

**East Montpelier Selectboard Meeting APPROVED (01/21/19) MINUTES
January 7, 2019 at the Town Office**

Selectboard (SB) members present: Carl Etnier (recording secretary), Seth Gardner, Gene Troia, Amy Willis; Bruce Johnson (town and zoning administrator, collector of delinquent taxes).

Others present: Rob Chapman, Onion River Community Access Media (ORCA); Charles Johnson and Ginny Callan, Conservation Fund Advisory Committee; Gabrielle Malina and Rebecca Schraeder, Revolving Loan Advisory Committee; Ross Hazel, East Montpelier Senior Living Initiative; Road Foreman Guthrie Perry.

A. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Seth Gardner called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

Additions to the agenda

City of Montpelier Request for Trails Use of Town-owned Baird Woods Parcels

VTrans Request to Recommend Center Road Stone Culvert for Listing on National Register of Historic Places

Review of Minutes

Motion: I move to approve the December 17, 2018 minutes as submitted. Made: Ms. Willis. Second: Mr. Troia. 4-0

Public comment

None

B. DISCUSSION ON POTENTIAL BROADCAST OF SELECTBOARD MEETINGS

Rob Chapman, Executive Director, Onion River Community Access Media

Mr. Chapman provided an overview of ORCA's available services for the community, including possible broadcast of board meetings. He explained that ORCA is a community media center that serves 14 towns around Montpelier. It is funded by fees on cable TV bills. Part of their mission is to cover meetings in towns. They have been expanding their offerings and are interested in doing all selectboard and all school board meetings in the 14 towns. EM is biggest town in their region that does not yet have this service.

They would also be interested in live streaming town meetings. They can even take questions from viewers, and inject them into the meeting, as they did at the Hunger Mountain Co-op annual meeting in 2018.

Their proposal is not to stream the SB meetings, just to tape them and archive them forever on the ORCA web site.

In response to a question about how many people in East Montpelier actually have cable TV, Mr. Chapman said Comcast does not make public the cable subscriber numbers by town. He acknowledged that it's probably a rather small number.

Comments by SB members against the idea included 1) members of the public are always welcome to show up at SB meetings, and they do so in large numbers when there are issues of strong concern to the town; 2) the presence of a TV camera could inhibit free and frank deliberations that lead to better decisions on behalf of the town; 3) filming meetings could make it more difficult to recruit introverted townspeople to the SB, and the town would thereby lose valuable contributions; and 4) there are some discussions where the SB would prefer to protect the privacy of affected townspeople, even when the information is a public record, e.g., identities of individuals struggling to pay their taxes.

On the other hand, 1) when an issue of greater importance to the town arises, townspeople not available to show up at the SB meeting may want to see how the issue is discussed; and 2) it may be more important to have filmed records of town government when there are strong disagreements or doubts about the way the SB is handling

things, and it could be more difficult for the SB at such a time to invite ORCA coverage, if ORCA wasn't already there.

The SB asked two long-time, active town residents who were listening to the discussion for their opinions. One said that, on the one hand, he believes there's a truth at some level to the saying that the camera steals a person's soul. On the other hand, open government is now at risk, and SB meetings are a symbol of open government. Recording the SB meetings can show people what open government looks like. The second spoke of experience with filmed meetings at the Central Vermont Solid Waste Management District, where people soon got used to the presence of a camera in the room. And streaming of Montpelier city council meetings sometimes led, reportedly, to viewers rushing to the chambers in their pajamas to add a comment.

In response to a SB question, Mr. Chapman acknowledged that Vermont open meeting law would allow ORCA to come in and film, with or without an invitation to do so. However, he said, so far ORCA has only come into such meetings when invited.

If the SB does not invite ORCA to film all SB meetings, Mr. Chapman said ORCA is willing to come in on a case-by-case basis, e.g., for certain hearings and/or town meeting.

No action was taken.

C. DISCUSSION WITH CONSERVATION FUND ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Committee members Ginny Callan and Charles Johnson discussed the need for further appropriations for the benefit of the town's conservation fund. The fund currently contains approximately \$20,216, including the FY2019 voter-approved appropriation of \$3,000. The committee would like to continue adding to the fund in anticipation of future needs, which include the trails easement element of the expected 2019 Fairmont Dairy/Vermont Land Trust conservation of the main Lylehaven Farm parcel.

Mr. Johnson pointed out that the committee, at the beginning of its work, wanted to get to the fund to \$40,000, and it has never been funded at that level. They recommend adding \$5,000 this year; a reason for the increase over last year's request of \$3,000 is that they now have a specific conservation project in mind.

The SB agreed to put the funding request article on the town meeting warning on its own motion, at the requested \$5,000 level.

D. DISCUSSION WITH REVOLVING LOAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (RLAC)

Committee Chair Gabrielle Malina and committee member Rebecca Schraeder updated the board on the committee's progress in developing recommendations for use of the Sandy Pines Mobile Home Park block grant repayment funds (the Revolving Loan Fund; RLF). The fund now has about \$40,000, and it is expected to have up to \$200,000 when the final repayment is made. The overall intent behind these discussions is to find ways to best use the money for economic development in East Montpelier.

The committee's most recent meeting had insufficient attendance for a quorum, but those assembled discussed the difficulties of turning over 25% of the RLF every three years, which is a state-imposed requirement.

The burdens of administering the RLF could be moved from the committee to a nonprofit community development organization (NCDO). For example, Community Capital would be willing to administer it for small business loans only and restrict lending to East Montpelier, with the committee having refusal and approval ability. However, funds turned over to Community Capital for administering would be difficult to have returned to the RLF Committee if they later wanted to use them for a housing project.

