

Minutes of the East Montpelier Selectboard

August 12, 2021 Selectboard Special Meeting

This in-person meeting was hosted by EMFD at the Emergency Services Facility. The Calais Selectboard also participated.

SB Attendance: Chair Seth Gardner, Carl Etnier and Jon Jewett; Town Administrator Bruce Johnson

Calais SB Attendance: Chair Denise Wheeler, Sharon Winn and Rick Kehne; ORCA was recording the meeting on behalf of Calais

EMFD Attendance: Chief Ty Rolland, President Toby Talbot, Larry Brown, Paul Guare and Albert Petrella; Clerk Judith Woodbeck

Public Attendance: None

Chair Gardner called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Additions to Agenda:

- **Discussion on Town Management in Light of COVID-19**

Public Comment: None

East Montpelier Fire Department Service & Budget Update

EMFD Chief Rolland and EMFD President Talbot welcomed the board members.

Mr. Talbot provided an end-of-FY2021 budget status report. There were no major areas of concern, with both the ambulance and fire budgets ending narrowly in the black.

Insurance revenues for ambulance services exceeded expectations for FY2021. This revenue stream is notoriously unpredictable month-to-month and even year-to-year, so although the FY2021 result is good news, it may not signal dependable long-term revenue growth.

Pandemic relief funds provided the ability to provide bonuses to the emergency service workers as well as covering unexpected PPE and other safety gear expenses. EMFD is providing vaccination support, in the form of running clinics and other services, to the state under an open-ended contract that covers all expenses.

Mr. Talbot reviewed the call volume tables for FY2021. The overall total of 666 calls was slightly below the norm for recent years.

Chief Rolland took the reins for the remainder of the meeting. He provided an update on upcoming vaccine clinics. He went on to describe the purchase and use of a new special

operations utility terrain vehicle. Money for the purchase came from a combination of capital reserve and discretionary funds. The off-road UTV provides EMFD the ability to perform trail and other difficult terrain rescues. Board members were somewhat surprised by the purchase, but intrigued by the UTV's capabilities.

Chief Rolland then shifted discussion to the interlocal service agreement issue.

Discussion on Proposed Contract with Respect to Fire Suppression, Ambulance, and Other Emergency Response Services

The East Montpelier Fire Department provides emergency services to the towns of Calais and East Montpelier under the terms of an agreement originally executed in 2013. That agreement renews annually unless one of the parties submits a timely notice of non-renewal. Calais submitted such a notice on March 30, 2021, seeking to negotiate a new emergency services agreement prior to the expiration of the current agreement at midnight on September 1, 2021. The Calais Selectboard came to the EM Selectboard's June 7, 2021 meeting to provide an explanation of the concerns the Calais board has with the current agreement. The Calais board followed up with a draft agreement proposing changes to Paragraph 1 & 6 of the existing agreement. At its July 12th meeting the EM board approved a tweaked version of the Calais draft. The Calais board approved the EM version at its August 9th meeting. That version had been presented to EMFD for review.

Chief Rolland expressed his frustration that EMFD has not been directly involved in the development of the proposed agreement and the termination date of the existing agreement was fast approaching. He presented a letter from EMFD requesting a 90-day time extension of the existing agreement to allow for more time to develop an acceptable new service agreement.

Although there was little substantive discussion on the agreement, the boards developed a plan of action to move things forward. TA Johnson was directed to draft a time extension for consideration by the two Selectboards at their individual board meetings scheduled for August 23rd and by EMFD. The Calais Selectboard members signed the EM-proposed agreement so EMFD would have the option of simply approving and executing that version if it so desired. Further action was deferred until there was clarity on the status of the proposed new agreement and the time extension.

Chief Rolland closed out the joint meeting by inviting board members to check out the new off-road rescue vehicle, which is housed in a trailer next to the south end of the fire station. The boards then continued their individual meetings.

Discussion on Town Management in Light of COVID-19

Due to the explosive growth of COVID-19 cases in Vermont and nationally, the board discussed the possibility of tightening its municipal operations order. Members settled on reinstating a mask requirement at the town office when in the presence of others regardless of vaccination status.

**March 16, 2020 East Montpelier Selectboard Order Regarding Municipal Operations
During Covid-19 Pandemic
As Amended June 7, 2021, Revised June 15, 2021 & June 21, 2021, and Further Revised
August 12, 2021**

By motion made by Mr. Etnier, seconded by Mr. Jewett, and passed unanimously, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, for the health and safety of town residents and the community at large the East Montpelier Selectboard orders the following:

As of August 12, 2021, the March 16, 2020 East Montpelier Selectboard order and subsequent amendments are replaced by the following order designed to guide municipal operations moving forward:

- The town office building will be open for limited access to the public until further notice; mask use and social distancing are required for all parties, including employees and volunteers, when in the presence of other people.
- The town office staff will continue to maintain the normal office schedule, will provide services to the public by email, telephone and, on a limited access basis, in person, and will allow limited, one-at-a-time access to the land records.
- The front door of the town office building will be unlocked during normal business hours; movement within the town office remains restricted; the back door will remain locked.
- The road crew will continue to provide necessary services while limiting contact with the public.
- The town office building is open for in-person town committee/ commission/board meetings and public events; town committee/ commission/board meetings and public events may be held at other facilities, subject to the rules of those facilities, and may be held outdoors without limitation.
- Remote meetings in compliance with the Vermont Open Meeting Law may be hosted at the town office building; further, the town office building can serve as the required physical meeting location for members of the public to attend and participate in a remote meeting.

The board will revisit the topic at its August 23rd meeting.

Motion: To adjourn. Made by Mr. Etnier; second by Mr. Jewett. Passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Bruce Johnson, Town Administrator

Approved: August 23, 2021 East Montpelier Selectboard meeting