

Minutes of the East Montpelier Selectboard

December 16, 2019 Selectboard Meeting

SB Attendance: Chair Seth Gardner, Gene Troia, Amy Willis, Carl Etnier and Casey Northrup; Town Administrator Bruce Johnson

Calais SB Attendance: Chair Denise Wheeler, John Brabant, Rose Pelchuck, Sharon Fannon and Clif Emmons; Recording Secretary Katie Lane-Karnas

Public Attendance: Jenn Wood (GMT); Sandy Rousse (CVHHH); Janna Clar (MSAC); Carolyn Brennan and Lindy Biggs (KHL); Susan Crampton and Denise Wheeler (TVSC); Jon Jewitt; Toby Talbot (EMFD)

Chair Gardner called the meeting to order at 5:10 p.m.

Additions to Agenda:

- **EMFD Request for ESF Bond Fund Use to Purchase Updated Wood Pellet Boiler Controller**

Minutes: The board tabled review of the draft minutes until later in the meeting.

Public Comment: None

Budget Discussion: GMT/Route 2 Commuter Bus

Jenn Wood, Green Mountain Transit Public Affairs & Community Relations Manager

Ms. Wood reported that overall ridership on the GMT/RCT (Rural Community Transportation) Route 2 Commuter Bus route that runs between Montpelier and St. Johnsbury has increased 8.16% in 2019 over 2018 for the July to November timeframe. This is a time of flux for GMT, with seemingly everything under study and in play for change. In particular, GMT is trying to stabilize its management, develop a fair share concept for town funding, and set up a matrix to evaluate both bus routes and individual stops. There will be numerous opportunities for town and public feedback in the coming year.

The GMT request remains at the same level, \$8,333, as it has since the introduction of the service back in 2010. Both Plainfield and Marshfield contribute the same amount. Ms. Wood reported that the funding request is likely to rise in the coming years as GMT struggles with rising costs and flat revenues. The likely target is \$12,000, reached in incremental increases of 3-5%. She repeated a request made by all previous GMT representatives: Please can the US2 Commuter appropriation be included as a budget line in the general fund budget rather than as a standalone funding article? GMT is now a Vermont municipality on par with CVRPC & CVSWMD, no longer an independent non-profit entity. In light of the change, perhaps the appropriation could be seen more as a dues payment. As in the past, board members expressed concern regarding such a shift. Board members were more enthusiastic about a potential shift in the timing of the annual conversation with GMT to a February board meeting so that board members have current information right in advance of town meeting. GMT struggles to have representatives cover town meetings given the large number of communities involved.

By consensus board members agreed to place an article for \$8,333 for support of the GMT US2 Commuter Bus on the draft 2020 Town Meeting Warning.

Budget Discussion: Central VT Home Health & Hospice
Sandy Rousse, CVHHH President & CEO

Ms. Rousse started off her presentation with the deceptively simple concept that it's the funding sources like town appropriations that allow the CVHHH staff to do what should be done, not just what must be done.

Service to East Montpelier residents continues to grow, with visits up 26% and individuals served up 13% over the past year. Despite the increase in service, CVHHH is requesting a level-funded \$6,000 appropriation for FY2021.

Ms. Rousse highlighted a special exhibit developed over the past couple of years in partnership with National Life: Being There, a collection of CVHHH caregiver portraits and stories by photographer Corey Hendrickson. It can be seen at www.cvhhh.org/beingthere.

By consensus board members agreed to place an article for \$6,000 for support of Central VT Home Health & Hospice on the draft 2020 Town Meeting Warning.

Budget Discussion: Montpelier Senior Activity Center
Janna Clar, MSAC Director

Ms. Clar reported that the use of MSAC by East Montpelier residents continues to rise, at least 113 and likely over 150 over the past year. Overall MSAC served more than 1,500 people last year. MSAC offers over 80 classes weekly, half of which are movement oriented. East Montpelier residents continue to enjoy low cost membership and class sign-up opportunities equal to those provided to Montpelier residents. Class costs are affordable (\$35 for a 12-week yoga class) and no-application financial aid is available upon request.

