

Minutes of the East Montpelier Selectboard

January 20, 2020 Selectboard Meeting

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

Public Attendance: Stephen Mills (Times Argus); Renée Carpenter (Friends of Coburn Pond)

Chair Gardner called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Additions to Agenda:

- **Naming of Private Road for E-911 Purposes Due to 3 Addresses on One Driveway**

Minutes:

Chair Gardner presented the draft minutes of the January 6, 2020 board meeting.

Motion: To approve the January 6, 2020 minutes as presented. Made by Mr. Troia; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

Public Comment: None

Consideration of Recreation Board's Proposal to Install Electric Service at the 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 \$3,400. Electrician Jamie Laquerre is donating his services. The town road crew would handle laying the line. The availability of electric service would, among other things, enhance the Rec Board's ability to raise funds through concession sales while allowing regular use of the pitching machine and sound system. Currently the Rec Board cobbles together similar capability through the use of generators and propane grills.

At its January 6, 2020 meeting the board was generally receptive to the concept, but decided to postpone any action until the Rec Board could investigate the possibility of installing a solar array at the recreation field. At the Rec Board's request Catamount Solar reviewed the concept for possible off or on grid solar. The off-grid cost is estimated to be \$20-25,000 plus there are questions as to location of necessary panels &/or charging of batteries by auxiliary generator. Catamount Solar recommended connecting to WEC and exploring net metering options.

Motion: To authorize the installation of electric service at the recreation field at a cost of up to \$4,000, with the funds coming from the town's capital reserve fund, and to authorize TA Johnson to complete the necessary paperwork with WEC to enable the service. Made by Mr. Etnier; second by Mr. Troia. Passed unanimously.

Consideration of 2020 Annual Certificate of Highway Mileage

The VT Agency of Transportation requires an annual certification of highway mileage within the town. There have been no changes to the town's road mileage or classifications in the past year.

Motion: To approve the 2020 annual certificate of highway mileage. Made by Mr. Northrup; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

Board members signed the certificate.

Consideration of Letter of Support for Fairmont Dairy Grant Application

Fairmont Farm is applying for a Working Lands Enterprise Initiative Grant Program business grant for funding to update a tie stall barn and install a robotic milking machine at the old Lylehaven Farm main facility owned by Fairmont Dairy. Fairmont requested a letter of support from the town. After reviewing a draft letter and discussing potential benefits of the grant to the town, the board agreed to the request.

Motion: To authorize Chair Gardner to sign the letter of support for Fairmont's grant application. Made by Mr. Troia; second by Mr. Etnier

Consideration of Capital Reserve Fund Use for Purchase of Mower for Cemetery Property Maintenance

As part of its January 6, 2020 discussion on the Cemetery Committee's proposed FY2021 budget, the board considered the committee's request to purchase a new zero-turn mower and associated trailer to replace a non-functional Cub Cadet riding mower. The board authorized the purchase, but recognized that the capital reserve fund use had not been warned, so included the item on this meeting's agenda to consider ratification of the decision. Board members remain in support of the purchase.

Motion: To ratify the January 6, 2020 motion to authorize the purchase of a zero-turn mower and trailer at a total cost of up to \$10,000, with the funds coming from the town's capital reserve fund. Made by Mr. Etnier; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

Discussion on FY2021 EMFD Operating Budget Levels

At the joint board meeting with the Calais Selectboard on December 16, 2019, the boards were supportive of the base operating budget requests presented by the East Montpelier Fire Department for the fire and ambulance services. The boards agreed to consider adding funding to the ambulance staffing lines to move rapidly toward full 24/7, 2-person paid ambulance staffing. The additional cost to reach full staffing is approximately \$150,000. The boards set the target timeframe to be three years, but the amount per year was still to be determined. The two discussed options were adding \$50,000 per year for three years or adding \$37,500 for the first two years and \$75,000 in the third. East Montpelier would be responsible for two-thirds of the chosen figure.

At the January 6, 2020 meeting the board preliminarily approved adding either \$25,000 or \$33,333 to the proposed FY2021 EMFD ambulance service budget depending on whichever level the Calais Selectboard settled on at its January 9, 2020 meeting. The Calais board approved the lower figure.

Motion: To include in the town's FY2021 general fund budget the EMFD operating budget requests of \$129,796 for the fire service and \$190,241, which includes the \$25,000 additional allocation, for the ambulance service. Made by Mr. Northrup; second by Mr. Etnier. Passed 4-1 (Mr. Troia). Mr. Troia made the symbolic "no" vote due to his concern that by trying to fund full 24/7 staffing for the ambulance service, we are heading down a path that a 2,500-resident town simply can't afford.

