

Minutes of the East Montpelier Selectboard

December 21, 2015 Meeting

SB Attendance: Chair Seth Gardner, Casey Northrup, Gene Troia, and Kim Swasey; Town Administrator Bruce Johnson

Public Attendance: Center Road Area Residents Karen Gramer, Karen Saudek, Chris Reed, Erika Zimmerman, Steve Justis, Janice Waterman, and Charles Waterman; Times Argus Reporter Gina Conn; Wrightsville Beach Recreation District Representatives Collin O'Neil and Bill Merrylees; Kellogg-Hubbard Library Representatives Tom McKone and Lindy Biggs; Green Mountain Transit Authority Representative David Armstrong

Chair Gardner called the meeting to order at 6:37 p.m.

Additions to Agenda:

- Renewal of Cemetery Commission Perpetual Care Certificate of Deposit

Public Comment: None

Budget Discussion: GMTA/Route 2 Commuter Bus

David Armstrong, CCTA/GMTA Planning Manager

Mr. Armstrong provided an update on the Route 2 Commuter, which runs from St. Johnsbury to Montpelier with multiple stops including the WEC garage property at the intersection of US Rte. 2 and VT Rte. 14 N in East Montpelier Village. Ridership on the Route 2 Commuter is down slightly in 2015, although overall ridership on GMTA routes is up nearly 3%. GMTA will once again request \$8,333 in funding from the town at 2016 Town Meeting. The funding level has remained constant since the service was first approved by the towns of East Montpelier, Plainfield, and Marshfield at 2009 Town Meeting.

Mr. Armstrong fielded a variety of suggestions to increase ridership on the Route 2 Commuter, including a service loop to U-32 and a recommendation to improve marketing. Speaking about the GMTA routes in general, Ms. Biggs suggested a direct route from Montpelier to the Burlington airport.

Board members assured Mr. Armstrong that the requested article would be included on the 2016 Town Meeting Warning.

Discussion on GMTA Use of WEC Garage Property

As an integral part of the long-planned park 'n ride facility, the town will soon become the owner of the WEC garage property located at 110 VT Rte. 14 N. The Route 2 Commuter currently uses that lot, the sole bus stop in East Montpelier, under lease from WEC. The town wants the bus service to continue using the location and the park 'n ride will include a bus shelter. The issue Mr. Armstrong would like resolved is whether a lease is necessary during the interim period between the time the town takes ownership of the parcel in early January and the park 'n ride is constructed (hopefully summer of 2016) and, if so, what the lease terms would be (WEC currently charges \$50/month).

The board would prefer to keep the arrangement informal and flexible until the park 'n ride facility is completed. No rent will be charged, but GMTA will have to provide adequate proof of insurance.

Budget Discussion: Kellogg-Hubbard Library

Tom McKone, KHL Executive Director; Lindy Biggs, Town Representative

Mr. McKone presented the KHL funding request for 2016 Town Meeting. Once again the library is seeking \$38,614. Usage of the library by East Montpelier residents is up, both with “real” books (more than six items per resident) and downloaded materials. The largely volunteer-driven outreach services, including book deliveries to satellite locations, homebound patrons, and daycare facilities, are continuing to expand. The funding requested from East Montpelier represents 4.2% of the library’s budget.

The board agreed to include the requested article on the 2016 Town Meeting Warning.

Budget Discussion: Wrightsville Beach Recreation District

Collin O’Neil, WBRD Manager; Bill Merrylees, Town Representative

The Wrightsville Beach Recreation District, the entity that runs the popular Wrightsville Beach recreation facility on VT Rte. 12 in Middlesex, is now 30 years old. The four founding communities (Montpelier, Middlesex, Worcester, and East Montpelier) provide annual funding to support the WBRD activities, although the bulk of the operating budget is fueled by user fees. WBRD is run by a board of directors made up of representatives appointed by the four municipalities. The board charges an annual dues assessment to the four towns using a per capita fee structure. The original governing charter set an assessment cap at \$0.50/resident, which has been used as the per capita fee for a number of years. Over the years the total town share of the total WBRD budget has slipped from approximately 25% to 11%. The WBRD board is asking the governing boards of the four towns to enact a charter change that will raise the cap to \$1.50/resident. If this change is approved, the WBRD board intends to increase the upcoming dues assessment to \$0.90/resident. The other three communities have already approved the charter change.

Motion: To ratify the Wrightsville Beach Recreation District Board’s decision to raise the per capita assessment cap to \$1.50. Made by Ms. Swasey; second by Mr. Northrup. Passed unanimously.

