

## Minutes of the East Montpelier Selectboard

# DRAFT

### April 13, 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 6:30 p.m.

#### **Additions to Agenda:**

- **WEC Annual Meeting Voting Authorization**
- **Discussion on Postponed EMFD Quarterly Budget & Service Update Presentation**

#### **Minutes:**

Chair Gardner presented the draft minutes of the March 30, 2020 board meeting.

**Motion: To approve the March 30, 2020 minutes as presented.** Made by Ms. Willis; second by Mr. Northrup. Passed unanimously.

**Public Comment:** None

#### **Consideration of Local Emergency Management Plan (LEMP)**

Towns are required to adopt updated local emergency management plans annually by May 1<sup>st</sup>. The 2020 East Montpelier LEMP has the same basic framework and information as the 2019 plan, updated for changes in personnel.

**Motion: To adopt the 2020 East Montpelier Local Emergency Management Plan.** Made by Mr. Northrup; second by Mr. Etnier. Passed unanimously.

#### **Consideration of LEMP Sharing Authorization**

The Central VT Regional Planning Commission has requested that Washington County towns issue formal permission to share adopted LEMPs with neighboring municipalities and the members of LEPC #5, our region's local emergency planning committee.

**Motion: To authorize the sharing of the 2020 East Montpelier Local Emergency Management Plan with LEPC #5 members and Washington County municipal officials.** Made by Mr. Etnier; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

**Consideration of NEMRC Annual Disaster Recovery Contract**

This is the annual renewal of the main off-site back-up program for our NEMRC modules. The cost last year was \$712.88; this year the cost is \$734.27, the standard NEMRC 3% increase.

**Motion: To accept the 2020 NEMRC annual disaster recovery contract.** Made by Mr. Etnier; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

**Consideration of Placement of Town Land Records Online**

In response to the closing off of public access to the town's land records due to the Covid-19 pandemic and Governor Scott's emergency order, the board decided to investigate the option of online access to the records. Avenu, the company providing our digital land records platform, is set to put the town's digitized land records online at <https://i2d.uslandrecords.com/VT/>. There are currently 10 Vermont municipalities on this site, including Burlington and Barre. There is no cost to the town. The fee for printing or downloading records is \$3.00/page, split (after credit card costs) 50/50 between the town and Avenu, so the town receives just under \$1.50/page. The likely timeframe for online availability is 6-8 weeks from now.

**Motion: To authorize TA Johnson to complete the agreement with Avenu to place the town's digitized land records online.** Made by Mr. Northrup; second by Mr. Jewett. Passed unanimously.

**Consideration of Town Properties Lawn Mowing Contract**

Creative Visions LLC (owned by Tim Frazier) has provided a 3-year proposal, covering 2020 through 2022, to continue lawn mowing and general maintenance of town-owned properties. The cost is \$10,200 paid in six equal payments of \$1,700/month. This is the same annual cost as the recently expired contract with the firm. The board had intended to put the contract out to bid, but in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and its devastating effects on small businesses, the town decided to work with Creative Visions LLC, a small East Montpelier company, on an extension.

**Motion: To authorize TA Johnson to offer a 3-year contract at \$10,200/year for lawn mowing and general maintenance of town-owned properties to Creative Visions LLC.** Made by Mr. Jewett; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

**Discussion on Town Management in Light of Covid-19**

Board members discussed various issues related to property tax payment timing and penalties, town payments to schools, and potential revenue shortfalls as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic. The town's second and final 2019-20 property tax installment is due May 15, 2020 and the linked town payment to the school district is due soon thereafter. There is concern that tax collection, which tends to be better than 95%, may fall below 90% of billings. Since the bulk of the town's tax revenue is paid over to the state's education fund in the form of direct payment to the school district, any shortfall has a significant effect on the town's bottom line. Another concern is that the penalty and interest tacked on to the amount due if a taxpayer fails to hit the May 15<sup>th</sup> deadline would compound the widespread economic suffering caused by Covid-19.

Currently selectboards have no power to alter any aspect of property tax collection, including the waiver of penalties for late payment.

