and tabulator. She wants to move forward assuming that we will be mailing ballots to all registered voters.

Upon motion by Elizabeth Dow, seconded by Lucian Avery, the Select Board voted unanimously to hold Town Meeting 2021 on Tuesday, March 2, 2021 by Australian Ballot in accordance with VSA Act 162.

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Board voted unanimously that Alberta should prepare to use the tabulator for the Town Meeting.

Shaun asked about the school portion and if we get anything back from the school for any additional costs associated with their voting needs. Alberta indicated that we would do the ballots in advance and then get reimbursed a portion of the costs from the school district. Alberta has been in contact with other local Clerks and the schools are prepared to go forward with their Town meeting votes on March 2 as well.

7:03 P.M. – 7:18 P.M. Item #2, Business Manager to recap DRAFT budget, discussion, and approval of final budget

The Business Manager recapped the most recent changes which included the following: updating the Lamoille Dispatch contract amount since we received the actual figures, added back \$2,500 to the Carey Rd. under Capital, and changed the way the COPS grant position is shown in the PD budget. The COPS grant expense is listed down below for the full year and none was added as a cushion for the next year in base salary because it will just shift from COPS into the regular budget, so it is a wash. The new overall budget percent increase is 1.75%, with revenues going down by 3.10% due to the Greensboro police contract being a percentage of the PD budget and COPS grant income being reduced in the last year of the grant. See attachments.

Elizabeth wonders if some of the appropriations may not get approved with this year's ballot method, rather than in-person. Lucian asked if it would be worth having an informational meeting for the appropriation agencies during February. Elizabeth suggested that we hold it on a different night other than Select Board meeting night. The Board agreed that they want to hold a Zoom informational meeting on Tuesday, February 23. Alberta will reach out to the agencies that request appropriations to let them know of this opportunity.

Upon motion by Elizabeth Dow, seconded by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, the Select Board voted unanimously to approve the presented budget of \$3,525,629 for presentation to the voters.

7:18 P.M. – 7:27 P.M. Item #3 Select Board to discuss Cannabis retailers based on new legislation

VLCT has offered some guidance on questions that can be put on Town Meeting ballots. See below. The Zoning Administrator shared this information so that the Board can decide if they want to do this. Elizabeth thinks we should put these questions on the ballot and see if the residents want this. There was some discussion about the fact that these questions do not really offer a direct "no" option if people do not want this type of activity in the community. Alberta said that she can work with Shaun to figure out language that would give "no" as an option.

Shall the town authorize cannabis retailers in town pursuant to 7 V.S.A. § 863?

Shall the town authorize integrated licensees in town pursuant to 7 V.S.A. § 863?

Shall the town authorize cannabis retailers and integrated licensees in town pursuant to 7 V.S.A. § 863?

The Chief also thinks that people should be able to weigh in if they want to see these types of businesses in the community.

7:27 P.M. – 7:38 P.M. Item #4, Update on Wastewater Treatment Facility capital improvements and possibility of going to Bond vote

Shaun recapped that we had a preliminary engineering report from Aldrich & Elliot for improvements to the Wastewater Treatment Plant. We are eligible for 50% subsidy on the design phase. We have already been approved for a Step II loan for the design.

If the Select Board decides to move forward, we must have our Bond warning ready for the January 21 meeting and it would be voted on at the Town meeting. We are looking for \$2.2M on the Bond, however, it does look like we would be eligible for a 40% subsidy. We would still have to bond for the whole amount. Shaun believes that the costs are \$8-10 more per quarter per user. Ceilidh did ask for clarification on the additional cost to users, based on a report that was provided in October. In looking further, Shaun found that it is approximately \$18 more per quarter per user.

The Board generally agrees that they want to move forward with putting it to a Bond vote, but the Bond documents are not ready for this evening, since we need to work out the language in the warning due to Town meeting not being in-person. Shaun can get the documents situated with the attorney before the next meeting.

Select Board Reports: Elizabeth reported that she is not planning to run for re-election to the Board at Town meeting. Lucian has not decided yet. Eric said that we are going to need some community members to get involved. Elizabeth encouraged people to get involved for the learning experience. Shari is also planning to take a break from the Select Board and hopes to work on reviving the old Downtown Commission.

New Business: None

Old Business: Shari mentioned that Geoff, the Town's CDC, is looking into a \$100K ACCD transportation grant that requires Downtown Designation. She noted that Downtown Designation has been considered in the past and it is likely that by having Geoff on board lends to the requirements of the designation. She further offered that she would check in with the program director at the Division for Historic Preservation (ACCD) along with having information about the program at Whistle on Main Street if anyone wants to stop in for further information. Eric offered that information is available online (vermont.gov) as well.

Shaun mentioned that Geoff is working on a significant USDA grant for the swinging bridge.

Shaun mentioned that the pictures on the second floor of the Memorial building are on loan from the Bessette's that sadly passed away recently. The family has been in touch and the Estate is interested in donating them to the Town. Shari suggested that Shaun should contact Tracy Martin about whether it should be donated to the Town or to the Historical Society.

7:50 P.M. *Upon motion by Elizabeth Dow, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to enter Executive Session, to include the Town Manager, for contract discussion pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313.*

8:05 P.M. The Select Board exited Executive Session. *No action taken.*

8:05 P.M. Eric Remick, Select Board Chair, adjourned the meeting.

Minutes approved by: _____
Eric Remick, Select Board Chair

Minutes taken by: _____
Casey Rowell, Business Manager