Ms. Malina noted that it is difficult to invest the money in local housing without housing projects in town. She encouraged the SB to consider appointing a housing committee for the town.

Mr. Hazel, a member of both the RLAC and the East Montpelier Senior Living Initiative (EMSLI), pointed out that EMSLI was looking at a project at Blueberry Hill Commons, for a senior center and housing. They would need about \$35,000 for a down payment if that project moves forward.

Ms. Malina commented that two of the six RLAC members are on EMSLI, as well, which she said is not acceptable if RLAC is going to designate money to EMSLI.

One of the more difficult administrative tasks if the RLAC administers the RLF is underwriting loans, i.e., doing due diligence on the potential borrower and the project. Ms. Schraeder said she does this type of work professionally, but she's not interested in adding it to her volunteer work. She also said there's no organization interested in administering the RLF for both business loans and housing. And once a loan from the RLF is approved, someone needs to service the loan. For both reasons, it's easier to administer the fund if the loans go to one or two entities borrowing a larger amount.

For the business loans, Community Capital would service them and provide a suite of additional services to borrowers.

In sum, the town faces five choices for the funds in the RLF:

- 1) The town allows the state to recapture the funds, taking them out of town hands,
- 2) The town administers a mixture of housing- and business loans in house,
- 3) The town asks Community Capital to administer the RLF, exclusively for business loans,
- 4) The town finds an underwriter for housing loans and services the loans itself, or
- 5) A mixture of 3 & 4.

Ms. Malina will email the SB details about the five choices, and the SB will discuss the issue in greater depth at its meeting on February 4.

E. ROAD FOREMAN REPORT

Road Foreman Guthrie Perry presented the FY2020 Highway Budget. His proposals make the total, including labor costs, increase by 1.7% over FY2019. After evaluating his proposals, the SB agreed to include them in the municipal budget.

Mr. Perry also brought up a potential purchase of tanks for Ice B' Gone Magic, a mixture of rock salt, a liquid, agricultural by-product of the distilling process, and magnesium chloride. He said using the product for anti-icing and de-icing saves the town \$1,100 per year on salt purchases. He would like to purchase the tanks so he can purchase a truckload at a time. He presented proposals for new tanks for \$4,500 or used tanks for \$3,500. The SB authorized him to negotiate a better price for the used tanks or to buy the new ones.

F. VTRANS REQUEST TO RECOMMEND CENTER ROAD STONE CULVERT FOR LISTING ON NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

VTrans has expressed the desire to recommend the historic stone culvert on Center Road just south of the Dodge Road intersection for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The SB could not see how such a listing would either help or hurt the town, so the SB has no objections.

G. DISCUSSION ON FY2020 BUDGET DEVELOPMENT

At this point, the increase in spending has been kept to about \$33,000, for a net total increase of \$24,768 on the bottom line, over FY19.

H. DISCUSSION ON 2019 TOWN MEETING WARNING DEVELOPMENT

On January 3, Mr. Johnson and Mr. Etnier met with the members of the Cemetery Commission to discuss a proposal to change the Commission into a Committee of the SB. The change would improve the professionalization of the financial aspect of operating the town cemeteries. A town meeting vote is required to make the change. At its meeting, the Cemetery Commission members voted 5-0 to approve the change.

Consequently, the SB agreed to put two Cemetery Commission articles, on the change and the funding, on the town meeting warning on its own motion.

There is no known petitioned article for the warning in the works at this point.

I. DEVELOPMENT OF 2018 SELECTBOARD REPORT FOR ANNUAL REPORT

The SB suggested topics for Mr. Johnson to include in the report draft.

J. DISCUSSION ON EAST MONTPELIER FIRE DEPARTMENT (EMFD) CONCERNS WITH SELECTBOARD-APPROVED FY2020 EMFD BUDGET REQUESTS

EMFD has submitted a letter to the EM and Calais selectboards expressing dismay at the towns' determinations regarding the EMFD operating budget requests for FY2020 and requesting a joint meeting to discuss the topic. The SB took no action.

K. CITY OF MONTPELIER REQUEST FOR TRAILS USE OF TOWN-OWNED BAIRD WOODS PARCELS

Montpelier is trying to develop ski trails from the Montpelier recreation field complex up to Morse Farm, taking advantage of some of the former Morse Farm Ski Touring Center trails. A key link trail will cross over the town's land, the Baird Woods. The City has provided a landowner approval form.

Motion: I move to authorize the Town Administrator to sign the landowner permission form to grant Montpelier Parks permission to create a winter use trail crossing the Town of East Montpelier's Baird Woods parcels, as indicated on the maps accompanying the permission form. Made: Mr. Etnier. Second: Mr. Troia. 4-0.

L. WARRANTS

Signed

M. OTHER BUSINESS

Vermont State Police Contract Update

Lt. David White is the new station commander and will be handling the contract process; he will come to the March 4 board meeting.

Film Crew Request

A New York University student film crew would like to do a short road/scenic shot near the North Street/Cummings Road intersection January 8 at 9:30 a.m. Washington County Sheriff's Department will monitor it, but they have required that the film crew get town permission. The SB approves the filming.

Property Acquisition

Transfer by donation of the 3-acre undeveloped Hodgeman property to the town is complete.

Meeting Schedule

January 21, 2019	6:30 pm	Selectboard regular meeting
January 28, 2019	6:30 pm	Tentative Selectboard special meeting

N. ADJOURNMENT

Motion: I move to adjourn. Made: Ms. Willis. Second: Mr. Troia. 4-0.

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 pm.