Discussion on & Potential Adoption of FY2021 Budget Development

Board members reviewed the proposed final FY2021 budget, which reflected changes approved at the January 6, 2020 meeting, an updated figure for the town's Washington County budget allocation, along with the revised EMFD numbers.

Motion: To approve the FY2021 Selectboard budget as presented, setting the to-be-raised-by-taxes figure for the 2020 Town Meeting Warning at \$1,871,223. Made by Mr. Troia; second by Mr. Northrup. Passed unanimously.

Discussion on & Potential Adoption of 2020 Town Meeting Warning

➤ **Discussion on Proposed Friends of Coburn Pond Article**

- As agreed at the January 6, 2020 meeting, the board revisited the proposed \$25,000 article designed to spur the growth of the Friends of Coburn Pond organization from a small grass roots group intent on protecting the pond to a more mature entity capable of managing the Coburn Pond recreation area should the VT Agency of Transportation decide to transfer the property to the town. The group did not mount a petition effort to get the article on the warning, so the only option remaining is for the board to put the article on the warning by its own motion.
- By consensus board members decided not to include the request on the warning. The board, despite members general support for the concept of protecting the recreational resource that many residents of East Montpelier and surrounding communities have utilized over the years, was uncomfortable with the idea of putting a first-time social organization question before voters by Australian Ballot (the requested \$25,000 level removes the article from on-the-floor discussion/voting at town meeting) on its own motion as opposed to through a petition process.

The board reviewed the revised draft warning that now includes the Selectboard budget figure and a non-binding article dealing with the proposed shift of the pre-town meeting informational forum from the Saturday before town meeting to a more flexible schedule aligned with Selectboard meetings. Mr. Etnier proposed adding two more non-binding discussion articles focused on the development of a regulatory framework for a commercial cannabis marketplace and the challenging issues facing the town with regard to the provision of ambulance service. Board members agreed on the importance of both issues, but determined that neither was ripe for discussion as separate articles at 2020 town meeting.

Motion: To approve the 2020 Town Meeting Warning as presented. Made by Mr. Troia; second by Mr. Northrup. Passed unanimously.

Board members signed the warning.

Development of 2019 Selectboard Report for Annual Report

The board reviewed the draft Selectboard report for inclusion in the town's 2019 annual report. By consensus the board agreed to accept the report as presented.

Naming of Private Road for E-911 Purposes Due to 3 Addresses on One Driveway

Marc Fontaine now has three distinct elements at his property on VT Rte. 14 N: his residence, a rental tiny house, and his sawmill operation. Each element should have a separate E-911 address. The standard guideline is that a driveway with three or more addresses should become a private road. Mr. Fontaine is fine with the private road concept and requests that the road be named "Fontaine Lane".

Motion: To approve "Fontaine Lane" as the name for the private road serving Mr. Fontaine's property. Made by Mr. Troia; second by Mr. Etnier. Passed unanimously.

Consideration of EM Signpost Town Meeting Issue Article

The most recent issue of the East Montpelier Signpost included a Selectboard-authorized post written by Mr. Etnier on two potential 2020 Town Meeting Warning articles, the creation of a conservation commission and the shifting of the constable positions from elected to appointed. The board has now decided not to move forward with the constable article for 2020 and has added a non-binding article on shifting the date of the annual pre-town meeting informational forum. Board members decided to submit an update for inclusion in the upcoming town meeting edition of the Signpost. Ms. Willis will author the update.

Warrants

Board members signed the warrant.

Other Business

Town Administrator Report

- Update on East Montpelier Village Sidewalk Project:
 - The construction bid invitation was released on January 8, 2019. 10 firms came to the pre-bid conference the following week and questions have been coming in regularly from prospective bidders, so our team is confident that we'll see multiple bids by the February 6th deadline.
 - A construction inspection services provider has been chosen by the selection committee. The next step is to receive authorization from VTTrans to begin negotiations with the selected firm.
- Meeting Schedule:
 - February 3, 2020 6:30 p.m. Selectboard regular meeting

- February 17, 2020 6:30 p.m. Selectboard regular meeting

Zoning Administrator Report

- There have been no permit applications in 2020.
- There is currently no scheduled DRB meeting.

Motion: To adjourn. Made by Ms. Willis; second by Mr. Northrup. Passed unanimously.
Meeting adjourned 8:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Bruce Johnson, Town Administrator

Approved: February 3, 2020 East Montpelier Selectboard meeting