

Minutes for the East Montpelier Selectboard

August 22, 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, Jon Jewett, Town Administrator Gina Jenkins

Remote SB Attendance: Judith Dillon

In-Person Public Attendance: Gilberto Diaz-Santos, ORCA Media; Deirdre Connelly

Remote Public Attendance: David Delcore, Scott Hess, Guthrie Perry

Chair Gardner called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Additions to Agenda: None.

Minutes:

The board reviewed the draft minutes of the August 1, 2022 board meeting.

Motion: To approve the August 1, 2022 minutes as presented. Made by Ms. Willis, second by Ms. Dillon. Passed unanimously.

Public Comment: None.

Designation of Town Delegate to 2022 VLCT Annual Meeting

Motion: To nominate Mr. Etnier as Town Delegate to 2022 VLCT, PACIF, and VERB Annual Meetings. Made by Ms. Willis, second by Ms. Dillon. Passed unanimously.

Employee Reimbursable Expenses for Conference Travel

TA Jenkins explained that there was no line item in the FY2023 budget for reimbursable conference expenses such as hotels and meals, and with a few conferences coming up she would like the board's guidance on whether the town can reimburse staff travel expenses for these conferences. Ms. Dillon noted that if someone is attending a two-day conference it makes sense that they should stay overnight near the conference. Chair Gardner added that the board doesn't want town employees to put themselves in a dangerous situation by driving long distances at night. The board generally supported paying for overnight conference expenses.

Mr. Etnier asked how best to ensure board oversight on these unbudgeted expenses. TA Jenkins suggested that she create an accounting code to track the expenses this year and use those tracked expenses to build a budget line for next fiscal year. For this year, TA Jenkins will approve these expenses and report to the board with the requests. The board supported this process.

Municipal Assistant Candidate Interview

Motion: To go 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. Dillon. Passed unanimously.

The board entered executive session at 6:48 pm and exited at 7:27 pm.

No action taken.

Motion: To authorize TA Jenkins to make a job offer to the candidate interviewed tonight at a rate of \$25/hour, pending the results of a background check. Made by Mr. Etnier, second by Mr. Jewett. Passed unanimously.

Allocation of ARPA Funds: CV Fiber Allocation

The board discussed their next steps for the CV Fiber allocation. Chair Gardner noted that all the numbers related to the cost of hook-ups and the number of households expected to sign up are estimates, so the board will not be able to come to an exact calculation of costs for connecting households in East Montpelier. Based on the estimates, an allocation of \$100k with the match from the Vermont Communications Board should cover the estimated cost to connect approximately 50% of the underserved or unserved households. The board will decide the final number at the next scheduled meeting.

The board discussed next steps on the contract from CV Fiber. Before the meeting TA Jenkins distributed copies of the contract with comments from the town attorney and from CVRPC. Ms. Dillon pointed out two important parts of the contract that needed revision: Appendix 1 and the clause preceding the agreement. Appendix 1 contains boilerplate language from CV Fiber and the board needs to draft language specifying where the funds should be spent, for example at a school or fire station. The clause preceding the agreement seems to imply that any funds the town allocates to CV Fiber will offset CV Fiber's debt. Ms. Dillon suggested updating that language to specify that any funds East Montpelier allocates to CV Fiber will offset the costs for hookups for underserved and underrepresented households in East Montpelier, and for any other locations specified in Appendix 1.

The board noted that they have one more scheduled meeting before the September 15 deadline to take advantage of matching funds from the Vermont Communications Board. Ms. Dillon and Mr. Etnier will work on updating the contract language and the board will hold an executive session over email to discuss the contract in greater detail.

County Road Project Update

RF Perry updated the board on the County Road Project. Pike Industries has experienced several delays and now expects to arrive next week. RF Perry expects they won't start digging until after Labor Day weekend. The East Montpelier road crew began work on the Hooper Hollow culvert today and expects it to be completed by Thursday.

RF Perry noted the calcium chloride savings are approximately \$61k and suggested a few options for the board to consider for using those savings. The first option is to absorb the savings. A second option is to increase the depth of pavement on County Road by .25". RF Perry felt this would not make a demonstrable difference to the road and is not the best use of the savings. The third option is to use some of the savings to create new aprons at Templeton Road and Cummings Road. RF Perry estimated that

new aprons at these two roads would cost approximately \$30k in total. Mr. Etnier asked how RF Perry determines the size of the aprons and RF Perry explained that it depends on the site and angles, but generally they aim to make it large enough that a car will have all four tires on pavement when making a turn onto County Road.

The board supported the apron project. RF Perry will get pricing for the board to review at a future meeting.

Motion: To authorize TA Jenkins to sign the change orders for the asphalt, fuel, and labor cost adjustment and the elimination of the calcium chloride cost. Made by Mr. Etnier, second by Mr. Jewett. Passed unanimously.

