

Minutes of the East Montpelier Selectboard

July 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, Carl Etnier, Jon Jewett and Amy Willis; Town Administrator Bruce Johnson

Public Attendance: Carolyn Brennan, Kellogg-Hubbard Library Co-Director; Rob Chickering, Judith Dillon, Gene Troia

Chair Gardner called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

Additions to Agenda:

- **Appointments: Selectboard Vacancy**

Minutes:

Chair Gardner presented the draft minutes of the June 22, 2020 board meeting.

Motion: To approve the June 22, 2020 minutes as presented. Made by Ms. Willis; second by Mr. Jewett. Passed unanimously.

Public Comment: None

Conversation with Carolyn Brennan, Kellogg-Hubbard Library Co-Director, Library Director

Ms. Brennan, fresh off the one-year anniversary of the installation of the co-director leadership model at KHL with Jessie Lynn filling the other “co” slot as the non-profit director, explained that one of her goals was to provide mid-year updates to the towns supporting the library. The update, by necessity, focused on how KHL is managing to provide services in the midst of a pandemic.

When the library shut down in late March, the focus shifted from in-person to remote services. The library has expanded its offerings, adding Flipster for digital magazines and Kanopy for movie streaming services while also increasing e-book availability. While the library was closed for in-building use, curbside pickup of materials was initiated and quickly became a popular service. Recently the library added a similar curbside delivery element to its outreach efforts, with weekly service to locations in the greater community. East Montpelier’s main location for this service is the Old Meeting House, Wednesdays from 10 – 11:30 a.m.

In-library options are slowly ramping up, now allowing access to computers, newspapers and the public bathroom on a limited basis. As the upcoming school year approaches, the library is

planning what it can provide for school-aged children, both during the school day and after school activities. To add a little more confusion, later in the summer the library will replace its elevator, which will require the closing off of the side entrance.

Despite the cost of the additional digital services and Covid-19 alterations, KHL is working hard to stay within its means. Fundraising remains a key element and signs point to a downturn in such revenues for FY2021.

The KHL website, <https://www.kellogghubbard.org/>, is the place to go for more information on available services along with Covid-19 modifications (the specific Covid-19 information page is at <https://www.kellogghubbard.org/khl-covid-19-information>).

Chair Gardner thanked Ms. Brennan for the timely update.

Conversation with Selectboard Candidates

Board member Casey Northrup resigned on June 9th, mid-way through the first year of a 3-year term. The board advertised for candidates with this meeting as the target for selection. Two people expressed interest: Judith Dillon and Gene Troia. Any appointment would be through the end of the first year of the term, 2021 Town Meeting Day, Mar 2, 2021. The last two years of the term would be up for election at 2021 Town Meeting.

Chair Gardner welcomed the candidates and asked them to provide a brief statement of interest.

Ms. Dillon, a 5-year resident living on North Street, explained that she is an attorney with experience in a number of relevant areas for town governance. Her child recently graduated from U-32 and she feels the time is ripe for her to step up to serve the community.

Mr. Troia, a long-time board member who decided not to run for reelection in 2020, stated he would be happy to serve out the remainder of the first year of Mr. Northrup's term, but would prefer that the board move forward with a new member if comfortable with that option.

After a general conversation, the board thanked the candidates. Any appointment will be handled later in the meeting.

Consideration of CAI Technologies WebGIS Support Contract

The agreement is the standard annual contract for the town's online map that includes lister assessment data along with the standard mapping elements. The support agreement's cost is \$2,400, the same price as the previous two years. The only change is the addition of an auto-renew aspect to remove the need to approve a new agreement every year. There is still a clause allowing cancelation at any time with 30 days notice.

Motion: To approve the WebGIS Support Contract with CAI Technologies and authorize Chair Gardner to sign the agreement on behalf of the board. Made by Mr. Etnier; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

Review of Treasurer's Financial Management Questionnaire

24 VSA §872 requires the board to review the town treasurer's financial management questionnaire (a form provided by the VT State Auditor), describing the town's internal financial control mechanisms. The questions and responses are the same as last year.

