

MINUTES REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING
6:00 P.M. Thursday, January 6, 2022
MEMORIAL BUILDING
20 CHURCH ST. 3RD FLOOR AND VIA ZOOM

Select Board

Eric Remick, Chair
 Ceilidh Galloway-Kane
 Elizabeth Dow
 Shari Cornish
 Michael Deering

Others Present

David Upson, Jr. Town Manager
 Casey Rowell, Business Manager
 Alberta Miller, Town Clerk - *Zoom*
 Danny Hale - *Zoom*
 David Kreindler – *Zoom*

Others Present

All Select Board present via Zoom

Regular Meeting

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

6:02 P.M. – Set/Adjust Agenda – Add an Executive Session to discuss a personnel matter pursuant to 1 VSA 313 to include the Town Manager

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, the Select Board voted to approve the adjustment to the agenda as stated.

No Communication from the audience

6:04 P.M. – Select Board to approve minutes for the Regular Select Board meeting of December 16, 2021

Upon motion by Elizabeth Dow, seconded by Shari Cornish, the Select Board voted to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of December 16, 2021, as written.

6:05 P.M. – 6:19 P.M. Town Manager’s Report– Given by David Upson

David reported on several items:

-Met with Aldrich & Elliot about the sludge disposal needed for the plant upgrade.

-Assessor NEMC has let us know that the Town’s Common Level of Appraisal (CLA) is at 88.45%, which means that we will need a Town wide reappraisal in the next couple of years as it’s required by the State when that figure gets to 85%. They will give us a proposal, but they are booking out for 2025 and can put us in their schedule.

-Had a meeting with Rural Community Assistance Partnership about what they can offer the Town in terms of technical assistance with projects. There is no cost, and they can assist with navigating federal and private funding sources. The Board generally agrees that it would be worth pursuing. David will let them know we are interested. Submitting an interest form does not automatically get us into the program.

-Shared info about a pilot program between Central Vermont Solid Waste Management District (CVSWMD) and Black Dirt Farm to set up composting in Town. If you know of a neighborhood in Town that might be willing to host a site, please reach out. *See his attached report for the full details. *

Ceilidh asked for an update on the Cannabis Task Force. David shared that they have had one meeting and will be having two more soon. They will be having Healthy Lamoille Valley as a guest speaker at one of them. The Select Board will need to decide at the next meeting if they want to have something on the Warning for voters about retail cannabis in the Town. The Task Force plans to create a document like the one that Elizabeth created about the Charter change that can be used to help people better understand what they would be voting on.

6:19 P.M. – 6:23 P.M. There was no Road Foreman report this evening. David did mention that he recently noticed the roughness of Montgomery Rd. and plans to talk to Tom about it.

There was no Hardwick Police Department report this evening. David shared that there are some staff shortages in the Police Department due to COVID. He had to line up the Vermont State Police to cover some weekend shifts. The coverage they will provide is for life saving events, not patrolling. David will also make himself available to our Officers for consultation on Friday and Saturday overnight.

There was no Hardwick Electric Department report this evening. Mike Sullivan indicated that he would be attending the January 20 meeting.

6:23 P.M. - 6:35 P.M. Item #1 Select Board to discuss Town meeting 2022 and if it will be in-person

Alberta shared that she communicated with the Secretary of State's office and learned that there is a legislative article being worked on to give Town's the ability to do their Town Meetings by Australian ballot again this year due to the pandemic. While it hasn't passed yet, they are moving quickly so that Towns can decide soon.

She wanted feedback from the Board on what their thoughts are. The School Districts will likely follow suit with the Town.

Casey asked Alberta if there might be funds available again this year to help with the cost of doing another Australian ballot. At this time, it has not been talked about. Last year, it was around \$4,000 in expenses, but we were reimbursed for the expense.

Eric asked about voter turnout last year. Alberta indicated that it was a little higher than a normal Town meeting, but likely because they mailed ballots to all registered voters. The votes cast were primarily absentee through the mail, but some people dropped them off at the Fire Station.

