

Minutes of the East Montpelier Selectboard

June 22, 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: Town Clerk Rosie Laquerre; Town Treasurer Don Welch

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

Additions to Agenda: None

Minutes:

Chair Gardner presented the draft minutes of the June 1, 2020 board meeting.

Motion: To approve the June 1, 2020 minutes as presented. Made by Ms. Willis; second by Mr. Jewett. Passed unanimously.

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

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

Public Comment: None

Town Clerk Report: Rosie Laquerre, Town Clerk

➤ Annual Reporting on Records Management and Records Retention

- Clerk Laquerre reported that she continues to make progress in her effort to declutter the vault to provide space for the ever-increasing volume of documents that need to be stored in the vault. As discussed previously, there will come a time when the town will need to increase the size of the vault. Board members expressed their appreciation for her efforts to extend the useful life of the current vault. Ms. Laquerre noted that there is no need to update the current Records Retention Schedule this year.
- The board-authorized project to move the start date of our digitized land records from December 2000 back to June 1988 is underway with an estimated completion sometime in October 2020. Once done, all the land records indexed in the card file will be available both through our in-house computer network and online. The online option became available in May and has been well received by researchers and realtors.

Ms. Laquerre brought up the possibility of scanning the maps and surveys that are part of the town's land records. The town has no in-house method to effectively scan the documents due to their large size. Since these are primary land records Ms. Laquerre would prefer not to have them taken off-site, with the remaining option to have an outside company scan the documents at the town office. Board members supported the concept of creating digital records of the documents and asked Ms. Laquerre to obtain quotes for the service.

Consideration of Warrant to Impound Unlicensed Dogs

The board reviewed the annual statutory warrant to impound unlicensed dogs. Mr. Etnier recused himself from the decision and, wearing his hat as the town's animal control officer, requested that the board soften the language "you are commanded forthwith to impound all dogs" to "you are authorized to impound any dogs" that are not properly licensed. The warrant as originally written carries a demand for action that the town's constables and animal control officers never actually carry out and the Selectboard (and community members) would be horrified if they did. The gentler language is designed to reasonably accommodate the statutory mandate without the issuance of a command no one would expect or desire to see executed.

Motion: To accept the revised language, to approve the 2020 Warrant to Impound Unlicensed Dogs and to authorize Chair Gardner to sign the warrant on behalf of the full board. Made by Mr. Jewett; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously (Mr. Etnier recused himself).

Update on Land Records Restoration Fund

➤ Consideration of Transfer of FY2020 General Fund Budget Amounts to Land Records Restoration Fund

- The concept is to transfer the available funds from the three land record lines in the general fund budget:
 - 100-3630-59.00; Public Records Management; \$1,634
 - 100-3730-70.00; Restoration/Fees; \$2,774.50
 - 100-3730-90.00; Vault Expenses/Town Records; \$950.77
- On January 6, 2020 the board approved a land records digitization project to move the records start date back to 1988 at an estimated cost of \$19,000. The intent was to pay for the project out of the FY2020 budget. At this point it looks like the project will be completed in October, long after the current fiscal year ends. One solution is to pay for the project out of the Land Records Restoration Fund, which currently has about \$7,300 available. Transferring the recommended general fund lines to the fund would increase the balance to approximately \$11,800.
- **Motion: To authorize the transfer of the remaining amounts in budget lines 100-3630-59.00, 100-3730-70.00 and 100-3730-90.00 to the Land Records Restoration Fund.** Made by Mr. Etnier; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

Town Treasurer Report: Don Welch, Town Treasurer

➤ Near End of Fiscal Year Budget Status Report

- Treasurer Welch presented the status report showing a likely surplus in the area of \$125,000 to \$150,000 at the end of FY2020, subject to any decisions the board makes this evening regarding assigning current year funds.
 - **Consideration of Transfer of EMSLI Fund to Revolving Loan Fund**
 - In 2013 the town utilized the town's Revolving Loan Fund to grant the East Montpelier Senior Living Initiative \$20,000 to help fund preliminary development expenses of a potential senior housing project. The grant was set up so the town essentially acted as EMSLI's fiduciary agent, holding the granted funds in-house and paying invoices once authorized by EMSLI and approved by the Selectboard. The grant expired in February 2020 and under the terms of the grant the remaining grant funds revert to the town. The remaining money in the EMSLI Fund, approximately \$17,760, should be returned to the loan fund.
 - **Motion: To authorize the transfer of remaining balance of the EMSLI Fund to the Revolving Loan Fund.** Made by Ms. Willis; second by Mr. Jewett. Passed unanimously.
 - **End of Fiscal Year Fund Balance Policy Determinations**
 - Treasurer Welch expects the town to have a surplus of between \$125,000 and \$150,000 when FY2020 is fully settled. The town's fund balance policy requires the board to commit funds by end of the fiscal year, June 30th, if it wants to restrict use of the current budget surplus for specific purposes.
 - **Motion: To assign the current FY2020 budget surplus in the following manner:**
 - \$5,000 to be added to the funds set aside to cover the future costs of allowable leave reimbursements at the time of employee termination;
 - \$10,000 to be added to the Land Records Restoration Fund to augment the funds available for the ongoing land records digitization project; and,
 - \$50,000 to be added to the Capital Reserve Fund to cover expected capital costs that have not yet been integrated into the capital plan.
- Further, \$100,000 of the unassigned current fund balance shall be assigned to reduce property taxes in FY2021.** Made by Ms. Willis; second by Mr. Jewett. Passed unanimously.

