

Selectboard Memo
May 24, 2021 SB Meeting

Carl Etnier is on vacation and will not be attending the meeting

Town Treasurer Monthly Financial Report

- Treasurer Welch will present the standard monthly report produced in accordance with the town's Accounting, Auditing and Financial Reporting Policy; the report is for the period ending April 30, 2021

Discussion on Property Tax Collection

➤ **Update on Tax Collection for Tax Year 2020-21**

- May 17, 2021 was the deadline for Tax Year 2020-21 tax payments; the delinquent tax warrant shows \$182,087.79 in unpaid 2020-21 taxes, compared to \$259,068 last year, \$183,043 in 2019 and \$147,313 in 2018
- Total due for all years of delinquency and including fees/interest as of May 17th was \$223,239.17, compared to \$294,439 last year (which did not include Tax Year 2019-20 fees/interest due to the delayed imposition under the SB's pandemic protocol), \$243,280 in 2019 and \$229,590 in 2018
- Including late payments made since May 17th, total tax delinquency stands at \$188,000.19 (as of 2:00 p.m. on May 24th)

➤ **Delinquent Tax Collector Report**

- As of May 17th there were 10 properties still owing taxes for Tax Year 2019-20, including one (Estate of Reed) with taxes owed for Tax Years 2017-18 and 2018-19; 5 of the properties are struggling with probate issues (Estate of Hawkins; Reed; and 3 in the Estate of Rogers); 1 is for a miniscule amount (Witzenberger property on Maplewood; only a small amount of land is in East Montpelier; house is in Montpelier); 1 is in an informal agreement (Hedding); two (Campbell and Corliss) owe less than the entire amount for Tax Year 2019-20 and are making intermittent payments; the final one is the Holt property
- Total current delinquency for past years (covering Tax Years 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20 in this situation) is \$23,058, compared to \$34,371 last year, \$39,570 in 2019, and \$66,985 in 2018

Discussion on Town Employee Northeast Delta Dental Plan

➤ **Northeast Delta Dental Plan Renewal**

- The dental plan, purchased through VLCT, is run on a fiscal year basis, so the new plan starts July 1st; no changes in terms this year; contract auto-renews unless board decides to make alterations
- 2-year rate lock-in drops monthly employer contribution to \$35.98/mo/employee, down from \$37.19/employee for the past two years

➤ **Life & Disability Plan Shift to New Vendor**

- VLCT has changed its life & disability insurance vendor from Lincoln Financial to a partnership with National Insurance Services and Madison National Life Insurance Company
- The town's rate schedule will drop 10% from the current cost sheet; the schedule will hold constant for four years; our annual costs will drop for FY2022 and then rise slowly due to wage increases; current cost is \$294.94/month; projected cost for FY2022 is approximately \$270

Consideration of Bids for County Road Project

- Bids were due May 24th at 2:00 p.m.; bid results:
 - Paving:
 - Pike Industries \$793,724.50
 - FW Whitcomb \$828,167.30
 - Morse Farm Culvert:
 - Blue Mountain Trucking \$120,000.00
 - Pike Industries \$147,857.25
 - “North of Barnes” Culvert:
 - Blue Mountain Trucking \$138,888.00
 - Pike Industries \$170,065.00
 - Pike handled the last round of County Road paving
 - Blue Mountain is new to us, but handled a culvert replacement last year on George Road in Calais; Toby Talbot, the Calais Highway Operations Manager, highly recommends the firm
 - These bids include value of performance and payment bonds, which were required elements of the bids; these bonds are not normally required for small culvert projects or paving jobs and were included based on the overall composite bid estimate of between \$1.1 and 1.2 million; if the board is okay with dropping the bond requirement, the town could save a few thousand dollars overall
 - If comfortable, board should authorize TA Johnson to offer contracts to the successful bidders on the three projects, subject to the normal procedural contingencies (acceptable schedule; agreeable contract terms)
- Update on Grants:
 - Grants already in house:
 - \$175,000 VTrans paving program funding for reclaiming/paving southern 1.83 miles of County Road
 - \$124,200 VTrans structures program funding for replacement of Morse Farm culvert
 - 2021 grant applications:
 - “North of Barnes” Culvert Replacement on County Road
 - \$60,000 in VTrans Better Roads program funding has been awarded with grant documentation likely arriving next month
 - The town is expected to receive around \$20,000 (we’re in line to receive the “whatever is left” allocation) in VTrans structures program funding
 - The requested VTrans paving program funding for reclaiming/paving the middle 2 miles of County Road was denied

Consideration of Engagement Letter for Special Audit of FY2020 VMERS Contributions by Sullivan, Powers & Co., P.C.

