

Minutes for the East Montpelier Selectboard

November 7, 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, Judith Dillon, Town Administrator Gina Jenkins

Remote SB Attendance: Jon Jewett

In-Person Public Attendance: Wayne Fisher, ORCA Media; Deirdre Connelly; Larry Gilbert

Remote Public Attendance: Paul Earlbaum, Flora (Zoom attendee, no last name noted), Stephen Miracle

Chair Gardner called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

Additions to Agenda: None.

Minutes:

The board reviewed the draft minutes of the October 17, 2022 board meeting and made a few edits for clarity.

Motion: To approve the October 17, 2022 with tonight's amendments. Made by Ms. Dillon, second by Mr. Jewett. Passed unanimously.

Public Comment: Mr. Earlbaum asked the board to consider including the [Vermont Declaration of Inclusion](#) in the town meeting warning. Ms. Dillon asked for more information and Mr. Earlbaum read the declaration aloud for the board. Ms. Dillon asked if sexual orientation was included in the declaration and Mr. Earlbaum said that it wasn't, and he suggested the town amend the declaration to include it. Mr. Etnier felt it would be better to have a broad discussion with the town with opportunities for engagement before putting the declaration before voters. Chair Gardner suggested the board discuss the declaration in more detail when Ms. Willis was in attendance.

VLCT Town Fair update

TA Jenkins, Town Treasurer Pallas, and Vice Chair Etnier attended the town fair. TA Jenkins reported that she'd attended a session addressing diversity and inclusion and came out with a lot of questions about what diversity and inclusion means specifically for East Montpelier. TA Jenkins also attended a session about employee recruitment and retention. She is still getting her head around the discussion and doesn't have anything specific to bring to the board about it at this time. TA Jenkins and Town Treasurer Pallas spent some time in the vendor area talking to local banks and found it very useful. Mr. Etnier attended a road meeting and got a lot of good information about maintaining the roads. He wants to review the tape from the session and get together with RF Perry and the road commissioners to talk about long-term maintenance investments. TA Jenkins will reach out to RF Perry and Mr. Etnier to find a time to meet.

Mr. Etnier also attended the VLCT, PACIF, and VERB annual meetings. VLCT has a new Executive Director, Ted Brady, who is interested in meeting with selectboards. Mr. Etnier suggested the board invite Mr. Brady to a future meeting, perhaps in February. The board supported this idea.

Mr. Etnier also noted that Xusanna Davis was at the town fair and suggested the board invite her to an upcoming meeting to talk about diversity and equity. Mr. Etnier connected with her over the summer and will reach out to her about her availability.

County Road Project update

TA Jenkins reported that the paving was completed last week and the center line is painted. Pike Industries is returning this week to complete shoulder work and the East Montpelier road crew has been working on regrading driveways to match the new pavement.

Mr. Gilbert came to the board to request a road closure along the newly repaved section of County Road on Sunday, November 13, from 9 am until noon. The closure would be to allow people to go out and enjoy the new infrastructure at slow speeds. Mr. Gilbert envisioned the road closure matching the closure during the road work, and he spoke to Burr Morse about possible impacts at Morse Farm and Mr. Morse gave his support.

Ms. Dillon asked if Mr. Gilbert had a sense of how many people might participate in the event. Mr. Gilbert didn't have an exact number but had talked to a lot of people in the past few weeks and had a sense that people were excited about the idea. Chair Gardner liked the idea and felt it was a good opportunity to build community. The board discussed the pros and cons and potential issues. Ms. Dillon asked about measures to minimize potential hazards. Mr. Gilbert explained he intends to have volunteers stand at the closure points for the full three hours to talk to drivers and direct traffic. He also plans to recruit volunteer monitors to post along the route and help direct traffic if residents who live along County Road need to drive out. Mr. Etnier offered to call the Vermont State Police to see if they are available to help at the closure points. Mr. Gilbert offered to take full responsibility for the event, from posting on Front Porch Forum and coordinating volunteers to putting up and taking down the reroute signs.

The board supported the road closure by consensus.

