

Minutes for the East Montpelier Selectboard

August 1, 2022 Selectboard Meeting

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

SB Attendance: Chair Seth Gardner, Carl Etnier, Amy Willis, Town Administrator Gina Jenkins

Remote SB Attendance: Judith Dillon

In-Person Public Attendance: Sean Temple, ORCA Media; Deirdre Connelly

Remote Public Attendance: Jennille Smith, Scott Hess, Gene Troia, Diana Fielder, Malcom Fielder, Stephen Miracle, Janice Waterman, Becky Reed

Vice Chair Etnier called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

Additions to Agenda: None

Minutes:

The board reviewed the draft minutes of the July 11, 2022 board meeting.

Motion: To approve the July 11, 2022 minutes as presented. Made by Ms. Dillon, second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

Public Comment: None

Discussion on use of ARPA funds

Overall discussion on process to allocate ARPA funds

Chair Gardner assumed control of the meeting at 6:36 p.m.

Ms. Dillon suggested that the board develop a process where the town is notified about the money and asked for input, perhaps at a series of public hearings or by soliciting project proposals. She felt it is important to alert the town to the amount and scope of uses for the funds and to really listen to what the town wants to invest in.

Mr. Etnier suggested bringing the question of how to spend the rest of the funds to the town meeting in 2023. The board supported this idea. The board decided to focus on making a decision about the CV Fiber allocation first, and then work on the process for reviewing proposals for the remaining ARPA funds.

CV Fiber- Jennille Smith

Ms. Smith gave a short presentation on CV Fiber's plans for building out a fiber network in central Vermont. CV Fiber has their own ARPA funds for building out backbone fiber lines along major roads and is asking towns to contribute a portion of their town ARPA funds to help pay for the individual hookups. Any money that East Montpelier gives to CV Fiber for this project will only be spent within East Montpelier for fiber drops at underserved or unserved addresses. CV Fiber has provided a map of the 259 underserved or unserved households in East Montpelier and estimates that the cost for those hookups will

be approximately \$1,650 per household or \$427K total. The Vermont Communications Board has pledged to match town ARPA dollars committed to CV Fiber by September 15, 2022.

Ms. Dillon requested a link to the announcement from the Vermont Communications Board about the match and September 15 deadline.

The board asked whether the town could allocate some of the money they give to CV Fiber for addresses other than the mapped 259 households. Ms. Smith explained that ARPA funds can only be used for fiber connections to underserved or unserved addresses, which are defined as having an internet speed of 25/3 or less, or to non-profits. The town may specify how their ARPA money is spent as long as it falls within those categories. Ms. Dillon requested the language about allowing ARPA funds to be spent connecting non-profits. The board discussed the possibility of allocating money to hook-up the school with a fiber connection.

Mr. Etnier asked if the town could include a condition on the allocation that might say the money only pays for a hookup within a certain distance from the road. Ms. Smith said conditions like that are acceptable.

Mr. Etnier asked if the indemnification clause in the draft agreement would protect the town if the federal government decided the spending was not allowed and wanted to take back the funds. Ms. Smith said it might be read that way. The board felt it would be helpful to check with the lawyer.

Twin Valley Senior Center- Gene Troia

TVSC submitted a letter requesting town ARPA funds to help pay for capital improvements at the facility. Mr. Troia noted that repaving the parking lot was a high priority for the organization.

Chair Gardner explained that the town can't give out ARPA money until a process for receiving and vetting requests is in place. The board can't make a decision on this request at the moment, but will hold onto it for future consideration.

Center Road speeding concern

Mr. Fielder sent an email representing the residents of Center Road regarding speeding concerns. Several residents joined the meeting via zoom and explained their concerns about speeding and aggressive driving along a stretch of road that is active with walkers and cyclists.

The board listened to the resident's input and discussed measures to help check speeding. TA Jenkins has been in touch with Vermont State Police and requested more attention along that road. TA Jenkins will check in with Road Foreman Perry about repairing the speed cart currently posted on Center Road and will look into pricing for additional speed signs.

Mr. Etnier pointed out that physical changes to the environment are more effective than signs and suggested installing speed bumps or looking into ways to narrow the road. TA Jenkins will talk to Road Foreman Perry about speed bump options and will work on getting pricing. Mr. Etnier will check with Local Motion about options for narrowing the road with planters or other obstructions.

Setting of the 2022-2023 property tax rates

The board reviewed the FY2023 Tax Worksheet. There were no questions.

Motion: To approve the 2022-2023 property tax rates as presented. Made by Mr. Etnier, second by Ms. Dillon. Passed unanimously.

Consideration of homestead filing penalty waiver

Motion: To waive the homestead filing penalty. Made by Ms. Dillon, second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

County Road project update

Road Foreman Perry is meeting with Blue Mountain Trucking & Excavation on Wednesday, August 3. We expect work to begin the week of August 15 and will know the final date after Wednesday's meeting.

Review of Quote for new oil tank in town office

TA Jenkins presented the quote from Packard Fuels for replacing the oil tank. Chair Gardner suggested getting another quote for comparison.

Town office updates and maintenance

TA Jenkins said the top priorities for the town office are new furniture, which she is currently pricing, interior painting, and carpet replacement. She is open to other ideas for improvements, including more extensive interior renovations. The board supported these updates and looks forward to seeing pricing at a future meeting.

Discussion on town management in light of Covid-19

Cases are currently low according to the CDC data tracker, though home tests mean the number of reported cases is less accurate than it's been in the past.

Access Permits: 22-054 Ayers Curb Cut

The board reviewed the permit. There were no questions.

Motion: To approve permit 22-054 for the Ayers curb cut on Foster Road. Made by Mr. Etnier, second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

Warrants: July 13, 2022 Special expense warrant and August 1, 2022 Regular expense warrant

TA Jenkins explained that the July 13, 2022 Special expense warrant was signed by Chair Gardner prior to this meeting.

TA Jenkins noted that the August 1, 2022 expense warrant includes the County Road culvert purchase. For now this expense will be included in the highway budget and TA Jenkins will continue to monitor the budget to determine if any of the capital reserve is needed.

The August 1, 2022 Regular expense warrant was signed by the present board members.

Personnel matters

TA Jenkins reminded the board that today is the last day for applications for the Municipal Assistant. She will be scheduling interviews and hopes to bring a candidate for the board to interview at the August 22 meeting. She confirmed with the board that a background check will be performed for this candidate because the Municipal Assistant will be responsible for handling money.

Town administrator report

TA Jenkins noted that 6 permit applications were submitted since the last meeting, bringing the total for the year to 56.

Meeting Schedule:

- August 22, 2022 6:30 p.m. Special meeting date
- September 12, 2022 6:30 p.m. Special meeting date
- October 3, 2022 6:30 p.m. Regular meeting date
- October 17, 2022 6:30 p.m. Regular meeting date

The Selectboard will also attend a budget and service update by the EMFD on August 11, 2022 at 7:00p.m.

Motion: To adjourn. Made by Ms. Willis, second by Ms. Dillon. Passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Deirdre Connelly.

Approved: August 22, 2022 East Montpelier Selectboard meeting