MSAC is requesting an appropriation of \$9,000 for FY2021, up from \$8,000 in FY2020. The actual rate per client, at the usage rate of 150 EM residents, is \$60/resident. Montpelier pays over \$150/client plus provides significant no-cost services. All the 6 outlying member towns (Moretown plus the 5 U-32 communities) are seeing increased appropriation requests.

By consensus board members agreed to place an article for \$9,000 for support of the Montpelier Senior Activity Center on the draft 2020 Town Meeting Warning.

Budget Discussion: Kellogg-Hubbard Library
Carolyn Brennan, KHL Co-Director, Library Director
Lindy Biggs, Town Representative to the KHL Board of Trustees

Ms. Brennan provided a general update on the library, with the focus on East Montpelier-centric elements. The East Montpelier Room, the big meeting room in the library basement, has been overhauled, updated, and otherwise made more appealing for a variety of uses, including its longtime usage as a meeting room for groups. In particular, it is now utilized as an afterschool kid

hangout space in the afternoons. Ms. Brennan also highlighted the direct outreach to East Montpelier such as the daycare visits, the annual EMFD Fireman Story Time event, and the regular Old Meeting House community lunch visits. She's open to suggestions for more such outreach efforts.

The library request is once again level-funded at \$42,022.

By consensus board members agreed to place an article for \$42,022 for support of Kellogg-Hubbard Library on the draft 2020 Town Meeting Warning.

Budget Discussion: Twin Valley Seniors, Inc.

Susan Crampton, Member of the Twin Valley Senior Center Board of Directors

Denise Wheeler, Member of the Twin Valley Senior Center Board of Directors

Ms. Crampton explained that the Twin Valley Senior Center request is based on the cost of the Meals on Wheels program provided by the organization to its six member towns. There is a significant gap between the actual cost of the meals and the federal reimbursement. The organization has determined the East Montpelier share of that gap to be approximately \$5,000. The organization requested an appropriation of \$4,500 for FY2021, with the intent to raise the request next year to \$5,000. After meeting with organization representatives, the Funding Request Study Committee, which evaluated the TVSC request as part of the committee's standard process, is recommending that the board set a separate article for Twin Valley Seniors, taking it out of the consolidated funding request article, in the full gap amount of \$5,000.

By consensus board members agreed to place an article for \$5,000 for support of Twin Valley Seniors, Inc. on the draft 2020 Town Meeting Warning.

Presentation of Funding Request Study Committee Report

The report reflects a number of changes from the FY2020 appropriations:

- Twin Valley Seniors, Inc. is removed from the article;
- Two new organizations:
 - Central VT Disaster Animal Response Team (CVDART), set at \$200; and,
 - Rural Community Transportation (RCT), set at \$1,000.
- Two known organizations with changes:
 - Home Share Now has been replaced by HomeShare Vermont; the central VT organization essentially was folded into the Chittenden County-area organization; same service, new Montpelier office, same funding level; and,
 - The Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District requested funding for the first time in many years; WNRCD is handling a stormwater project at Morse Farm; the recommended appropriation is \$500.
- VCIL (\$300, up from \$250) and VT Family Network (\$200, up from \$100) received small increases.

The committee recommends the funding request article be set at \$21,541, down 9.1% from last year's \$23,691, a deceptive decrease since Twin Valley Seniors, Inc., which received an FY2020 appropriation of \$4,000, has been removed from the process.

By consensus board members agreed to place the joint social organization funding request article for \$21,541 on the draft 2020 Town Meeting Warning.

