

Minutes for the East Montpelier Selectboard

September 12, 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, Judith Dillon, Town Administrator Gina Jenkins

Remote SB Attendance: None

In-Person Public Attendance: Sean Temple, ORCA Media; Deirdre Connelly, Lindy Johnson, Joe Aldsworth, Paul Cerutti

Remote Public Attendance: Scott Hess, David Delcore, Paul Erlbaum, Kate Rader, Ginny Callan, Road Foreman Guthrie Perry

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

Additions to Agenda:

TA Jenkins requested adding a discussion of additional “Prohibited” signs for the Park and Ride lot.

Minutes:

The board reviewed the draft minutes of the August 22, 2022 board meeting. Mr. Etnier suggested a few edits for clarity.

Motion: To approve the August 22, 2022 minutes with tonight’s edits. Made by Ms. Dillon, second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

Public Comment: None.

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. Mr. Etnier noted that Omicron boosters are now available and that the state has a number of free walk-in clinics, including one in Berlin. He also noted that at-home test kit that appear to be expired may still be usable; the FDA has extended expiration dates for many tests. The FDA website has more information on expiration date extensions for specific tests.

Discussion of additional “Prohibited” signs in the Park and Ride lot

TA Jenkins noted that a van has been camping in Park and Ride lot and wanted to discuss installing additional “Prohibited” signs on the poles with electricity. Currently there is only one “Prohibited” sign in the lot and it is easy to miss. She spoke with VSP and they recommended adding language to the signs about loitering because camping can be hard to define. TA Jenkins has reached out to Waterbury to ask about the language they use on their signs. Mr. Etnier noted that we want to be careful we don’t put up signs that would prohibit allowed activities like parking overnight.

Conversation with EM Funding Request Study Committee

Chair Gardner noted that the total last year was \$23k and that the “vote on the floor” cap is \$25k. Ms. Johnson said that so far the committee has managed to stay below the cap and that they can always remove something if they are over the cap, as they have done in the past with some of the larger organizations. Chair Gardner said the committee can come back to the Selectboard if they run into issues. The board thanked the committee members for their work.

Discussion on bank transition and monthly financial reports

The People’s United transition to M&T Bank occurred on September 6, 2022. The transition has not been smooth, so TA Jenkins is working through some challenges with reporting. Monthly reports will be delayed, TA Jenkins will present a report as soon as she can.

Discussion on the role of elected auditors

TA Jenkins asked the board to clarify the scope of work for the elected auditors. She pointed out that in the November 15, 2021 Selectboard Minutes it was noted that Mr. Etnier researched the role of the elected auditors position and the statutory requirements for the position. As was noted in the minutes, “his key finding was that the role of the auditors is relatively clear: they conduct an annual audit and report their findings to the townspeople; they have no direct role in day-to-day operations.” Despite this, at least one elected auditor thinks they have historically reviewed day-to-day documents such as the Expense Warrants. In addition, the town’s external auditor noted a material weakness in the expectation that the elected auditors reviewed monthly bank reconciliations when in fact they only reviewed annual reconciliations.

The board clarified that, in the past, one of the elected auditors did review warrants. However, this person did not do so in their capacity as elected auditor; they were paid separately for their service in reviewing warrants. The board asked if the external auditors stated that the elected auditors must review monthly bank reconciliations to address the material weakness. TA Jenkins has reached out to the external auditors and is waiting to hear back, but she believes that the material weakness has been addressed by the hiring of the new Municipal Assistant, who does not have access to the bank accounts and will be tasked with reviewing the reconciliations.

The board will not invite the elected auditors to be part of day-to-day financial operations until TA Jenkins hears from the external auditors.

EMFD Request for Board to send letter of support for capital region dispatch enhancement

Larry Brown, EMFD Fire Chief, requested the board consider sending a letter of support for upgrades to the emergency radio system. Deputy Chief Aldsworth from the City of Barre gave an overview of the upgrades to the dispatch and radio system. The current system is more than 30 years old and dispatchers run into frequent issues. They are looking at a replacement cost of \$3.5 million and have applied to the state for a grant to cover that cost. Part of the grant requirement is having a plan in place for replacement and maintenance. The funding proposal asks towns to contribute an amount for the long-term maintenance based on their usage of the system; for East Montpelier that will be approximately \$3,700. They are requesting a letter of support from the Select Board for their application for the grant. DC Aldsworth noted that one of the benefits of this investment in the dispatch system is that East Montpelier will be a part owner in the new system.

