

Minutes of the East Montpelier Selectboard

March 4, 2019 Selectboard Meeting

SB Attendance: Chair Seth Gardner, Carl Etnier, Amy Willis, and Kim Swasey; Town Administrator Bruce Johnson

Public Attendance: VT State Police Lt. Dave White & Sgt. Charles Winn; State Representative Kimberly Jessup; Julie Potter; Town Treasurer Don Welch; Town Road Foreman Guthrie Perry

Chair Gardner called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

Additions to Agenda:

Agenda Item G involving the Revolving Loan Advisory Committee will be rescheduled to the March 18, 2019 board meeting.

Minutes:

Chair Gardner presented the draft minutes of the February 18, 2019 board meeting.

Motion: To approve the February 18, 2019 minutes as presented. Made by Ms. Swasey; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

Public Comment: None

Discussion with Vermont State Police; Consideration of 2019 State Police Contract

VSP contracts with East Montpelier to provide 40 hours per month of patrolling in town, over and above the work they do as the town's primary police service. This annual discussion of the contract provides an opportunity to receive an overview of their work in town over the previous year as well as discuss issues of concern. Lt. Dave White and Sgt. Charles Winn presented statistics on the calls that VSP had responded to and the amount of traffic enforcement work they had done. East Montpelier continues to enjoy a relatively low crime rate.

A pilot "VSP troopers serving in place of local police" project is currently underway in Waterbury. Two troopers are assigned to Waterbury fulltime, one on day shift, one on nights.

The 2019-2020 contract includes a 5% increase in the statewide average hourly rate, now \$71.61. We generally are charged a somewhat lesser rate than listed as the Middlesex barracks tends to have younger troopers on staff. An additional challenge for staffing that barracks is the combination of National Guard deployments (slots must be held open) and the expansion in number and use of specialized forces, both forensic and tactical.

Motion: To authorize Chair Gardner to sign the new contract with the Vermont State Police for the period April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020 at a maximum cost of \$34,373. Made by Mr. Etnier; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

State Police Community Advisory Board Report

Town Treasurer Don Welch is also a town representative to the Community Advisory Board (CAB) that serves as a conduit between VSP and the town.

After years of frustration, Mr. Welch expressed a degree of optimism that there may finally be a viable method to pass along to the community a redacted version of the information presented by VSP to the CAB. He will report back when he has more details.

Town Treasurer Report: Don Welch, Town Treasurer

Treasurer Welch provided the board with a positive financial status report.

Discussion on Potential Shift of Online Payment Provider

Treasurer Welch and board members discussed the possibility of shifting from our current credit card payment service provider, Noble Payment Technologies, to the Vermont Information Consortium (VIC). Noble utilizes a variable rate processing fee methodology for credit card payments (generally ranging from 2.5-4% of the payment) based on the specific card used, which makes it difficult to quote an accurate cost in advance of the actual payment. VIC charges a flat 3% fee on each charge. Both services charge \$1.50 for eCheck payments. Unlike Noble, VIC has a local office and serves neighboring municipalities. The board recommended that Treasurer Welch continue to investigate the provider change, aiming for a summer (post-tax season) shift.

Conversation with State Representative Kimberly Jessup

Representative Jessup provided a legislative session update in advance of Town Meeting Day. She highlighted four bills in what she acknowledged to be a very active legislative season:

- H.57 dealing with abortion and reproductive rights
 - In light of concerns regarding the long-term viability of Roe v. Wade, the House passed the bill that will preserve in statute the abortion rights Vermont women have been entitled to over the past 46 years.
- H.513 dealing with broadband availability
 - This bill, still in committee, is focused on finding effective means to bringing the desire for “last mile service” closer to fruition; providing viable funding options for municipality-driven efforts, like CVFiber (the central VT communications union district East Montpelier is a part of), is an important element of this effort.
- H.3 dealing with ethnic studies
 - The House unanimously passed legislation to establish a Working Group to review current ethnic and social equity studies education standards and, by June 2021, recommend updated standards; the intent is to better prepare students to thrive in an increasingly diverse society; a slightly altered version of this bill has since passed unanimously in the Senate.
- H.39 dealing with Act 46 merger deadlines
 - The House overwhelming approved a one-year extension of the forced merger process for some of the school districts under State Board of Education-mandated

merger requirements; East Montpelier is one of the communities that would receive the extension (essentially putting off the merger of the U-32 towns until July 1, 2020) if the bill is enacted into law.