Presentation of FY2021 Capital Improvement Committee Plan

The Capital Improvement Committee presented an updated, for FY2021, plan for anticipated capital expenditures over the foreseeable future. The plan is the same as that reviewed favorably by the Selectboard at its October 21, 2019 meeting. The committee is recommending an increased Capital Reserve Fund budget line (\$446,634) for FY2021, up from \$435,234 (2.6%). The increase is due to the addition of \$10,000 to the Opportunity Fund to better reflect local matches for grants and the inclusion of a replacement line for the highway department's hydroseeder and associated trailer purchased in 2018.

Motion: To adopt the FY2021 Capital Improvement Plan as presented. Made by Mr. Etnier; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

Minutes

Chair Gardner presented the draft minutes of the December 5, 2019 board meeting.

Motion: To approve the December 5, 2019 minutes as presented. Made by Mr. Troia; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

Chair Gardner presented the draft minutes of the December 2, 2019 board meeting.

Motion: To approve the December 2, 2019 minutes as presented. Made by Mr. Northrup; second by Mr. Etnier. Passed unanimously.

Special Joint Meeting with the Calais Selectboard to Discuss EMFD FY2021 Ambulance & Emergency Services Budget Request

The two boards considered the East Montpelier Fire Department's FY2021 budget request:

| Service | Calais | | East Montpelier | | Total | |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| | FY2021 Request | % Increase over FY20 | FY2021 Request | % Increase over FY20 | FY2021 Request | % Increase over FY20 |
| Fire | \$ 64,898 | 4.3% | \$129,796 | 4.3% | \$194,694 | 4.3% |
| Ambulance | \$ 82,620 | 10.3% | \$165,241 | 10.3% | \$247,861 | 10.3% |
| Town Total | \$147,518 | 7.6% | \$295,037 | 7.6% | \$442,555 | 7.6% |

The ambulance service budget includes other revenue items: contracted amounts from Plainfield (\$52,062, up 3% from FY2020) and Marshfield (\$42,436, up 3%) plus \$15,000 (down \$3,000) from off-the-top EMFD ambulance service revenue.

Total FY2021 Ambulance Service Budget: \$357,359 (up 6.9% from FY2020)
Total FY2021 All Services Budget: \$552,053 (up 5.9% from FY2020)

Chair Gardner opened the discussion by pointing out that ambulance staffing remains the key component to these budget conversations and followed by providing a series of options: (1) continuing doing as the towns have done for years and bump up staffing marginally; (2) fully fund full staffing immediately or incrementally over a few years by shifting the use of the ambulance revenue stream to cover staffing and small capital items, moving the larger capital items back to direct town vote; and, (3) again fully fund, but this time by rapidly increasing the staffing budget lines directly and leaving the ambulance revenue stream for the most part as is.

Board members agreed that now was the time to address the known need to eliminate reliance on volunteer EMTs. Most board members were uncomfortable with radically altering the current ambulance revenue division methodology, which fuels the EMFD capital reserve fund utilized for all EMFD capital purchases since the ambulance service was established in 2010. Given the desire to leave the capital reserve fund revenue stream alone, additional funding will need to come directly from the towns. The cost to move to full per diem, 24/7, 2 employees/shift staffing would require approximately \$150,000 in additional funding. At the current two-thirds/one-third cost split between East Montpelier and Calais, this means \$100,000 from East Montpelier (about 3.3 cents on the tax rate) and \$50,000 from Calais (about 2.7 cents).

With a course of action and a basic cost understood, the details will need to be hammered out. Whether to and exactly how to stagger the increases remains the big unknown. The boards will work on potential options individually, before getting back together to make the final decision for FY2021 by mid-January 2020. Both boards were comfortable with the basic budget requests for fire and ambulance services, so those levels will form the base onto which any funding targeted for staffing will be added.

EMFD Request for ESF Bond Fund Use to Purchase Updated Wood Pellet Boiler Controller

The East Montpelier Fire Department (EMFD) is requesting funding to replace the controller for the pellet boiler at the Emergency Services Facility (EMFD Station 2). The boiler has suffered through a series of faults and shutdowns that require EMFD to utilize the more costly backup propane system. The replacement controller would notify Sunwood Biomass, the company maintaining the system, automatically when operational issues occur, minimizing potential impacts and resulting in a more reliable heating system. The controller upgrade would cost \$837.