Motion: To authorize Chair Gardner to sign the treasurer's financial management questionnaire. Made by Mr. Etnier; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

Preview of 2020-2021 Property Tax Rates

The state has released the education rates for the upcoming tax year:

Homestead rate: \$1.8929, up 0.0547 from FY2020 (3.0% increase)

Non-homestead rate: \$1.7352, up 0.0629 from FY2020 (3.8% increase)

Using a current estimate of \$3,070,000 for the grand list (0.08% increase), the projected tax rates for the 2020-21 tax year:

Homestead rate: \$2.5391, up 0.0827 from FY2020 (3.4% increase)

Non-homestead rate: \$2.3814, up 0.0909 from FY2020 (4.0% increase)

The tax rates are expected to be set at the August 3, 2020 board meeting.

Discussion on Town Management in Light of Covid-19

Board members discussed possible updates to the town's current emergency order. Once again, members decided to leave the office closed while continuing to monitor the situation. The board will revisit the issue at its August 3, 2020 meeting.

To date the town has sent out 629 absentee ballots (28% of the voter checklist) for the August 11, 2020 primary election. This number far exceeds any previous election. There will be in-person voting on August 11th at the East Montpelier Elementary School. A variety of safety protocols will be in place, including a mandate to wear masks, social distancing and regular disinfection.

Access Permits

➤ 20-027; Thomas Brazier, access to subdivided lot

- Lot 2 of the 2005 Brazier subdivision was never sold or developed. It is now proposed to be developed as a residence for Michelle Brazier and her partner Cody Blake. Lot 2 received a Selectboard-approved curb cut at the time of the subdivision (Access Permit #05-011). Mr. Brazier would like to give up that curb cut and put the driveway in the location of an old agriculture drive about 97' to the north of Lot 2 over the Brazier main farm property. Road Foreman Perry recommends approval of the shift due to improved sight lines. An access easement will be necessary when the two parcels come under separate ownership.
- **Motion: To approve Access Permit #20-027 and authorize Chair Gardner to sign the permit on behalf of the board.** Made by Mr. Etnier; second by Mr. Jewett. Passed unanimously.

Warrants**➤ July 13, 2020 Warrant for Approval**

- Board members reviewed the warrant. Following a protocol developed at the board's April 13th meeting to deal with the difficulties inherent in individually signing a warrant during a remote meeting, 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 July 13, 2020 expense warrant and authorize Chair Gardner to sign the warrant on behalf of the board.** Made by Mr. Etnier; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

Appointments**➤ Selectboard Vacancy**

- With Mr. Troia making it clear that he would like to see that board appoint a qualified new member, the board quickly agreed to offer the slot to Ms. Dillon.
- **Motion: To appoint Judith Dillon to the Selectboard for a term ending March 2, 2021.** Made by Mr. Etnier; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

Other Business**Town Administrator Report**

- Concerns Regarding “Defacing” of Public Property:
 - The town’s speed cart, which has the word “Police” on it along the sides, was marked up with multiple versions of “Abolish the” on July 5th. This was allowed to stay untouched for a week before the road crew took the cart back to the town garage for removal of both the graffiti and the “Police” stencils.
- Update on Codling Road Dry Hydrant Project:
 - The town has been paid by EMFD for all its out-of-pocket expenses for last year’s dry hydrant project. The grant received by EMFD for the project was large enough to make the department whole and cover the town’s direct expenses.
- Meeting Schedule:

○ August 3, 2020	6:30 pm	Selectboard regular meeting
○ August 13, 2020	7:00 pm	EMFD budget & service update at ESF
○ August 24, 2020	6:30 pm	Selectboard “special” regular meeting

Zoning Administrator Report

- There have been 7 new applications since the June 22nd SB meeting. There have been 28 zoning permit applications in 2020.
- The next DRB meeting is scheduled for August 4, 2020. There are no applications at this point.

Motion: To adjourn. Made by Ms. Willis; second by Mr. Jewett. Passed unanimously.
Meeting adjourned 7:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Bruce Johnson, Town Administrator

Approved: August 3, 2020 East Montpelier Selectboard meeting