Discussion of Black Rock Coal Quarry Proposal

Road Foreman Perry and the board discussed a recent proposal from Black Rock Coal regarding its quarry in Calais off County Road. The quarry has an active Act 250 permit (through 2022) for the extraction of 80,000 cubic yards of material, with approximately 70,000 cubic yards remaining under that allotment. The permit does not allow for on-site crushing. The proposal envisions the town purchasing the quarry.

Board members evinced a degree of interest in the concept of having a viable long-term source of gravel and stone within 3 miles of the town garage. The town will request detailed quarry documentation and a post-winter site visit. Evaluation of the proposal will continue once the additional information is obtained.

Delinquent Tax Collector Report

On Thursday, March 7, 2019, the town is holding a tax sale for the Blake/Allard property located at 2784 US Rte. 2. The base bid, which covers the delinquent taxes along with legal fees and costs, is \$18, 208.68. The board needed to decide whether the town will submit a base-level bid if no one participates in the sale.

Motion: To authorize TA Johnson to make the base bid on the Blake/Allard property scheduled for tax sale March 7, 2019. Made by Mr. Etnier; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

Work Session for 2019 Town Meeting

Board members saw no reason to alter its presentation methodology in light of the rather limited feedback it received at the town forum held on March 2nd.

Personnel Matters

The board discussed a letter from the Recreation Board regarding the process for the standard annual appointments of committee & board members. The Rec Board would prefer not to be responsible for recommending reappointments or new members for the coming year.

The board decided to provide additional leave time to Town Clerk Laquerre in appreciation for her willingness to put in the long hours necessary during the town meeting election period.

Motion: To provide Town Clerk Laquerre with 30 hours of sick leave in compensation for her recent weekend, evening, and holiday workload. Made by Ms. Swasey; second by Mr. Etnier. Passed unanimously.

Warrants

Members signed warrant.

Other Business

Town Administrator Report:

- Office Computer Network Overhaul Project:
 - rbTechnologies is working on a quote for a complete network replacement – server and desktops; likely cost in the \$30-\$35k range; target date is September/October 2019.
- Emerald Ash Borer Grant Program Update:
 - The town received the \$2,000 grant for an ash tree inventory and other associated concerns involved in readying the town for EAB issues.
 - Paul Cate and others will be distributing EAB information at town meeting.
- Meeting Schedule:
 - March 5th 9:30 am Town meeting at EMES
 - March 18th 6:30 pm Regular Selectboard meeting
 - April 8th 7:00 pm Selectboard “special” meeting
 - April 11th 5-7 pm EMFD quarterly meeting at the ESF
 - April 22nd 6:30 pm Selectboard “special” meeting

Zoning Administrator Report:

- No new zoning permit applications have been submitted since the February 18th board meeting. There have been 9 total applications so far this year.
- Next DRB meeting will be held April 9, 2019. There is one scheduled hearing for final plan review of a proposed 2-lot subdivision of the Coburn property at 139 Daggett Road. The anticipated March 12, 2019 DRB meeting had to be canceled due to an anticipated lack of a quorum.

Motion: To adjourn. Made by Ms. Willis; second by Ms. Swasey. Passed unanimously.
Meeting adjourned 9:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Bruce Johnson, Town Administrator

Approved: March 18, 2019 East Montpelier Selectboard meeting