

Minutes of the East Montpelier Selectboard

March 30, 2020 Selectboard Meeting

This meeting was conducted remotely using the Zoom conferencing platform. Participation options were provided to the public.

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

Public Attendance: None

Chair Gardner called the meeting to order at 6:40 p.m.

Additions to Agenda: None

Minutes:

Chair Gardner presented the draft minutes of the March 16, 2020 board meeting.

Motion: To approve the March 16, 2020 minutes as presented. Made by Ms. Willis; second by Mr. Jewett. Passed unanimously.

Public Comment: None

Discussion on Warrant Procedures for Town Expenditures

At its March 16, 2020 meeting the board approved the signing of special warrants by Chair Gardner or, in his absence, by Vice-chair Etnier. As part of its guidance to municipalities in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the VT League of Cities and Towns is reminding boards that state statute does not allow the signing of warrants outside of warned meetings except under circumstances previously authorized by the board. In particular, special warrants should not be generated by the treasurer and then signed, outside of a meeting, by a majority of board members, which is a process the town has utilized on rare occasions in the past.

In essence VLCT's guidance limits the options for the signing of special warrants to the situations included in the board's March 16th motion. Given the new guidance, the board considered altering its procedure approved at the March 16th meeting, but decided by consensus to stick with the procedure as adopted.

Consideration of VTrans Paving Grant Application

The town intends to apply for a state paving grant of \$175,000 to partially fund the reclaiming and paving of the 2-mile middle section of County Road, from Powder Horn Glen Road to Horn of the Moon Road. The town has already received a paving grant for the 1.83-mile County Road stretch from the Montpelier line to Powder Horn Glen Road. The expectation is the 3.83-mile

paving project will occur during the 2021 construction season. The northernmost mile of County Road, from Horn of the Moon Road to the Calais line, was repaved in 2017.

➤ **Required Complete Streets Determination**

- 19 VSA §309d requires consideration of complete streets principles for all projects involving paved highways. If not incorporating complete streets principles, a written determination needs to be made that circumstances exist warranting such a decision. The town, for previous paving projects, has already determined that County Road, due to its inherent natural limitations, is not a good area to try to incorporate such principles.
- **Motion: The Selectboard finds that it has considered Complete Streets for this area and the cost of incorporating complete streets principles is disproportionate to probable use, due to natural resource constraints imposed by long stretches of ledge near the road (19 VSA §309d(2)).** Made by Mr. Northrup; second by Mr. Jewett. Passed unanimously.

➤ **Approval of Application Submission**

- **Motion: To authorize TA Johnson to complete and submit a FY2021 VTrans Class 2 Roadway Paving Program grant application for the proposed paving project on County Road.** Made by Mr. Northrup; second by Mr. Etnier. Passed unanimously.

Consideration of Annual Highway Financial Plan

The board needs to approve the highway financial plan for FY2021 and certify, with all members signing, that the town budgets funding of at least \$300 per mile for the town's highway system. Conservatively calculated, we town-fund at around \$10,000/mile.

Motion: To approve the FY2021 highway financial plan and certify that the town will raise by municipal taxes at least \$300 per mile for each mile of Class 1, 2 & 3 town highways. Made by Mr. Etnier; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously. Board members signed the document

Consideration of Annual Certification of Compliance for Town Road & Bridge Standards and Network Inventory

Annually the board needs to certify, with all members signing, that the town complies with the state's minimum road & bridge standards. The town's current standards, tracking the most recent VTrans template, were adopted last July. The second part of the certification is to confirm that the town has an up-to-date highway network inventory. The town's road network inventory was completed last year by Central VT Regional Planning Commission. The inventory is one of the required elements of the municipal roads general permit that all towns must comply with.

Motion: To certify that East Montpelier is in compliance with the state expectations for town road & bridge standards and highway network inventories. Made by Mr. Jewett; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously. Board members signed the document.

Consideration of Sending Letter to VTrans Regarding Speed Limit on US Rte. 2 from Mekkelsen's RV to Codling Road

The town has been encouraged to submit a formal request to have VTrans conduct an evaluation of the US Rte. 2 speed limit in the area of the troublesome Towne Hill Road intersection. The town has long pushed for improvements to the intersection, including a decreased speed limit, due to the number of accidents in the vicinity.

Motion: To authorize Chair Gardner to sign the letter to VTrans requesting a study of the stretch of US Rte. 2 from Mekkelsen's RVs to Codling Road. Made by Ms. Willis; second by Mr. Etnier. Passed unanimously.

Discussion on Town Management in Light of Covid-19

The board reviewed the procedures currently in place and decided to loosen the restrictions on town committee meetings. The state legislature has passed a bill, now signed by Governor Scott, to temporarily eliminate the Open Meeting Law requirement that all public meetings have a physical location. Meetings, such as this board meeting, can be held remotely so long as the public can participate. The Selectboard's March 16, 2020 order stated: "All non-essential town committee/commission/board meetings and events are canceled until further notice." Board members decided that remote meetings should be allowed.

Motion: To amend the Selectboard's March 16, 2020 order to state "[a]ll non-essential in-person town committee/commission/board meetings and events are canceled until further notice." Made by Mr. Etnier; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

Board members also discussed ways to improve remote work options for employees. The board directed TA Johnson to investigate the options for putting digitized town land records online as soon as possible.

Appointments:

- **Revolving Loan Fund Advisor: Rebecca Schrader**
 - **Motion: To appoint Rebecca Schrader as the Revolving Loan Fund advisor for a term ending March 2021.** Made by Ms. Willis; second by Mr. Etnier. Passed unanimously.

Access Permits:

- **20-005; Coe, 0 Towne Hill Road**
 - The Coes purchased an undeveloped 13-acre lot (in East Montpelier; there are 26 contiguous acres in Montpelier) on Towne Hill Road just west of Maplewood Road. The intent is to build a single-family residence with a detached garage/accessory dwelling. The access point has been used for a recent logging project and has an 18"-diameter culvert installed at the time of the Towne Hill Road reconstruction.
 - **Motion: To approve the requested residential curb cut for the Coe Towne Hill Road parcel.** Made by Mr. Northrup; second by Mr. Jewett. Passed unanimously. Board members signed the permit.

Warrants

Board members signed the warrant.

Other Business

Town Administrator Report

- Update on EM Village Sidewalk Project:
 - The town has finalized contracts with J.P. Sicard (contractor) and Stantec (construction inspection services). The next step is to receive a construction schedule from Sicard, but as of March 25, 2020 all non-essential transportation projects are on hold due to Covid-19. This includes the sidewalk project, but since we do not yet know the planned start date by Sicard, the injunction may not have much practical effect.
- Update on Town Attorney Bruce Bjornlund:
 - Mr. Bjornlund will be closing his offices and retiring as of June 30, 2020.
- CVRPC Call for Projects:
 - In anticipation of federal “get back to work” funds, Central VT Regional Planning Commission is asking towns to develop lists of potential projects, preferably ones already ready to go. The town’s Mallory Brook/Center Road culvert replacement may be a good fit for a federal stimulus program.
- Meeting Schedule:
 - April 13, 2020 6:30 pm Selectboard “special” meeting
 - May 4, 2020 6:30 pm Selectboard regular meeting

Zoning Administrator Report

- There has been 1 new application since the March 16th SB meeting. There has been a total of 5 zoning permit applications in 2020.
- There is no DRB meeting currently scheduled.

Motion: To adjourn. Made by Mr. Northrup; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned 7:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Bruce Johnson, Town Administrator

Approved: April 13, 2020 East Montpelier Selectboard meeting