

Minutes of the East Montpelier Selectboard

November 29, 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, Judith Dillon, Jon Jewett and Carl Etnier; Town Administrator Bruce Johnson

In-Person Public Attendance: Town Auditor Deb Fillion; Town Lister Ross Hazel

Remote Public Attendance: Town Auditors Carla Occaso & Ed Deegan

Chair Gardner called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

Additions to Agenda:

- **Preliminary Discussion on the Possible Enactment of a Town Mask Mandate**

Public Comment: None

Discussion on Existing Town Office Positions & Future Needs

With Town Treasurer Don Welch and Municipal Assistant Denise Sparrow, two of the four town office employees, expected to retire next summer, the board is reviewing the current office duties/responsibilities structure with an eye toward developing a more balanced staffing framework for FY2023 and beyond. The board had requested TA Johnson provide a conceptual staffing model for this meeting. His recommendation:

- Town office staff should include 5 full-time, benefit-eligible employees. The EM Personnel Policy defines 30 hours or more per week as full time with 24 – 30 hours per week benefit eligible on a pro rata basis. Proposed staffing:
 - Town Clerk (all office hours, salary, 35 hours/week plus occasional meetings and elections)
 - Essentially this job remains the same as the current version.
 - Municipal Assistant (serves as assistant clerk and assistant treasurer; all office hours, salary, 35 hours/week plus elections)
 - This would become a salaried position; otherwise, duties remain the same.
 - Town Treasurer (24-40 hours/week; salary; flexible office hours; remote work eligible)
 - Duties would include:
 - Statutory treasurer duties
 - Collector of current & delinquent taxes
 - Participation on Capital Improvement Committee
 - Town Administrator (32-40 hours/week; salary; flexible office hours)
 - Duties would include:
 - Staff for Selectboard and SB committees
 - General town administrative duties (i.e., SB responsibilities)
 - Personnel management and human resources

- Grant procurement and administration
- Internal IT and website maintenance
- Zoning Administrator/Assistant Town Administrator (32-40 hours/week; salary; flexible office hours)
 - Duties would include:
 - Zoning Administrator
 - E911 Coordinator
 - Staff for DRB, PC and, perhaps, the Conservation Commission once formed plus any town recreation partnership with EM Trails
 - Facilities management, including major project development

Board members reviewed a staffing costs worksheet reflecting one version of TA Johnson's proposal. Office payroll and benefit expenses would increase by approximately 20%, although that figure is highly variable depending on salary decisions, position hours and benefit selections.

The board was generally supportive of the conceptual framework, although finding the right employees in the current employment environment will be a significant challenge. The next step in the process will be to finalize the treasurer selection committee, expected to occur at the December 6th board meeting, and start the recruitment for that position.

Board members asked TA Johnson to provide a sense of the future for his employment with the town. Since that discussion will necessitate executive session, it will be taken up at the end of the meeting.

Preliminary Discussion on the Possible Enactment of a Town Mask Mandate

Vermont municipalities have been given the authority to enact local mask mandates under 2021 Special Session Act 1, recently passed by the legislature and signed into law by Governor Scott. Board members briefly discussed the opportunity and decided to place the topic on the board's December 6th meeting agenda. Mr. Etnier will put out a Front Porch Forum message regarding the issue and encourage the public to post to FPF, contact board members &/or come to the meeting to provide the board a sense of community sentiments on the concept.

Warrants:

- **November 29, 2021 Regular Expense Warrant**
 - Board members reviewed and signed the warrant.

Continuation of Discussion on Existing Town Office Positions & Future Needs

The development of a framework for town office positions depends, to a certain extent, on the contract status of TA Johnson. The board requested an update on his expectations, both for completing his existing contract which runs through June 30, 2023, and for continued employment with the town thereafter. TA Johnson declined to discuss the topic in open session.

Motion: To enter into executive session under 1 V.S.A. §313(a)(3) – the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee, provided that the public body shall make a final decision to hire or appoint a public officer or employee in an open meeting and shall explain the reasons for its final decision during the open meeting. Made by Mr. Etnier; second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

The board entered executive session at 7:32 p.m.; exited at 7:43 p.m.

The board had nothing to report and no action was taken.

Other Business

Town Administrator Report

➤ Meeting Schedule:

- December 6, 2021 6:30 pm Selectboard regular meeting
- December 9, 2021 7:00 pm EMFD budget meeting at ESF
- December 20, 2021 6:30 pm Selectboard regular meeting

Motion: To adjourn. Made by Ms. Dillon; second by Mr. Jewett. Passed unanimously.
Meeting adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Bruce Johnson, Town Administrator

Approved: December 6, 2021 East Montpelier Selectboard minutes