By consensus the Calais Selectboard agreed to the use of the ESF bond fund for this purpose.

Motion: To authorize the expenditure of \$837 from the ESF remainder bond fund for an upgraded controller for the ESF pellet boiler. Made by Mr. Northrup; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

The Calais board left the meeting.

Presentation of FY2019 Financial Audit

Sullivan, Powers & Co., P.C. has completed the town's FY2019 financial audit. The audit reflected the town's solid financial condition, with a comfortable general fund balance and healthy rainy day and capital reserve funds. No "material weaknesses" were found. The only "significant deficiency" related to the mistaken placement of an FY2020 invoice as an FY2019 expense. The company again

recommended the town enact stronger internal control procedures and conduct a fraud risk assessment.

By consensus board members accepted the FY2019 audit.

Presentation of Proposal for FY2020 Financial Audit

Sullivan Powers has submitted a proposal to do the town's FY2020 external audit for \$14,800, an increase of \$200 over the FY2019 audit base cost of \$14,600 (1.3%). The agreement has a three-year component if desired, with the FY2021 audit at \$15,100 and FY2022 at \$15,400 (both approximately 2% increases). The town has used Sullivan Powers for the past six years. Board members weighed the relatively minor increases proposed by a company that has worked effectively with staff against the potential benefits of going out to bid (the possibility of lower costs and a new set of eyes reviewing town activities). Sullivan Powers was the low bidder by a significant margin the last time the town put the audit out to bid.

Motion: To accept the Sullivan Powers proposal to handle the town's financial audits for FY2020, FY2021 and FY2022. Made by Mr. Troia; second by Mr. Etnier. Passed unanimously.

Preliminary Discussion on FY2021 Budget Development

The SB reviewed the draft budget with an eye on places to cut to make room for the possibility that the EMFD ambulance service budget will rise significantly in light of the decision to move toward funding full-time staffing.

Work on the budget will continue at all the meetings through January 2020, with a focus on the highway lines at the January 6, 2020 meeting.

Preliminary Discussion on 2020 Town Meeting Warning

The draft warning includes articles still under consideration:

- The shift of the constable from an elected to an appointed position;
- Numerous funding articles, including the addition of Twin Valley Seniors as a standalone article and the reappearance of an article benefitting Cross VT Trail; and,
- The creation of an East Montpelier Conservation Commission.

Work on the warning will continue at all the meetings through January 2020.

Consideration of Sale of LaPerle Farm Parcel

At its November 4, 2019 meeting the board provisionally accepted an offer from Marc Fontaine to purchase the eastern portion of the town-owned Old LaPerle Farm Property. Notice was provided to town residents and others regarding the proposed sale and the right of residents to petition for a town vote on the issue. The 30-day window for petition submission has passed without any submission or evidence of a petition effort. No direct feedback was received. The notice also opened a window for alternative offers. None were received.

Motion: To sell the approximate 45-acre eastern portion of the town-owned Old LaPerle Farm Property to Marc Fontaine, Fontaine Forestry & Millworks, for \$200,000 in accord with Mr. Fontaine's proposed terms:

- **\$50,000 down**
- **Balance paid in equal annual payments at 4% interest**
- **Payments due on June 1st of 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023**

Made by Mr. Troia; second by Mr. Northrup. Passed unanimously.

Chair Gardner will work with Mr. Fontaine to move the proposed sale forward. TA Johnson will work with Chase & Chase Surveyors to complete the necessary boundary adjustment to separate the eastern portion from the old farmhouse portion next to the park 'n ride facility.