Presentation of Funding Request Study Committee Report

The Funding Request Study Committee submitted its annual report dealing with funding requests from social organizations. The committee recommends a 2016 Town Meeting Warning funding request article in the amount of \$19,811, down from the \$22,611 article at 2015 Town Meeting. The committee also recommends separate funding articles for the Montpelier Senior Activity Center (\$5,000; level-funded request; fourth year as a separate article) and Central Vermont Home Health & Hospice (\$5,500; level-funded request; first year as a separate article). Although the total funding request article for 2016 appears to be a significant decrease, it is actually a 16% increase over 2015 due to the removal of CVHHH from the funding request article. The increase is mostly due to the addition of four organizations that did not receive funding in 2015.

Board members discussed the committee's recommended numbers and article strategy. The board appreciated the committee's diligence in the creation of a balanced funding scheme in an era of ever-increasing societal needs and funding shortfalls. The proposed articles will be placed on the draft 2016 Warning as presented.

Discussion on Requested Center Road Speed Limit Change

At the board's December 7th meeting concerned residents in the East Montpelier Center area presented a petition asking the town to reduce the speed limit on Center Road in the village to 25 miles per hour due to safety concerns. The board agreed to investigate the situation, arranged for the Central VT Regional Planning Commission to conduct a traffic study of the stretch of Center Road from the Bliss/Barnes Roads intersection to Dodge Road, and put the issue on its December 21st agenda for further discussion.

The CVRPC one-week traffic counts showed the following:

- At a point near, but east of, the Bliss/Barnes intersection, traffic heading west toward County Road had an average speed of 36 mph and an 85th percentile speed of 43 mph;
- At the same point heading east, traffic had an average speed of 40 mph and an 85th percentile speed of 47 mph;
- At a point near, but west of, the Dodge Road intersection, traffic heading west toward County Road had an average speed of 26 mph and an 85th percentile speed of 34 mph; and,
- At the same point heading east, traffic had an average speed of 25 mph and an 85th percentile speed of 33 mph.

EM Center residents Cristin O'Donnell and Martha Israel submitted letters of concern regarding the traffic speeds and the lack of safety for other users of the road. These concerns were reiterated by the residents present at the meeting.

The board discussed the concerns and reviewed sales brochures for a type of speed monitoring device currently in use on the Central VT Medical Center's property in Berlin. The board decided to do the following:

- Request the VT State Police to use some of the town's 40-hour/month contract time on speed enforcement in the EM Center area;
- Investigate opportunities for the procurement of portable &/or temporary speed monitoring devices, including options available through the Washington County Sheriff's Department;
- Investigate the procedural steps, including state statutory requirements, necessary to create an enforceable lower speed limit; and,
- Notify the town's planning commission of the concerns and options in light of East Montpelier Center's treatment in the Town Plan.

Discussion on Planning For Winston/Silberberg Property

➤ **EMFD Request for Building Use:**

- The East Montpelier Fire Department would like to use the old farmhouse on the town-owned property at 3035 US Rte. 2 for a series of training exercises. TA Johnson and EMFD developed a draft Memorandum of Understanding to cover the use. The board reviewed the MOU with an eye toward ensuring that the town is not exposed to

liability for the use and that EMFD is responsible for any damage to the property as a result of the training exercises.

- **Motion: To authorize Chair Gardner to sign the Memorandum of Understanding allowing EMFD use of the farmhouse on the town-owned 3035 US Rte. 2 property.** Made by Mr. Northrup; second by Mr. Troia. Passed unanimously.
- **Discussion on Responses from Volunteer Appreciation Party and Next Steps:**
 - The board continued its efforts to develop the town's options for the recently purchased 48-acre Winston/Silberberg parcel on the northeast side of East Montpelier Village. The next outreach event will be a public inspection of the entire property, including the remaining structure. The inspection will be held Saturday, January 9th, starting at 10:00 a.m.

Presentation of FY2015 Financial Audit

The board reviewed the FY2015 financial audit prepared by Sullivan, Powers and Co., PC. No issues were found, although Sullivan, Powers continues to recommend that the town adopt a more elaborate set of financial policies to regulate to town's fiscal management. Sullivan, Powers also continues to recommend that handling of the Recreation Board's finances be brought under the town's direct management.

