

**East Montpelier Selectboard Meeting APPROVED (01/07/19) MINUTES
December 17, 2018 at the Town Office**

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

Others present: Chris Loyer, Green Mountain Transit; Kim Farmer and Sandy Rousse, Central Vermont Home Health and Hospice (CVHHH); Janna Clar and Becca Jordan, Montpelier Senior Activity Center (MSAC); Town Treasurer Don Welch; Renée Carpenter and Ross Hazel, East Montpelier Senior Living Initiative (EMSLI); Andy Harper and Michelle Harper, Harper Properties; George Cushing, Twin Valley Senior Center.

A. CALL TO ORDER

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

Additions to the agenda

Treasurer's Report from Don Welch.

Review of Minutes

Motion: I move to approve the December 3, 2018 minutes as amended. Made: Ms. Willis. Second: Mr. Etnier. 4-0

Motion: I move to approve the December 6, 2018 minutes as presented. Made: Ms. Swasey. Second: Ms. Willis. 4-0

Motion: I move to approve the December 10, 2018 minutes as presented. Made: Ms. Willis. Second: Mr. Etnier. 4-0

Public comment

None

B. BUDGET DISCUSSION: GREEN MOUNTAIN TRANSIT ROUTE 2 COMMUTER BUS

Chris Loyer, public affairs coordinator with Green Mountain Transit, discussed the Route 2 commuter bus in connection with their annual funding request.

In April 2010, the US 2 Commuter bus began operating between Montpelier and St. Johnsbury. As part of a \$25,000 local match for grants funding the service, the Washington County towns of East Montpelier, Plainfield, and Marshfield have each contributed \$8,333 per year towards the service.

Mr. Loyer reported ridership on the route has rebounded a bit since last year, but it's still below levels of earlier years, a change Mr. Loyer attributed to the availability of inexpensive used cars and low-priced gasoline. He said that it's easier to keep a route going during periods of lower ridership than it is to revive a route if it is discontinued.

Far from considering discontinuing the route, however, Mr. Loyer reported VTrans is discussing alternatives for a possible expansion of Route 2 service, including a leg with direct service to Barre. More information will be coming in advance of a yet-to-be-scheduled public hearing on a concrete proposal.

The SB agreed to put the funding request article on the town meeting warning on its own motion, to fund the Route 2 commuter bus at the same nominal dollar amount the town has contributed since 2010: \$8,333.

C. BUDGET DISCUSSION: CENTRAL VERMONT HOME HEALTH AND HOSPICE

Sandy Rousse, CVHHH President and CEO, and Kim Farnum, CVHHH Community Relations and Development Manager, presented an update on the organization's activities and reasons for asking for increased funding. CVHHH is requesting \$6,000 for FY2020, a \$500 increase (9.1%) from FY2019; their intent is to collect about \$2.33/capita.

Ms. Rousse said CVHHH is facing a cost squeeze on a number of fronts. As the population ages, they are getting an increasing number of clients. They have seen a 50% decrease in their Medicare funding since 2007, in nominal dollars. Furthermore, they expect to lose more than \$200,000 in Medicare funding over the next three years; this is because Medicare is eliminating add-ons for health care in rural areas, where the cost of reaching patients can be greater than in urban areas. The organization is also seeing increased costs for labor, with the current full employment situation; they now pay their workers a wage of at least \$12/hour.

Ms. Rousse described CVHHH services over the entire life-span, from pre-natal care to the end of life. She gave examples from her own family, where CVHHH helped provide care for her during a difficult pregnancy, when she was at home, and also for her husband when he was laid up at home after knee and hip replacements. She said their care costs one third as much as comparable care would cost in a nursing home, and the number of patients they care for now would require five nursing homes to be built if they were to be cared for in such institutions.

For East Montpelier, CVHHH has seen a doubling of the number of clients in long-term care and maternal and child health care since 2015.

After Ms. Rousse referred to the organization's use of volunteer drivers, Mr. Etnier asked about background checks for them. He described a conversation in which he was told some organizations require background checks for their drivers, and the organizations then end up excluding many people who might be capable and trustworthy as volunteer drivers. Ms. Rousse said that as a recipient of Medicare funding, CVHHH is required to conduct background checks on volunteer drivers. However, they also partner with other community organizations that don't conduct the background checks and have an expanded pool of potential drivers.

The SB agreed to put the funding request article on the town meeting warning on its own motion.

D. BUDGET DISCUSSION: MONTPELIER SENIOR ACTIVITY CENTER

Janna Clar, MSAC Director, and Becca Jordan, MSAC Communications & Development Coordinator, presented an update on the organization's activities and reasons for asking for continued funding. MSAC is requesting \$8,000 for FY2020, no change from FY2019.

