Minutes of the East Montpelier Selectboard

DRAFT

August 30, 2021 Selectboard Meeting

This meeting was held in-person at the town office building with a remote participation option using the Zoom conferencing platform.

SB Attendance: Chair Seth Gardner, Amy Willis (remote), Judith Dillon, Jon Jewett and Carl Etnier; Town Administrator Bruce Johnson

In-Person Public Attendance: David Delcore, Times Argus

Remote Public Attendance: Ginny Burley, Town Health Officer; Zach Sullivan; Scott Hess; Kim Watson

Chair Gardner called the meeting to order at 7:37 p.m.

Additions to Agenda: None

Public Comment: None

Consideration of Mask Mandate for Local Businesses Due to Resurgence of COVID-19

Mr. Etnier gave a brief recap on the board's August 23rd discussion on the mask mandate concept, highlighting the recognition of a need to gauge the mindset of both the community at large and the local business owners. A majority of the general public feedback was in support of a mask mandate, whereas the business community was almost unanimous in expressing a lack of interest for any mandate. Chair Gardner stated that his conversations with business owners evinced a similar lack of support for a mandate.

The board had before them the resolutions adopted by the Town of Brattleboro's Selectboard earlier in August. That board adopted both a mask mandate for businesses and, as a back-up if the mandate failed to pass legal muster, a resolution encouraging businesses to require the use of face coverings. Given the shaky legal underpinnings for a local mask mandate coupled with the lack of local business support for the concept, Mr. Etnier recommended that the EM board adopt a resolution encouraging the desired behavior and presented a tweaked, to reflect East Montpelier, version of the Brattleboro resolution for consideration.

Health Officer Burley agreed with Mr. Etnier's shift towards a resolution encouraging mask use. Her priority remains for the board to make a strong public policy statement on the need for mask use at the present time while also promoting vaccination.

Ms. Dillon expressed her support for the general concept of a resolution encouraging mask use, but had issues with some of the specific language used in the Brattleboro resolution. In particular she wanted the wording to reflect an effort by the board to urge that businesses recommend, not require, mask use. Board members coalesced behind Ms. Dillon's suggestions and refined the language to lead with a recommendation to wear face coverings followed by encouragement to get vaccinated.

Motion: To adopt the resolution encouraging the use of face coverings. Made by Mr. Etnier; second by Ms. Dillon. Passed unanimously.

[The adopted resolution is appended to these minutes.]

Warrants

- **August 30, 2021 Regular Warrant for Approval**
  - Board members reviewed and signed the warrant.

Other Business

TA Johnson reported that the East Montpelier Elementary School would shift to remote operations for the rest of the week due to two COVID-19 cases in the EMES community.

Motion: To adjourn. Made by Mr. Etnier; second by Mr. Jewett. Passed unanimously.
Meeting adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Bruce Johnson, Town Administrator

Town of East Montpelier
Selectboard Resolution

Be it resolved by the Selectboard of the Town of East Montpelier, Vermont, as follows:

WHEREAS, the East Montpelier Selectboard recognizes that COVID-19 remains a public health hazard in East Montpelier and believes that wearing a face covering indoors is an important act to reduce the further spread of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that face coverings be worn indoors in areas of "substantial" or "high" rates of "community transmission" of the COVID-19 virus; and

WHEREAS the entire state of Vermont is currently experiencing substantial or high rates of transmission of the Covid-19 virus; and

WHEREAS the Town of East Montpelier has mandated masks in the town office when people are together and for all visitors; and

WHEREAS, the East Montpelier Selectboard accepts scientific conclusions that the single most effective way to reduce the harm of COVID-19 is vaccination of every eligible individual.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the East Montpelier Selectboard, as follows:

WEARING FACE COVERINGS ENCOURAGED

Recommendation to Wear Face Covering.
All establishments located in the Town of East Montpelier that invite the public into their premises for the purpose of receiving services, purchasing products, or otherwise transacting business, are encouraged to recommend both staff and customers (or visitors) wear cloth face coverings or face masks over their nose and mouth while inside the establishment.

Vaccinations.
All residents of East Montpelier who are eligible are encouraged to be fully vaccinated against the COVID-19 virus.

Effective Period.
This Resolution shall take effect immediately and shall remain in effect until the East Montpelier Selectboard amends, rescinds, or suspends it by a future action in a properly warned meeting. In the interim, the Selectboard intends to review this matter at every regularly scheduled Selectboard meeting on the first and third Mondays of each month.

Adopted by the East Montpelier Selectboard at its meeting on August 30, 2021.

Seth B. Gardner
Seth Gardner, Chair

Carl Etnier
Carl Etnier, Vice-chair

Amy Willis

Judith Dillon

Jon Jewett