

Minutes of the East Montpelier Selectboard

A public hearing of the Selectboard and the East Montpelier Fire District #1 Prudential Committee was warned to precede the Selectboard meeting. Selectboard Vice-chair Casey Northrup called the hearing to order at 6:33 p.m. Prudential Committee Chair Steve Gilman was in attendance; no members of the public were present. The hearing was adjourned at 6:34 pm.

January 2, 2017 Meeting

SB Attendance: Vice-chair Casey Northrup, Gene Troia, and Carl Etnier; Town Administrator Bruce Johnson

Public Attendance: Ginny Callan, Victoria Pearson

Vice-chair Northrup called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

Additions to Agenda:

- **[Deletion] There will be no warrant**

Public Comment: None

Discussion on Potential Invasive Plant Workshop

Mike Bald, the proprietor of *Got Weeds?* and currently contracted by the town to eradicate the hogweed infestation around the EM Village Cemetery, has offered to conduct a workshop on the control of invasive plants, focusing on chervil. The proposed schedule involves a pre-workshop session in late winter to determine the sites to focus on, the actual workshop in early May, and then a follow-up workshop in October. Mr. Bald has offered to do the half-day workshops and the site evaluation for \$150 per session.

Board members are very interested in moving forward with the chervil workshops. TA Johnson will work with Mr. Bald to refine the schedule and the methodology for site evaluation. Once details are ironed out, the town may invite neighboring communities to participate.

Discussion on Proposed Charter Amendments

The East Montpelier Charter Committee has presented the Selectboard with a summary report and draft charter amendment language. The committee is recommending that the charter be amended to add the town clerk and collector of delinquent taxes positions to the list of town jobs appointed by the Selectboard. Mr. Etnier, a member of the committee, explained that the committee felt the time was right to move toward the appointment of the two positions despite some underlying concerns regarding perceived consolidation of power by the Selectboard. The draft charter provisions include the formation of a selection committee that would recommend qualified candidates to the Selectboard, one-year terms for the positions to provide a degree of independence and security for the job holders, and a specification that the job holders will be town employees subject to all personnel policies.

The board will meet Monday, January 9th, 6:30 p.m. at the town office to discuss the proposed amendments. The first of two public hearings on the proposal is set for Monday, January 16th, 6:00 p.m. at the Emergency Services Facility (the new fire station).

Discussion on Proposed Sanctuary Community Policy

Mr. Etnier presented his research on the possibility of East Montpelier adopting a “sanctuary city” policy, essentially a directive to town employees to decline to assist in efforts to determine a person’s immigration or religious affiliation or to otherwise assist in immigration policy enforcement efforts. Although the adoption of such a policy by a town like East Montpelier would be mostly symbolic as we don’t have a police force and the bulk of the information housed at the town office is general in nature and fully accessible by the public, everyone present agreed on the importance of the principles involved. There was also an understanding that there is a faction of the community that would be repelled by the adoption of a sanctuary policy.

Both board members and participating members of the public commented on a desire that East Montpelier express a general town welcome to immigrants, a concept somewhat different and broader than the basic sanctuary city policy.

By consensus the board decided that the sanctuary community issue would be better suited for discussion at town meeting rather than decided by three members of the Selectboard. Mr. Etnier will develop draft language for a 2017 Town Meeting Warning article that encompasses both the narrow and broad sanctuary precepts.

Development of 2016 Selectboard Report for Annual Report

Board members brainstormed ideas for the Selectboard report, including:

- The conservation summit and related efforts to reformulate the land conservation program
- The request and eventual movement to merge the fire district back into the town
- The Charter Committee process and ultimate recommendation
- The resignation of Town Clerk Terri Conti and her replacement by CJ Flynn
- The retrofit of a portion of the Templeton Road Fire Station for town equipment storage
- The Center Road speed limit decrease through EM Center
- The award of both state structures and paving program grants for town projects
- The work of the Old LaPerle Farm Property Committee

TA Johnson will draft a report for discussion at the January 16th board meeting.

**** Due to a previous commitment Mr. Etnier needed to leave the meeting by 7:40 p.m. With two absent members, this would leave the board without a quorum so the rest of the meeting agenda items were postponed to a later date. ****

Discussion on FY2018 Budget Development

Tabled until January 9, 2016 board meeting.

Discussion on 2017 Town Meeting Warning

Tabled until January 9, 2016 board meeting.

Warrants

There was no warrant.

Minutes

Review of the December 19, 2016 Selectboard meeting minutes tabled until the January 16, 2017 board meeting.

Other Business [Presented; no discussion due to time constraints]

Town Administrator Report:

- VT Act 69, the Earned Sick Leave Law:
 - The law took effect on January 1, 2017; our basic sick leave offering is more generous than the state requirement, so no major changes are needed; however, the law benefits any employee working more than 18 hours/week on average; we currently do not provide sick leave to a part-time employee under contract who works approximately 22 hours/week; employees under contract are not exempt from the law's provisions; this will likely require an amendment to the town's personnel policy
- VT Department of Taxes Equalization Study:
 - East Montpelier's 2016 Common Level of Assessment, the measure of how our property assessment values compare to market value, is 94.94%, up from last year's 94.6%; this is generally considered good news as this will slightly lessen the effect of the CLA on the education tax rate charged to property owners in the 2017/18 tax year
- Central VT Solid Waste Management District's Annual Report:
 - Once again asking for \$1/capita dues assessment
- VT Land Trust's 40th Anniversary Celebration:
 - VLT intends to hold a series of 40 events highlighting all aspects of conservation; looking for event suggestions from owners of conserved properties (the town owns two such properties)
- National School Choice Week:
 - Sponsors of the program are asking the Selectboard to proclaim January 22-28, 2017 as "Town of East Montpelier School Choice Week"
- Meeting Schedule:
 - January 9th 6:30 pm Selectboard special meeting
 - January 16th 6:00 pm At ESF: SB regular meeting; hearing on charter amendments
 - January 23rd 6:30 pm Selectboard special meeting; final budget/warning approvals

Zoning Administrator Report:

- No permit applications since the last board meeting; 55 total applications for 2016
- No DRB meeting is currently scheduled

Motion: To adjourn. Made by Mr. Troia; second by Mr. Etnier. Passed unanimously.
Meeting adjourned 7:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Bruce Johnson, Town Administrator

Approved: January 16, 2017 East Montpelier Selectboard meeting