Discuss 2023/2024 Mack truck purchase additional surcharge

TA Jenkins explained that a \$4,000 surcharge is being applied to the Mack truck that the town has under contract, bringing the total cost to \$151,400. She also learned that the owner of Sheldon Trucks is retiring at the end of the year and closing his dealership. Mr. Etnier asked if there was anything the town could do to push back against these surcharges and TA Jenkins explained that the only real option would be to cancel the order and place an order through a different company, with the potential for an even longer wait time.

Motion: To approve the revised Mack truck price of \$151,400. Made by Mr. Etnier, second by Ms. Dillon. Passed unanimously.

Town Treasurer Report

TA Jenkins noted that she and Town Treasurer Pallas are still experiencing issues with M&T Bank. They have met with three local banks and she hopes to have information to present the board about those banks at the next meeting.

Discuss emails for Selectboard Members

TA Jenkins explained that Microsoft has a "business basic" license that the town could use for selectboard member email addresses at an economical price. Mr. Jewett investigated options for Google accounts and

found they are priced similarly. The benefit of going through Microsoft is the emails will match town employee emails, and for this reason the board agreed that going with Microsoft made sense. TA Jenkins will work with RbTech to get the emails setup.

Discuss furniture quotes for new Town Office furniture

TA Jenkins presented two quotes for office furniture for the town office. The quote from Office Environments was easy to pull together, but she'd struggled to get a second quote from another vendor and ultimately worked with Magee to pull something together for comparison. The quotes came in about the same, the main difference is in the pricing on chairs. The Office Environments quote is higher for chairs, but TA Jenkins feels more comfortable with that option since town employees were able to test those chairs. Office Environments holds the State of Vermont contract and has been great to work with; TA Jenkins would prefer to work with them on this project.

Motion: To approve the quote from Office Environments to purchase new office furniture, and to revisit where the funds will come from in the budget at a later date. Made by Mr. Etnier, second Ms. Dillon. Passed unanimously.

Discuss Town Office Hours

TA Jenkins asked the selectboard for their thoughts on adjusting town office hours. She noted that many employees have a 30-45 minute commute and so the 3-hour workday on Fridays doesn't really make sense. She is also interested in scheduling some time when the office is closed for meetings and trainings for staff. The board was supportive of exploring new town office hours.

Discussion on Town Management in Light of COVID-19

Using the CDC's community level tool, Washington County is at "Low." The latest data is as follows:

- Case Rate per 100,000 population: 71.91
- New COVID-19 admissions per 100,000 population: 4.4
- Staffed inpatient beds in use by patients with confirmed COVID-19: 2.1%

All numbers have decreased from last meeting and Mr. Etnier noted that the national numbers are down as well.

Warrants: November 7, 2022 Regular Expense Warrant

The present board members signed the warrant. Mr. Etnier asked for more information on the town garage security; TA Jenkins didn't know the specifics.

Town Administrator Report

TA Jenkins noted that tomorrow is election day and that approximately 42% of registered voters had returned their ballots by mail, through the drop box, or in-person. She mentioned that Town Clerk Laquerre had been contacted by two voters with concerns about mailing ballots out to all voters rather than only sending them upon request. Chair Gardner noted that the town has seen an increase in participation since they began mailing all ballots and voiced strong support for changes that make participating in democracy less burdensome.

TA Jenkins asked if a board member would be willing to be a point person for her during the budget and town meeting preparations since this is her first year. Chair Gardner volunteered.

TA Jenkins reported that she has been working with RbTech to get a VPN network setup to facilitate remote work for the town employees. Beyond the upfront cost of RbTech's time, the annual subscription for the VPN network will cost \$840 per year.

There was 1 new permit application since the last meeting for a total of 69 this year.

Meeting Schedule:

- November 21, 2022 6:30 p.m Regular meeting date
- December 5, 2022 6:30 p.m Regular meeting date
- December 19, 2022 6:30 p.m Regular meeting date

Personnel Matter

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 8:05 pm and exited at 8:08 pm.

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

Meeting adjourned at 8:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Deirdre Connelly.

Approved: November 28 2022 East Montpelier Selectboard Meeting