Ms. Clar said MSAC has added 20 hours per week of programs. They have increased offerings and participation in classes, drop-in programs, trips, and meals, with many people participating in more than one way. East Montpelier residents still comprise the greatest number of non-Montpelier residents who participate.

In the last year, MSAC has focused on the "senior center without walls" model, a national trend. They have more programming demand than they can schedule into the existing space, so they are doing more work off site. They have focused on Berlin, Middlesex, and Worcester so far, in recognition that there is another senior center in East Montpelier. However, Janice Walrafen has offered to do a clay class at her studio in East Montpelier; if they do that, they would reach out to Twin Valley Senior Center to be a partner. Ms. Clar expressed openness to other ideas on partnering with Twin Valley Senior Center.

They are also reaching out to other ages than seniors for some of their classes, like art and language classes. But they are maintaining the age limitations for the movement classes.

MSAC is now allowing members from supporting towns to register for classes the same day registration opens, a system replacing the previous two-week window in which sign-up was only open to Montpelier residents.

They partner with many local organizations, like Central Vermont Council on Aging, for blood pressure clinics and more.

Ms. Clar said a potential indoor recreation center is still under consideration by the city of Montpelier. A survey is underway, and focus groups were convened. There has been discussion about making the recreation center

more regional. She said to expect to hear more about this idea, if the regional approach continues to be an option.

Ms. Clar noted that MSAC has become part of a larger department in the city of Montpelier, but she said MSAC has a separate budget, so town contributions go solely to MSAC activities.

Other work she does includes advocacy, for example, working with Bernie Sanders' office to increase support for senior centers from state and federal sources. A lot of what senior centers do (movement classes, foot clinics, meals on wheels) is a form of health care, but they currently get no health insurance reimbursement.

MSAC is also attempting to get national accreditation, which makes it more attractive to some funders. The process of applying for accreditation is helping MSAC identify gaps in their organization.

The SB agreed to put the funding request article on the town meeting warning on its own motion.

E. PRESENTATION OF FUNDING REQUEST STUDY COMMITTEE REPORT

The funding request study committee suggested three changes from FY2019 appropriations: \$4,000 for Twin Valley Seniors, up from \$3,500; and two new organizations, \$250 for Big Heavy World (an independent, volunteer-staffed music office with a mission of preserving and promoting original Vermont-made music) and \$250 for Community Harvest of Central Vermont (a food gleaning organization). This brings the total to \$23,691, up 4.4% from last year's \$22,691.

The SB accepted the report and agreed to put the funding request article on the town meeting warning on its own motion.

F. PRESENTATION OF FY2018 FINANCIAL AUDIT

The final FY2018 external audit has been received and posted to the town website as statutorily required. The auditors, Sullivan Powers, found no "material weakness" in the town's finances. However, they did suggest beefed up internal controls against fraud. Treasurer Don Welch will follow up with Sullivan Powers to get suggestions on whom to hire as a consultant to conduct a fraud risk assessment and potentially recommend additional internal controls.

G. TREASURER'S REPORT

Mr. Welch presented a detailed report on the state of the town's budget, almost halfway through the fiscal year. Overall, expenditures and revenues match up well with the budget.

H. PRESENTATION OF PROPOSAL FOR FY2019 FINANCIAL AUDIT

Sullivan Powers has submitted a proposal to do the town's FY2019 external audit for \$14,600, an increase of \$300 over the FY2018 audit base cost of \$14,300 (2.1%). The town has used Sullivan Powers for the past five years.

Motion: I move to accept the Sullivan Powers proposal for the town's FY2019 external audit. Made: Mr. Etnier. Second: Ms. Willis. 4-0.

I. PRESENTATION OF FY2020 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE PLAN

On behalf of the Capital Improvement Committee, Mr. Welch presented an updated plan for anticipated capital expenditures over the foreseeable future. The committee is recommending an increased Capital Reserve Fund budget line (\$435,234) for FY2020, up from \$431,484 (\$3,750, or 0.9%). The increase is primarily due to the higher expected cost of replacing the town pickup truck and shorter predicted lifespan.

Mr. Gardner objected to replacing the pickup truck after six years of service, especially after major body work was just done on it. However, he did not object to including the new projection in the plan, as the plan will be modified if capital expenditures can reasonably be delayed (or must be moved up).

The SB discussed paving as a major area where expenditures in the plan may reasonably be delayed, as roads are holding up well after concerted and systematic work in recent years. Out of an abundance of caution, however, the SB decided not to adjust the plan's paving projections at this time.

Motion: I move to accept the report of the capital improvement committee and adopt the FY2020 capital plan. Made: Mr. Etnier. Second: Ms. Willis. 4-0.

J. CONSIDERATION OF MUNICIPAL PLANNING GRANT (MPG) AGREEMENT

The town received the requested 2019 MPG in the amount of \$7,250 of state funds, which the town will match to the tune of \$1,600. The money is to pay for additional time from the consultant who is facilitating both the completion of the ongoing zoning regulation update project and, if all goes as planned, the adoption process.