Mr. Etnier asked if the town or if the Fire Department will be the part owner. DC Aldsworth explained that by statute it will be the town that is the part owner. Mr. Etnier asked how much of this project will be equipment upgrades and how much will be further integration of dispatch work between the member towns. DC Aldsworth explained that this is primarily an equipment upgrade, but that the cities of Barre and Montpelier are also planning for further service integration.

DC Aldsworth explained that if they receive the grant, they will come back to the Selectboard at a future meeting for a commitment.

Motion: To authorize Chair Gardner to sign the letter of support for capital region dispatch enhancement on behalf of the Select Board. Made by Mr. Etnier, second by Ms. Dillon. Passed unanimously.

Allocation of ARPA Funds to CV Fiber

Ms. Dillon and Mr. Etnier have been working on the contract language and suggested they send their revisions out via email for the board to review and discuss. Ms. Dillon noted that the revisions focused on eliminating unnecessary clauses, adding an indemnification clause, making some small edits for consistency, and completing the section identifying populations or areas for funding for the service to be provided. The board agreed that the previously discussed \$100k amount still seems like the best amount.

Motion: To appropriate \$100k from town ARPA funds to CV Fiber for building out fiber internet infrastructure in the town. Made by Mr. Etnier, second by Ms. Dillon. Passed unanimously

Motion: To authorize Ms. Dillon and Mr. Etnier to complete the contract for TA Jenkins to sign, subject to it going out to Select Board members by noon Tuesday and with no concerns raised by board members by noon Wednesday. Made by Mr. Etnier, second by Mr. Jewett. Passed unanimously.

County Road project update

RF Perry reported that Blue Mountain is making great progress and he anticipates the road will be open by Thursday of this week, possibly even by Wednesday afternoon.

The board and RF Perry discussed the recent complaints about flat tires. RF Perry explained that the gravel is stone blasted, it originated in the ground or as tailings and was crushed into the current material. The gravel laid on County Road is $\frac{3}{4}$ inch and was chosen because the better angles on the blasted stones offer better compaction rates and the gravel surface stays together longer. Pit gravel, which has more rounded edges, doesn't pack as well and is also more varied in size.

RF Perry noted that the original bid called for reusing some of the guardrail at Morse Farm, but the guardrail is in very rough shape and not fit for reuse. Blue Mountain has quoted the replacement of all the guardrail at approximately \$16k. RF Perry thinks the actual cost will be lower since some of the work and rails were included in the original bid. The consensus from the board was that it is ok to add in the cost of replacing all the guardrails with Blue Mountain.

Appointments

- Assistant Town Treasurer: Jessica Adam
- Assistant Town Clerk: Jessica Adam

TA Jenkins explained that both appointments are for the new Municipal Assistant.

Motion: To appoint Jessica Adam as Assistant Town Treasurer and Assistant Town Clerk. Made by Mr. Etnier, second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

Warrants: September 12, 2022 Regular Expense Warrant

Mr. Jewett asked for more information on the payment to EJ Prescott. Chair Gardner explained this was the purchase of the culvert. The present board members signed the warrant.

Town Administrator Report

Meeting Schedule:

- October 3, 2022 6:30 p.m. Regular meeting date
- October 17, 2022 6:30 p.m. Regular meeting date
- November 7, 2022 6:30 p.m Regular meeting date
- November 21, 2022 6:30 p.m Regular meeting date

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 Ms. Dillon, second by Mr. Jewett. Passed unanimously.

The board entered exec session at 8:07 p.m. and exited at 8:28 p.m.

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

Meeting adjourned at 8:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Deirdre Connelly.

Approved: October 3, 2022 East Montpelier Selectboard Meeting