EMFD Meeting Update

Mr. Jewett reported some highlights from the August 11, 2022 EMFD meeting. They are continuing to get a number of Covid calls from the new variants and rebound cases. They also mentioned three recent structure fires in Calais and Woodbury that illustrated how the whole region is short staffed. The EMFD would like to proceed with plans for enticing volunteers and retaining current staff and they are open to suggestions from the board. Ms. Dillon mentioned that the state legislature has put aside some money for apprenticeship programs and that the EMFD might look into those funds for training new EMTs or fire fighters.

Mr. Jewett briefly covered financials. The ambulance service finished \$7k under budget and due to Covid vaccine supplement pay, made an extra \$70k in income. The fire department finished \$20k over budget due to some maintenance projects and increased fuel costs.

Town Treasurer Monthly Financial Report

TA Jenkins noted that she and Treasurer Pallas are still working on the final report with the auditors and will have more to present at the next meeting. There is nothing of concern at the moment.

Delinquent Tax Collector Report

TA Jenkins noted that the total delinquent taxes as of August 17, 2022 is \$139,874. She explained that two taxpayers are estates; one is making payments and the other is involved in a family dispute and has been in touch with DTC Pallas. The other taxpayer balances represent a minor portion of the total balance. DTC Pallas would like more time to determine if further course of action is needed.

External Audit Follow Up Questions

TA Jenkins presented a list of questions from the external auditors to discuss with the board.

The auditors wanted more details on the \$66k balance in the fund for the Village Sidewalk project. TA Jenkins followed up with the grant administrator for the project and there are no remaining funds available to cover these expenses. The board agreed that the easiest solution is to cover these expenses with the general fund. All invoices related to this project have been paid, this is only an accounting step needed to close out this fund.

Motion: To use the general fund to cover the remaining Village Sidewalk project balance of \$66,029. Made by Mr. Etnier, second by Mr. Jewett. Passed unanimously.

The auditors asked for information on what the town plans to do about the Record Restoration Fund deficit. The board had previously discussed using ARPA funds to cover this deficit. The board decided to

sit on the deficit until the final cost is determined, and then ask the town to vote at a future town meeting on using ARPA funds to cover the deficit.

The auditors asked if there was a reason the money set aside for the Municipal Building, Town Garage, and EM Facility was not spent. The board explained that the money was placed in the budget without a specific plan for spending and with the intention of setting aside funds for unknown future capital expenses.

The auditors asked for clarification on the intent to spend the Forest fund, Veteran's Memorial Fund, Rally Day fund, and Land Conservation fund. The board was unsure about the history of the Forest fund; TA Jenkins will look for more information about it. The board explained that the Veteran's Memorial fund was set up for maintaining the Veteran's Memorial after it was built. Mr. Etnier wondered if it could be incorporated into the Capital fund as a line item. The board supported this idea; TA Jenkins will ask the auditors if making this change is a good practice. TA Jenkins explained that the Rally Day fund was set up to support an annual event that hasn't been held in recent years. She felt that it would be good to keep this fund for possible future events. The board explained that the Land Conservation fund is set aside to be used for conservation opportunities as they arise. They would like it to remain as it is.

Consideration of FY2023 Municipal Grants-In-Aid Agreement

Motion: To accept the grant and authorize TA Jenkins to sign the agreement. Made by Mr. Jewett, Second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

Discussion on Town Management in Light of Covid-19

According to the CDC community level tool Washington County is at "low", though this is likely an undercount. There will be no change in town office procedures.

Liquor Permit: Blake Wedding, Sibley Road

Motion: To approve the liquor permit and authorize Town Clerk Laquerre to sign the request. Made by Mr. Etnier, second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

Access Permits

22-052: New Curb Cut McKnight Road

Mr. Jewett recused himself from the discussion.

The subdivision will be up for final approval at the next DRB meeting, TA Jenkins brought this curb cut permit before the board in anticipation of DRB approval.

Motion: To approve permit 22-052 contingent on DRB approval of the subdivision. Made by Mr. Etnier, second by Ms. Dillon. Passed unanimously. Mr. Jewett abstained from the vote.

Warrants: August 22, 2022 Regular Expense Warrant

The present board members signed the warrant.

Town Administrator Report

TA Jenkins noted that 2 permit applications were submitted since the last meeting for a total of 59 for the current year.

Meeting Schedule:

- 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

DRB Warning: Final plan review for a proposed subdivision of the Jewett/Vaillancourt property located at 130 Quaker Road and along McKnight Road. The proposal is for a 2-lot subdivision: Lot 1 of 6.5 acres and Lot 2 of 3.6 acres. The property is in Zone C, the Residential and Commercial District where the minimum lot size is 1 acre plus 150 feet of road frontage.

Personnel Matters

Motion: To go 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. Dillon. Passed unanimously.

The board entered exec session at 9:15 p.m. and exited at 9:48 p.m.

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

Meeting adjourned at 9:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Deirdre Connelly.

Approved: September 12, 2022 East Montpelier Selectboard Meeting