

Minutes of the East Montpelier Selectboard

DRAFT

November 2, 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, Jon Jewett, Carl Etnier and Amy Willis; Town Administrator Bruce Johnson

Public Attendance: Road Foreman Guthrie Perry

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

Additions to Agenda:

- **Consideration of Certificate of Deposit Maturation Options**
- **Review of CVFiber Annual Report & Draft 2021 Budget**

Minutes:

Chair Gardner presented the draft minutes of the October 19, 2020 board meeting.

Motion: To approve the October 19, 2020 minutes as presented. Made by Ms. Willis; second by Mr. Jewett. Passed unanimously.

Chair Gardner presented the draft minutes of the October 26, 2020 board meeting.

Motion: To approve the October 26, 2020 minutes as presented. Made by Mr. Etnier; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

Public Comment: None

Consideration of Rotobec Log Grapple 4042HD Purchase

Road Foreman Perry explained that he located a used 2012 log grapple attachment for the town's excavator. The unit is in good shape and is priced at \$7,500, less than one-third of the list price. The attachment would be used for ash tree removal projects, general tree management and storm damage clean-up. It could also be of use on road projects for large rock removal/placement. The ability of the grapple to swivel 360 degrees provides far more flexibility and safety for log movement compared to the relatively static bucket with thumb attachment the town currently utilizes. Board members agreed that the grapple would be a good investment given the expected increase in logging by the road crew as part of the effort to proactively deal with the anticipated emerald ash borer destruction of ash trees.

Motion: To authorize the purchase of the 2012 log grapple at a cost of \$7,500 utilizing the capital reserve fund. Made by Mr. Jewett; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

Preliminary Discussion on FY2022 Budget Development

Board members reviewed the first draft of the town's FY2022 budget. Anticipated major changes for FY2022 include:

- The ambulance service budget is expected to go up \$30-40,000, much of which will be due to year 2 of the effort to increase the staffing lines to enable 100% paid professional per diem staffing by FY2023.
- The upcoming recommendation from the Capital Improvement Committee for the FY2022 Capital Plan will likely add \$8-10,000 to the Capital Reserve Fund line.
- The preliminary budget includes \$15,000 for ash tree management in advance of the expected demise of most ash trees due to the emerald ash borer. This is a desire of the Resilient Roads Committee, with the Capital Improvement Committee recommending that any such funding be included in the general fund budget.
- EM Signpost and EM Trails will both be requesting funds for FY2022 after not requesting anything for FY2021. This will be offset somewhat by not funding the Cross VT Trail Association for FY2022 as no request is expected after the \$7,500 appropriation in FY2021.

Work on the budget will continue at the December 7th board meeting, and then at all the meetings through January 2021.

Preliminary Discussion on 2021 Town Meeting

➤ **Options for Holding in Light of the Covid-19 Pandemic**

- Act 162 provides the Selectboard with the authority to turn 2021 Town Meeting into an all-Australian Ballot affair. Board members discussed how a standard town meeting or a large informational meeting in advance of an all-Australian Ballot election might be held remotely utilizing Zoom or some other interactive mechanism.
- In the event that voting for town meeting is 100% Australian Ballot in 2021, the board pondered the issue of whether non-mandatory items should be left off the warning and brought forward in later years when town meeting is back to normal. Mr. Etnier will look into how town meeting experts view this situation. There is a fear that the loss of the archetypal town meeting in 2021 throughout the state could result in permanent shift away from a major element of what makes Vermont special.

➤ **Potential Warning Items of Interest**

○ **Constable Elected/Appointed**

- The issue of whether to shift from an elected to an appointed constable was brought forward from last year. The board tabled this topic last January with a stated desire to revisit the issue in advance of 2021 Town Meeting. Board members would like to include Constable Boucher in this discussion and directed TA Johnson to invite Mr. Boucher to the November 16th meeting.

○ **Tax Payment Protocol**

- At the board's August 24th meeting it was decided that this would be a good year to review the town's tax collection scheme. Board members batted around options used by other towns, such as grace periods and

staggered imposition of the delinquency penalty, without any particular concept gaining traction. The board decided to continue work on this issue at upcoming meetings.

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 November 16, 2020 meeting.

As of mid-afternoon on November 2nd the town had received 1,405 ballots (61% of current voter checklist of 2,305) for the November 3, 2020 general election. There were 490 absentee/early ballots for the 2016 general election out of 1,631 total voted ballots that year. 1,114 ballots have already been run through the election tabulator by Board of Civil Authority members during the three live-streamed Thursday afternoon tabulation events in October.

Consideration of Certificate of Deposit Maturation Options

The town's \$160,000 certificate of deposit at Northfield Savings Bank will mature in mid-November. These are general fund monies which the board has historically invested in relatively short term cds. Lacking any attractive cd option at other banking institutions, Treasurer Welch recommends allowing the funds to rollover at NSB for another year at the current 0.30% rate.

Motion: To invest in a \$160,000 12-month certificate of deposit at Northfield Savings Bank. Made by Ms. Willis; second by Mr. Jewett. Passed unanimously.

Review of CVFiber Annual Report & Draft 2021 Budget

CVFiber, the 18-town communications union district of which East Montpelier is a part, today released its draft annual report and 2021 budget in advance of its November 10, 2020 annual meeting. The board reviewed the documents, which highlight the potential for a 2021 surge in both funding and activity toward the goal of bring fiber-borne internet throughout the region. Board members would like to get an update from the town representatives to the CVFiber governing board after the annual meeting. TA Johnson will invite our representatives to the November 16th board meeting.

Warrants

➤ November 2, 2020 Regular 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 November 2, 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.

Other Business

Town Administrator Report

- Meeting Schedule:
 - November 16, 2020 6:30 pm Selectboard regular meeting
 - December 3, 2020 7:00 pm EMFD FY2022 budget presentation
 - December 7, 2020 6:30 pm Selectboard regular meeting
 - December 21, 2020 6:30 pm Selectboard regular meeting

Zoning Administrator Report

- No new applications have been received since the October 19th SB meeting. There have been 49 zoning permit applications in 2020.
- The next DRB meeting is scheduled for December 1, 2020. Applications are anticipated for some outdoor classroom pavilions at Orchard Valley Waldorf School and for at least one subdivision.

Motion: To adjourn. Made by Ms. Willis; second by Mr. Etnier. Passed unanimously.
Meeting adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Bruce Johnson, Town Administrator