Consideration of VTrans Mallory Brook/Center Road Culvert Replacement Study Grant Amendment

The town has received a requested amendment to the VT Agency of Transportation grant funding the design engineering study to develop a plan to replace the use of the historic stone culvert carrying Mallory Brook under Center Road. The existing culvert will be left in place, with a new structure installed about 50 feet to the south. The brook's channel will be redirected to the new culvert. The original grant was for \$12,000 (\$10,800 state funds; \$1,200 town match) and was to expire December 31, 2019. The amendment increases the award to \$40,000 (\$36,000 state funds; \$4,000 town match) and pushed the deadline to December 31, 2020.

Motion: To authorize TA Johnson to accept the grant amendment. Made by Mr. Etnier; second by Mr. Troia. Passed unanimously.

Consideration of Adding Electric Service at Recreation Field

The Recreation Board is proposing to bring electric service to the recreation field. The new line would run underground from just south of the EMES bus loop exit to the recreation field shed. The total cost of the installation is anticipated to be approximately \$3,000. Electrician Jamie Laquerre is donating his services. The town road crew would handle laying the line.

The board decided to postpone any action on this request due to cost concerns and the lack of information supporting the need for the electric service. The Recreation Board will be asked to attend a January board meeting to discuss the proposal.

Listers Errors & Omissions: Washington Electric Cooperative

The East Montpelier Board of Listers is requesting authority to alter the 2019 Grand List in light of an assessment change (an increase of \$119,700) for the WEC utility infrastructure. WEC has accepted the increased assessment. The change will trigger a revised 2019/20 tax bill for WEC for an increase totaling \$2,741.72.

Motion: To authorize the listers to make the necessary adjustment to the 2019 Grand List to reflect the increased assessment of the WEC utility infrastructure. Made by Mr. Troia; second by Mr. Northrup. Passed unanimously.

Rural Road Vegetation Assessments PAC Issues:**➤ Consideration of Committee Name Change**

- The Rural Road Vegetation Assessments Project Activity Committee is both too long and no longer representative of the committee's mission, which has evolved over the past year to include taking the lead on the town's response to the emerald ash borer threat. The board considered a few options that all started with "Resilient Road" and settled on the simplest version.
- **Motion: To rename the Rural Road Vegetation Assessments PAC to the Resilient Roads Committee.** Made by Mr. Etnier; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

➤ Consideration of Change of Selectboard Member on Committee

- As the committee mission shifted from the original roadside vegetation management project to the EAB response effort, Chair Gardner has been supplanted by Mr. Etnier as the active Selectboard member working with the committee. Chair Gardner is more than willing to officially step aside in favor of Mr. Etnier.
- **Motion: To accept Chair Gardner's resignation from the Resilient Roads Committee.** Made by Mr. Northrup; second by Mr. Troia. Passed 4-0 (Chair Gardner recused himself).
- **Motion: To appoint Mr. Etnier to the Resilient Roads Committee.** Made by Ms. Willis; second by Mr. Northrup. Passed 4-0 (Mr. Etnier recused himself).

Warrants

Board members signed the warrant.

Minutes

Chair Gardner presented the draft minutes of the November 19, 2019 board meeting.

Motion: To approve the November 19, 2019 minutes as amended. Made by Mr. Troia; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

Other Business**Town Administrator Report**

- Kim Kendall has accepted appointment as the town's representative on the Wrightsville Beach Recreation District board.
- Meeting Schedule:
 - January 6, 2020 6:30 p.m. Selectboard regular meeting
 - January 13, 2020 6:00 p.m. Public forum and hearing on EAB plan at U-32
Tree warden and Resilient Roads Committee
 - January 20, 2020 6:30 p.m. Selectboard regular meeting
 - January 27, 2020 6:30 p.m. Tentative Selectboard special meeting

Zoning Administrator Report

- There have been no new applications since the December 2, 2019 SB meeting. There have been 65 applications so far in 2019.

- There is currently no scheduled DRB meeting.

Motion: To adjourn. Made by Mr. Northrup; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.
Meeting adjourned 9:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Bruce Johnson, Town Administrator

Approved: January 6, 2020 East Montpelier Selectboard meeting