- The state has contracted with two firms to do an audit of the FY2020 VMERS contributions; East Montpelier was selected to be included in the audit and we’ll be working with Sullivan, Powers & Co., who are coincidentally our normal external auditors; essentially this is an audit of our documentation to verify our certification, which we do annually and did last month for the FY2020 cycle, of our contributions is accurate; the town is responsible for providing the requested documentation of our contributions; there is no cost to the town for this audit
- If the board is comfortable with the engagement letter, which details the scope of work by both the auditors and the town, it should authorize Chair Gardner to sign the letter

Discussion on Act 250 Permit for Morse Farm Stormwater/Erosion Control Project

- This is the Act 250 draft permit for a stormwater infrastructure project around the Morse Farm Maple Sugarworks lower driveway area at 1168 County Road; the project is not a town project, but the town is mistakenly listed as the lead applicant in the notice and draft permit; that aspect has been corrected, with the Morse Trust listed as applicant/owner; if the board has an issue with the substantive part of the draft permit, comments need to be received by May 26, 2021

Discussion on Town Management in Light of COVID-19

- Standard statement: There have been no changes since the board's last meeting; the town office remains closed to the public, with researchers/attorneys allowed to access vault materials under the terms originally set up before all in-person actions were banned – one at a time and only by appointment from Town Clerk Laquerre; mandated protocols (masks; health survey; etc.) are in effect for such appointments
- Governor Scott extended the state of emergency to June 15, 2021
- Municipal operations have moved to the now-modified Universal Guidance (stay home if sick; wear mask if unvaccinated; six-foot spacing & uncrowded places if unvaccinated; practice good hygiene; think before traveling); baseline indoor requirements are at Step 3; vaccinated persons no longer have mask or social distancing mandates; the rules for unvaccinated people include masks and physical distancing with a limit of 1 unvaccinated person per 50 square feet; the Vermont Forward Plan does not alter the ability of towns to chart a more protective course; as of May 14th the outdoor mask mandate only applies to unvaccinated people with masks only required for prolonged close contact in line with the two out of three concept – outdoors, socially distanced, masks; as of July 4, 2021 (current target date; Governor Scott has expressed hope to move this up if vaccination rates warrant), there are no capacity restrictions and the now-modified Universal Guidance elements become encouraged rather than mandated
- Expectations are rising that the town office closure will be lifted in the near future; staff is vaccinated and is in favor of relaxing the strict office closure; committees are requesting options for in-person meetings; the Planning Commission in particular is actively discussing its options

Discussion on Calais Notice of Non-Renewal of the EMFD Service Agreement

- Calais submitted notice of non-renewal on March 30, 2021, seeking to negotiate a new emergency services agreement prior to the expiration of the current agreement on September 1, 2021; no specific reason for the non-renewal has been provided; the Calais board is meeting May 24th to continue internal discussions on the topic; no communications timeframe beyond “we’ll be getting a letter out soon” has been provided by Calais
- If the board desires executive session: 1 V.S.A. §313(a)(1)(A) contracts; requires a specific finding that premature general public knowledge would clearly place the public body at a substantial disadvantage; if such a finding is made, a second motion is then necessary to formally enter executive session

Warrants

➤ May 24, 2021 Regular Warrant for Approval

- Just like other recent warrants, this evening's regular warrant needs to be approved as normal, which generally is shown by a quorum of board member signatures; given our current limitations, the board should approve the warrant and authorize Chair Gardner to sign to that effect

Town Administrator Report

- Update on Center Road/Mallory Brook Culvert Relocation Project:
 - The town has been awarded a VTrans structures grant for the project; as with all FY2022 grants, the actual paperwork process is still likely a month out; the expectation is that the grant will provide \$175,000 in funding toward the construction cost currently estimated in the \$250,000 - \$275,000 range; expected construction is in either 2022 or 2023
- Other Highway Project News:
 - The County Road ash tree management project, partially funded by our second Emerald Ash Borer program grant, will be ongoing during the last week of May and first week of June; contractor is Nate Ebert of Foxfire Tree Care
 - The town has been approved to utilize the FY2021 Municipal Grants-in-Aid funding (currently expected to be \$14,020) on Cherry Tree Hill Road improvements, including a culvert replacement, near the Vincent Flats/Quaker Road intersection; the road crew will be working on that project in the very near future
 - The town did not receive the requested \$17,000 in Better Roads Category C grant funding for culvert/drainage improvements at the large concrete culvert at the base of Codling Road
- Meeting Schedule:
 - June 7, 2021 6:30 pm Selectboard regular meeting
 - June 21, 2021 6:30 pm Selectboard regular meeting
 - July 12, 2021 6:30 pm Selectboard “special” regular meeting

Zoning Administrator Report

- 7 new applications since the May 3rd SB meeting; 34 total so far in 2021
- The next DRB meeting is scheduled for June 1, 2021; one warned hearing for three applications for the M. Bolduc Leasing LLC commercial property at 4423 US Rte. 2:
 - An addition to the western storage building for car part recycling
 - A second motor vehicle service use to benefit VT Auto Spa
 - A new retail use for Peak Hydroponic Garden Supplies