Motion: I move to authorize the town administrator to sign the municipal planning grant agreement. Made: Mr. Etnier. Second: Ms. Willis. 4-0.

K. DISCUSSION ON EM VILLAGE BRIDGE DESIGN CONCERN

Unlike the previous bridge, the new Route 14 S bridge in East Montpelier village has opaque "railings," which are essentially Jersey barriers with bas-relief arches. Mr. Etnier said initially he was simply disappointed with the aesthetic of losing the visual contact with the river while crossing the bridge. However, he soon realized that the configuration of the road height and stop lines, along with the opaque railings, has traffic safety implications: 1) When traveling east on Route 2, it is impossible in most vehicles to see most vehicles on the bridge, so it's not possible to see whether they are slowing down or stopping for the intersection before one is practically in the intersection; 2) Most traffic on the bridge going north cannot see Route 2 traffic from their stop lines, and edging forward to where they can see Route 2 traffic puts them in the path of any tractor trailers turning from Route 2 onto the bridge.

Mr. Johnson reported concerns expressed by others, including a traffic engineer.

The SB indicated that the traffic safety concerns are potentially an issue, but they did not have a particular remedy to suggest. Mr. Etnier said he had talked to Jill Barrett, outreach coordinator for the project, and he will contact VTrans project manager Carolyn Carlson to continue the conversation.

In the discussion, the SB also voiced admiration for the bridge contractor's management of construction, including the short time period for closing the bridge, the well-managed flow of traffic during construction, and the hard work of the crew in all weather.

L. DISCUSSION WITH EAST MONTPELIER SENIOR LIVING INITIATIVE (EMSLI) ON A POTENTIAL SENIOR HOUSING PROJECT

EMSLI's President Renée Carpenter presented a new possibility for senior housing in East Montpelier: purchasing Blueberry Common, the site of the Twin Valley Senior Center and four apartments, with the possibility of expanding either the senior center area or the number of apartments, or both.

The town's 5-year grant to EMSLI from the Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) will expire December 23, 2018; there is approximately \$19,800 held by the town for the benefit of EMSLI. After the grant termination date, the unused funds are to be folded back into the town's loan fund. Exactly how that will work with the Sandy Pines block grant accounting is still under discussion.

While options are now being explored for the future management of the \$48,000 in the RLF, Mr. Johnson said the EMSLI grant is already outside of those monies, and how it is administered will not affect decisions about the RLF.

The SB found that the project proposed by EMSLI to be in the spirit of the original grant. Ms. Carpenter requested a one-year extension of the grant. To place any potential future consideration of an additional

extension at a less busy time of year for the SB, the SB decided to extend the grant until February 15, 2020.

Motion: I move to extend the December 23, 2013 Grant Agreement between the Town of East Montpelier and the East Montpelier Senior Living Initiative, under the same terms, through February 15, 2020. Made: Mr. Etnier. Second: Ms. Willis. 4-0.

M. PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION ON FY2020 BUDGET DEVELOPMENT

The draft budget anticipates a sub-2% increase overall (less than a 1 cent increase in the municipal tax rate). The highway budget aspect will be discussed at the January 7, 2019 board meeting.

N. PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION ON 2019 TOWN MEETING WARNING

The very preliminary draft warning includes potential articles still under consideration: the elimination of the Cemetery Commission and town authorization to sell a portion of the town-owned Old LaPerle Farm parcel. Mr. Etnier volunteered to attend the next Cemetery Commission meeting, to discuss the issue of converting the commission to a committee.

O. WARRANTS

Signed.

P. OTHER BUSINESS

Town Administrator Report

Kellogg-Hubbard Library Board of Trustees Update

There is a potential opening on board for an East Montpelier representative. Our current representative, Lindy Biggs, is considering stepping down and is working with the Board of Trustees to determine the process for finding her replacement.

Potential Use of Town-owned Baird Lots off of North Street for Nordic Trail

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. The trail would cross over the town's land.

Meeting Schedule

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| January 3, 2019 | 1:00 pm | Cemetery Commission meeting |
| January 7, 2019 | 6:30 pm | Selectboard regular meeting |
| January 14, 2019 | 6:00 pm | WCUUSD special school meeting |
| January 21, 2019 | 6:30 pm | Selectboard regular meeting |
| January 28, 2019 | 6:30 pm | Tentative Selectboard special meeting |

Zoning Administrator Report

There has been one new permit application since the December 3 SB meeting; 54 total so far this year.

The next Development Review Board meeting will be held January 8, 2019, with one hearing scheduled at this point, a conditional use review of Brown request to operate an auto service business at 505 Quaker Road.

Q. ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:41 pm.