The Vermont League of Cities and Towns is pushing the Vermont Legislature to pass some, likely temporary, alterations to the property tax regulatory scheme that would give local governing bodies the power to waive penalties and adjust upcoming tax rates. Other alterations include removing the state-imposed penalties on municipalities for any shortfall in school payments and requiring the state to borrow to cover Education Fund deficits rather than forcing towns to do the same.

**Motion: To authorize Chair Gardner to sign a letter in support of the VLCT effort to encourage the state to enact Covid-19 property tax reforms, and distribute the letter to Washington County Senators Cummings, Perchlik, and Pollina, State Representative Jessup, and Governor Scott.** Made by Mr. Etnier; second by Mr. Jewett. Passed unanimously.

#### **Personnel Matters: [Potential Executive Session]**

##### **➤ Consideration of Hiring Part-time Road Crew Member**

- Road Foreman Perry would like to add Dillon Mears to the town's roster of available on-call, very part-time road crew members. Mr. Mears has the necessary CDL with medical card.
- **Motion: To authorize the hiring of Dillon Mears as a part-time road crew member at \$18.00/hour for a maximum of 350 hours in any 12-month period.** Made by Mr. Northrup; second by Mr. Jewett. Passed unanimously.

#### **Warrants**

Board members reviewed the warrant. Due to the inherent nature of a remote meeting, individually signing the warrant as the board generally would do is impossible. Board members decided to approve the warrant by motion and have Chair Gardner sign the warrant as certification of the board approval.

**Motion: To approve the April 13, 2020 expense warrant and authorize Chair Gardner to sign the warrant on behalf of the board.** Made by Mr. Northrup; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

Chair Gardner signed the warrant.

#### **WEC Annual Meeting Voting Authorization**

The town is a corporate member of Washington Electric Cooperative. In order to submit a ballot for the May 7, 2020 WEC annual meeting, the board needs to authorize a representative to formally cast the ballot. There is no competition for the three slots on the WEC board up for election and there are no special items. By consensus board members agreed to vote for the three listed WEC board candidates.

**Motion: To authorize TA Johnson to cast the town's ballot for the 2020 WEC Annual Meeting.** Made by Ms. Willis; second by Mr. Jewett. Passed unanimously.

**Discussion on Postponed EMFD Quarterly Budget & Service Update Presentation**

The normal April budget and service update provided by the East Montpelier Fire Department to the Calais and East Montpelier Selectboards was postponed at the request of EMFD. The next regular update would be on August 13, 2020. Board members were in agreement that they would prefer to receive an update prior to August, preferably in May if circumstances allow.

**Other Business**

- **Update on US Rte. 2/Towne Hill Road Intersection Study Request to VTrans**
  - Ian Degutis, VTrans' traffic operations engineer, has responded positively to the board's recent request for an evaluation of the US Rte. 2 speed limit and other safety considerations for the Mekkelsen's RV to Codling Road section, with a focus on improving safety in and around the Towne Hill Road intersection. VTrans will conduct a traffic engineering study of the speed limit through the slot and present a recommendation to the VT Traffic Committee for consideration at its next meeting. The town will be invited to participate in that meeting. VTrans will also conduct a safety evaluation of the intersection – a separate item outside the purview of the VT Traffic Committee.

**Town Administrator Report**

- Update on EM Village Sidewalk Project:
  - The project continues to be on hold due to the governor's emergency order. Stantec, our construction inspection services provider, is working with our design engineering firm, Dubois & King, and our contractor, JP Sicard, to ensure the project is ready to roll once given the green light.
- Update on Lister Deadlines
  - The standard June 4<sup>th</sup> deadline for filing the preliminary grand list has been relaxed by the state, with towns allowed to file up until August 15, 2020. At this point it does not appear that the East Montpelier listers will need to file late.
- Meeting Schedule:
  - May 4, 2020                      6:30 pm                      Selectboard regular meeting
  - May 18, 2020                     6:30 pm                      Selectboard regular meeting

**Zoning Administrator Report**

- There has been 1 new application since the March 30<sup>th</sup> SB meeting. There has been a total of 6 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 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Bruce Johnson, Town Administrator