Appointments

Chair Gardner presented the annual slate of town charter-based appointments.

Motion: To appoint the following officers for terms as specified:

Rosie Laquerre as Town Clerk; term July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021;
Don Welch as Town Treasurer; term July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021;
Don Welch as Collector of Current Taxes; term July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021;
Denise Sparrow as Assistant Town Clerk; term July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021;
Denise Sparrow as Assistant Town Treasurer; term July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021;
Bruce Johnson as Zoning Administrator; term July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021;
Bruce Johnson as Collector of Delinquent Taxes; term July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021;
Bruce Johnson as Road Commissioner; term July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021;
Gene Troia as Acting Zoning Administrator; term July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021;

Seth Gardner as Road Commissioner; term July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021.

Made by Mr. Etnier; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

Board members by consensus agreed to have Chair Gardner sign the required certificates of appointment for the clerk and assistant clerk on behalf of the full board.

When Casey Northrup recently resigned from the Selectboard due to his anticipated move out of town, he also stepped off the Capital Improvement Committee. His slot on that committee is the designated Selectboard seat. Mr. Jewett agreed to fill the seat.

Motion: To appoint Jon Jewett to the Capital Improvement Committee for a term through March 2021. Made by Ms. Willis; second by Mr. Etnier. Passed unanimously (Mr. Jewett recused himself).

Discussion on Town Management in Light of Covid-19

Board members discussed possible updates to the town's current emergency order. In particular, the board considered a partial opening of the town office to allow members of the public limited access to the building for certain in-person services. Members decided to leave the office closed while continuing to monitor the situation. The board will revisit the issue at its July 13, 2020 meeting.

Consideration of Employee Pay Rates for FY2021

Chair Gardner opened discussion on employee pay rates for the upcoming fiscal year.

Motion: To enter executive session for the purpose of evaluation of a public employee under 1 V.S.A. §313(a)(3). Made by Mr. Etnier; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

The board entered executive session at 7:40 p.m. and exited at 8:01 p.m.

Motion: To approve the employee pay rates for FY2021 as presented. Made by Mr. Jewett; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

Motion: To approve the rollover to FY2021 of all accrued vacation time for TA Johnson in light of the loss of planned vacations due to the exigencies of the Covid-19 pandemic. Made by Mr. Etnier; second by Mr. Jewett. Passed unanimously.

Warrants

➤ **June 22, 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 June 22, 2020 expense warrant and authorize Chair Gardner to sign the warrant on behalf of the board.** Made by Mr. Etnier; second by Mr. Jewett. Passed unanimously.

Other Business

Town Administrator Report

- Delinquent Tax Update:
 - The current unpaid property tax stands at \$220,011 compared to \$160,980 in 2019, \$173,200 in 2018, \$172,365 in 2017 and \$204,839 in 2016.
- Town Attorney Bjornlund Retirement:
 - Attorney Bjornlund closed his office effective June 15, 2020. His official retirement date is June 30, 2020.
- Road Speeding Concerns:
 - There has been an uptick in complaints regarding speed on County Road, especially out past Templeton toward the Calais line. The state police have been notified and Road Foreman Perry has the speed cart in the area. The state police caught someone going 90 on Towne Hill Road last week. Other speed complaints have come in for Cherry Tree Hill Road and Center Road through EM Center.
- Independence Day Holiday Schedule for Employees:
 - Independence Day falls on a Saturday this year, with the federal holiday observation on Friday, July 3rd. With the road crew working a Monday-Thursday schedule and Treasurer Welch not working on Fridays, only three employees benefit from a Friday work holiday. By consensus board members agreed to designate July 6, 2020 as the work holiday for the town.
- Meeting Schedule:

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

Zoning Administrator Report

- There have been 4 new applications since the June 1st SB meeting. There have been 21 zoning permit applications in 2020.
- The next DRB meeting is scheduled for July 7, 2020. There will be a hearing for a two-lot subdivision of the Fitch property at 440/450 Fitch Road.

Motion: To adjourn. Made by Mr. Jewett; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.
Meeting adjourned 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Bruce Johnson, Town Administrator

Approved: July 13, 2020 East Montpelier Selectboard meeting

Approved as revised to correct a fiscal year notation to FY2021 on page 3 in the motion assigning funds to reduce property taxes. Done at the February 1, 2021 Selectboard meeting.