Ideally, the Board would decide at the beginning of the January 20 meeting if Town meeting will be in person or by Australian ballot and then the warning could be signed towards the end of the meeting after Alberta adjusts the language. The 27th is the latest that a warning can be signed; however, the Town report is due to the printer on January 26.

Elizabeth thinks that as an abundance of caution with the new COVID variant, that it seems like the responsible thing to do to repeat how we did Town meeting last year.

Ceilidh brought up the feasibility of using the school and if space limitations and social distancing is in place (as well as the school's requirement for masks) that we might be limiting who can attend.

Eric brought up the fact that the vulnerable populations may be less likely to attend in person anyway. We will need to wait to see what the Legislature comes up with, but overall, the Board seems to feel strongly that the Australian ballot would be the best method. A decision can be made at the January 20 meeting.

6:35 P.M. – 7:05 P.M. Item #2 Select Board to discuss the project that VASA plans to do on Wright Farm Rd. using an RTP grant & to discuss trail access to the center of Town

Danny Hale from VASA came to talk about the plans they have to use an RTP (Recreational Trails Program) grant to make improvements to the Wright Farm Rd. trail. The trail can be used by anyone. They wanted to let the Town know about the project and get our permission. The project summary is in the meeting attachments. VASA has used this grant type in the past for other trails. As part of their grant application, they need the Town to sign a “Resolution of Commitment.”

Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to authorize the Town Manager to sign the RTP Program Resolution of Commitment from the Municipality on behalf of the Town.

Another topic that has arose is creating a Village Connector off the VASA trail network so that ATV/UTV’s could come into Town from So. Main St. up to the intersection by Front Seat Coffee. This would not be opening all the Town roads, just an extension to get them closer to Town. The proposed extension can be found in the minute’s attachments. The Town Manager has spoken to business owners in Town, and they would like to be able to have people come into Town to utilize their businesses, particularly restaurants. David communicated with Danny Hale at VASA, and they are willing to assist with making this happen.

There was discussion about parking and enforcement, particularly how people would know that they cannot go past that point. All the users are subject to the same rules as motor vehicles when on the road, meaning they must be registered, insured, etc. and helmets are required. Mike Gauthier is willing to allow parking in his lot on the weekends. These details would still need to be worked out. There would also need to be signage and the trail map would need to updated showing the end of the extension.

Since this would require a change to the Town’s ATV ordinance and there is still time before Spring, the Board did not decide this evening. It could likely be done on a trial basis before making a permanent ordinance change.

7:05 P.M. – 7:42 P.M. Item #3 Business Manager to recap entire budget FY23 summary and Select Board to consider approving as a final draft to present to voters at Town Meeting 2022

Danny Hale expressed concerns about the overall budget and using the fund balance and lowering the expense lines to the “bare bones.” There was some discussion about the reasoning behind this since the Town has grown the Fund balance significantly over the last couple of years with expense savings. We can lean the budget down and put some of the fund balance back into the budget. We also have some significant capital needs, of which we are setting aside a large chunk of money this year to make happen in future years. Danny questioned the decreased revenue from the loss of Greensboro Police contract and wondered why the Police budget did not go down the amount of the lost revenue. Eric elaborated on this and described that when the entire expense of the department falls on the Town, it does end up being more costly vs. when they were sharing the expense with another Town (Greensboro). Therefore, the decreased expense does not necessarily equal the decrease in revenue.

David explained that we still have the option for regional policing. He wants to explore this.

There was some discussion about the COPS grant position. The grant expires on March 31, 2022. The Officer who was hired under this grant has given notice and is leaving. Since they were on military leave for the past 6 months and are not returning, we plan to ask for a 9-month extension (which is not guaranteed). However, the

Business Manager has spoken to the Grant agency, and they seemed confident that the grant could be extended given the circumstances. Provided the extension is approved, we would have expense and revenue from the grant for the first half of this budget year. We will add this back into this version of the budget, which does change the overall percentage increase slightly.