Consideration of Letter to EMFD Regarding Expansion of Ambulance Service to Other Towns

At their joint meeting on December 7, 2015, the Calais and East Montpelier Selectboards directed TA Johnson to draft a letter of concern to the East Montpelier Fire Department regarding the possibility that EMFD might contract to provide ambulance service to additional neighboring towns (it already has a contract for service with Plainfield). The board reviewed the draft letter and suggested edits. TA Johnson will create a new draft based on the board edits coupled with any Calais suggestions. Consideration of the new draft will be an agenda item on the January 4th board meeting.

Discussion on FY2017 Budget Development

The board continued work on the FY2017 budget. Discussion focused on the revised capital plan provided by the Capital Improvement Committee. The highway portion of the budget will be the main topic of discussion at the upcoming January 4th meeting.

Preliminary Discussion on 2016 Town Meeting Warning

The board reviewed the draft 2016 Town Meeting Warning. Since both the town and school district annual meetings are run consecutively on the same day, there has been a long-standing policy of rotating year-to-year which entity's meeting goes first. Special circumstances led to the school district meeting being first up for the last two years. The School Board would prefer that "school first" become the normal pattern. The Selectboard discussed the issue and decided that it preferred the rotational system and would like to go first at 2016 Town Meeting. TA Johnson will communicate this result to the School Board.

Two potential articles on the 2016 Warning were based on Selectboard discussions earlier in 2015: (1) a funding article to replenish the Conservation Fund, which dropped to around \$5,000 after this

year's contribution to the conservation of the Ormsbee parcel on Center Road; and, (2) an article requesting voter approval to shift the responsibility for providing town recreation programs from the town's Recreation Board to a non-profit organization created by the members of the Recreation Board for the express purpose of providing the recreation programs. The Selectboard decided to postpone decisions on the two articles and schedule discussions with the Recreation Board and the Conservation Fund Advisory Committee for the January 4th meeting.

Listers Errors & Omissions

The Listers are requesting that the Selectboard allow a change in the as-billed 2015 Grand List to account for a mistaken deletion from the Grand List of the 2952 US Rte. 2 property owned by Gloria Biron. If approved, the parcel's assessed value of \$94,400 will be added to the Grand List.

Motion: To allow the addition of the 2952 US Rte. 2 parcel to the 2015 Grand List at the assessed value of \$94,400. Made by Mr. Northrup; second by Mr. Troia. Passed unanimously.

Renewal of Cemetery Commission Perpetual Care Certificate of Deposit

Town Treasurer Don Welch is requesting permission to renew a recently matured \$50,000 Cemetery Commission perpetual care certificate of deposit. The board discussed the anemic interest rate (around 0.40%) for the one year renewal period. The board will investigate options for more remunerative investments in the future.

Motion: To authorize Treasurer Welch to renew the \$50,000 Cemetery Commission perpetual care certificate of deposit for a one-year term. Made by Mr. Troia; second by Ms. Swasey. Passed unanimously.

Warrants

Members reviewed and signed the warrant.

Minutes

The Chair presented the minutes of the December 7, 2015 Selectboard meeting for consideration.

Motion: To approve the December 7, 2015 Selectboard meeting minutes as amended. Made by Mr. Troia; second by Mr. Northrup. Passed unanimously.

Other Business

Town Administrator Report:

- Citizen Request for Permit Information on Town Website:
 - A town resident asked if the board would allow zoning permit information to be posted on the town website. The board agreed to the request to the extent of allowing the posting of the actual permit document. Application materials will not be posted at this point.

- WEC Park ‘n Ride Issues:
 - Closing on the WEC garage property that will be the site of a town-owned park ‘n ride facility is scheduled for January 4, 2015
 - Level 2 Charging Station:
 - WEC is offering to provide a Level 2 charging station at the park ‘n ride. WEC’s Bill Powell will present the offer and provide the necessary operational information at the January 18th Selectboard meeting.
 - Power at Garage Property:
 - WEC would like to know if the town will need power at the garage property in the interim period between ownership transfer and the construction of the facility. The board decided that there was no need for power at the site.

- Upcoming Meeting Schedule
 - January 4th 6:30 pm Regular SB meeting
 - January 18th 6:30 pm Regular SB meeting
 - January 25th 6:30 pm Special SB meeting

Zoning Administrator Report:

- 3 permit applications since the December 7th board meeting
- Next DRB meeting is scheduled for February 2, 2016

Motion: To adjourn. Made by Mr. Northrup; second by Mr. Troia. Passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned 10:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Bruce Johnson, Town Administrator

Approved: January 4, 2016 East Montpelier Selectboard meeting