

Minutes of the East Montpelier Selectboard

February 1, 2021 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, Amy Willis and Judith Dillon; Town Administrator Bruce Johnson

Public Attendance: None

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

Additions to Agenda:

- **Amend previously approved June 22, 2020 board minutes to correct a substantive error (wrong fiscal year) in a motion**

Minutes:

Chair Gardner presented the draft minutes of the January 18, 2021 board meeting.

Motion: To approve the January 18, 2021 minutes as amended. Made by Ms. Willis; second by Ms. Dillon. Passed unanimously.

Public Comment: None

Open Forum on 2021 Town Meeting Warning Articles and Other Items of Interest to Town Residents

Chair Gardner introduced the open forum on 2021 town meeting issues. With no public present, the board decided to move forward with the rest of the agenda while leaving open the option to start the town meeting conversation if a member of the public entered the meeting.

Amend previously approved June 22, 2020 board minutes to correct a substantive error (wrong fiscal year) in a motion

While conducting its end-of-year review of the town books, the town's Board of Auditors discovered an error in the Selectboard's June 22, 2020 meeting minutes. In the "End of Fiscal Year Fund Balance Policy Determinations" section, the last line of the motion states "[f]urther, \$100,000 of the unassigned current fund balance shall be assigned to reduce property taxes in FY2020." The auditors determined the fiscal year in question should have been FY2021, the then-upcoming tax year.

After reviewing the minutes, board members agreed with the auditors' determination.

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

Work Session on 2021 Town Meeting and Town Forum

With no public attending the open forum, Mr. Etnier played the part by asking questions:

Why is the Second Constable position not listed on the ballot this year?

The Second Constable position is optional and is included on the ballot at the board's discretion. The last time anyone ran for the position was in 2014, when Paul Haynes was reelected. After a decade of service, Mr. Haynes decided not to run in 2015. There has been no candidate since then, no one has mounted a write-in campaign and the Selectboard has not seen reason to appoint anyone. First Constable Jon Boucher is handling the job effectively and has expressed no need for assistance. If the situation changes, the board can reinstitute the Second Constable slot.

After voters on the floor at 2020 Town Meeting approved the acceptance of postmarks as proof of timely tax payments, how did the board handle that issue on this year's warning?

This year's tax payment article (Warning Article 3) includes acceptance of postmarks as the default position. If the article passes, the due dates will be set for the two FY2022 property tax installments and a mailed payment bearing a legitimate postmark dated on or before the relevant due date will be accepted as timely.

The board will hold another open forum on the 2021 town meeting ballot at the start of its February 15, 2021 meeting. The mandatory public informational forum on the 2021 warning articles will be held March 1, 2021 at 7:30 p.m. Both events will be conducted utilizing Zoom remote conferencing services.

Consideration of Support Letter for EM Trails Grant Application for Trail Across Bobolink Farm

East Montpelier Trails, Inc. has requested a letter of support for a grant application under the Recreation Trails Program, a federal program handled in VT by the Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation. EM Trails is seeking \$25,000 to help fund a trail running from the southern end of the Mallory Brook Trail on Chris Pratt's land (the big VT Land Trust-conserved parcel between Brazier and Cherry Tree Hill Roads) through the Bobolink Farm parcel (owned by Bruce Howlett & Carol Dickson) to Towne Hill Road. The long-planned trail links the bulk of the EM Trail network with the Karen Clark Trail that runs into the U-32 trails network.

Board members reviewed a draft letter expressing support for the EM Trails project.

Motion: To authorize Chair Gardner to sign the letter of support for the East Montpelier Trails, Inc. application for Recreation Trails Program funding to construct the proposed Bobolink Farm Trail. Made by Mr. Etnier; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

Consideration of CAI Technologies Tax Map Maintenance Contract

This contract is the standard annual agreement between CAI Technologies and the town for tax map updates covering the 2022 season (April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022). The \$1,600 cost is \$100 more than the 2020 contract, although still less than the long-standing \$1,800 cost for the updates before

the town began contracting for CAI's online AxisGIS webmap service in 2018. For unknown reasons the town has not yet entered into an agreement for the 2021 period (April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021). CAI will send that agreement to the board for consideration at the February 15, 2021 board meeting.

Motion: To accept the 2022 CAI Technologies tax map maintenance contract and authorize TA Johnson to sign on behalf of the board. Made by Ms. Willis; second by Mr. Etnier. Passed unanimously.

Discussion on Town Management in Light of Covid-19

As they do at every meeting, board members discussed the state of the pandemic and whether there was a need to alter the town's current emergency order. With state and federal officials preaching continued vigilance, the board had no interest in altering the current protocol. The board will revisit the issue at its February 15, 2021 meeting.

Appointments

- **2021 Green Up Day Coordinator: Chris Racanelli**
 - Mr. Racanelli is willing to serve another year as the town's coordinator.
 - **Motion: To appoint Chris Racanelli as the town's 2021 Green Up Day coordinator.** Made by Mr. Etnier; second by Ms. Dillon. Passed unanimously.

Warrants

- **January 19, 2021 Special Warrant for Review**
 - As required by board policy, the special warrant approved by Chair Gardner was presented to board members for review. No action was necessary.
- **February 1, 2021 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 February 1, 2021 expense warrant and authorize Chair Gardner to sign the warrant on behalf of the board.** Made by Ms. Dillon; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

Other Business

Town Administrator Report

- 45-day Advance Notice PUC Filing for 44.2 kW Solar Array at 1970 VT Rte. 14 S:
 - rbTechnologies is moving forward with a proposed 2-array, ground-mounted, net-metered solar project on the field north of its parking lot, across Carleton Blvd from NorthCountry Federal Credit Union. Both the Selectboard and Planning Commission have standing to participate in the Public Utility Commission's certificate of public good permitting process.
- Town Meeting Ballot & Annual Report Update:
 - The town and school district ballots are at the printers, with the ballots expected to be mailed out to all active voters no later than February 10th. Town Clerk Laquerre is recommending that those not receiving ballots by February 16th contact her.
 - The annual report is also at the printers, with delivery anticipated by mid-February.

- Update on FY2021 Municipal Roads Grants-in-Aid Program:
 - After a pandemic-related delay, VTrans has provided the grant funding level for this year's program, with East Montpelier awarded \$14,020 with a 20% town match of \$3,505. CVRPC, which administers this program, will work with the town to determine appropriate erosion control projects to do utilizing the funds.
- Meeting Schedule:
 - February 15, 2021 6:30 pm Selectboard regular meeting
 - March 1, 2021 6:30 pm Selectboard regular meeting (truncated)
 - 7:30 pm Forum on town meeting ballot items
 - March 2, 2021 7 am – 7 pm All-Australian ballot vote at EMES

Zoning Administrator Report

- There was one new zoning permit application since the January 18th SB meeting. There have been 8 applications so far in 2021.
- The next DRB meeting is scheduled for February 2, 2021. There are three warned hearings: one for a 3-lot subdivision/reconfiguration of the Messier East Hill Road parcels; the second for a dog daycare facility at 1678 US Rte. 2; and, the third for an alteration of the 2019 permit authorizing a PRD and community center at 170 Cherry Tree Hill Road to allow a time extension to file the necessary Declaration of Condominium.

Motion: To adjourn. Made by Mr. Jewett; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.
Meeting adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Bruce Johnson, Town Administrator

Approved: February 15, 2021 East Montpelier Selectboard meeting