There was a brief discussion about the Carey Rd. property and setting aside a small amount for possible future improvements. \$1,000/year for the next 3 years was added back in.

See attachments for the full details.

Upon motion by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to approve the proposed FY23 budget of \$3,564,808 to be presented to the voters at Town Meeting.

7:42 P.M. – 7:46 P.M. Item #4 Select Board to discuss sludge disposal at the Wastewater Plant and using ARPA funds for this as it's necessary for the plant upgrades to happen

This was discussed in the Town Manager's report in more detail with David working on figuring out how many tons of sludge we can get done. Ceilidh mentioned that some people have approached her because they believe that ARPA funds can be spent on other items. The ARPA funds that the Town received are very specific about what they can be spent on. There are only 4 options for spending this money (this was inserted from a previous meeting):

1. To respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency or its negative economic impacts;
2. To respond to workers performing essential work during the COVID-19 public health emergency by providing premium pay to such eligible workers of the recipient, or by providing grants to eligible employers that have eligible workers who performed essential work;
3. For the provision of government services, to the extent of the reduction in revenue of such recipient due to the COVID-19 public health emergency, relative to revenues collected in the most recent full fiscal year of the recipient prior to the emergency; and
4. To make necessary investments in water, sewer, or broadband infrastructure.

There is likely to be another round of funds earmarked for broadband infrastructure. Eric brought up the point that using the ARPA funds might be the difference between doing the Wastewater project and not because the sludge removal must happen for it to move forward.

The Board does not need to decide this tonight, but it needs to stay on the radar. David will be continuing to work on the most cost-effective way for us to get the sludge removed and move the project forward.

7:46 P.M. – 7:50 P.M. Item #5 Select Board to consider two road name additions/changes.

A letter was provided by Amanda Fecteau explaining that there are two driveways in the Town that now have more than 3 property owners/buildings on them, so they need to be named as private roads. One is off Kate Brook Road, and the other is off Route 15 near Wolcott (Gravel Construction). The Kate Brook Road one will need to have the name approved by both Wolcott and Hardwick because it is in both towns. The proposed names are Grouse Crossing and Blizzard Way. These will be considered private roads and not maintained by the Town.

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Ceilidh Galloway-Kane, the Select Board voted to approve the road names of Grouse Crossing and Blizzard Way, as presented.

7:50 P.M. – 7:51 P.M. Item #6 Select Board to certify the annual Highway Mileage Certificate for State of VT Highway Aid

Annually, the Town must certify their total mileage within the Town, which determines the amount of the State Aid the Town receives.

Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to certify and sign off on the annual Highway Mileage Certificate.

No Select Board Reports or Old Business.

New Business: Michael brought up that a new liner is needed at the skating rink. David commented that he has been working with the Recreation Committee but there has been hesitation to move forward.

Ceilidh mentioned that the decision to pull it was because it was vandalized. The Committee is concerned about buying a new one and having the vandalism happen again. She explained that is why there is hesitation to do this.

David has been looking at liners and he plans to go to the next Recreation Committee Meeting. He is aware of the vandalism at the Atkins Field area and is addressing that separately. He wants to see the liner replaced and the rink back open.

Ceilidh reported that the Equity Committee met with Xusana Davis, the Equity Coordinator for the State of Vermont. As a result of that meeting, recommendations for changes to the Town website were made that could be added or changed to be more inclusive to everyone.

David reported that the deadline for the VOREC grant decision has been moved out because they have a lot of great projects to consider. The new date is expected to be January 17 for when we will know about our application.

7:56 P.M. *Upon motion by Shari Cornish, seconded by Elizabeth Dow, the Select Board voted to enter Executive Session pursuant to 1 VSA 313 for a personnel matter.*

8:27 P.M. Exited Executive Session.

8:28 P.M. Eric Remick, Select Board Chair adjourned the meeting.

Minutes taken by: _____
Casey Rowell, Business Manager

Minutes approved by: _____
Eric Remick, Select Board Chair