

Minutes for the East Montpelier Selectboard

November 28, 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, Amy Willis, Town Administrator Gina Jenkins

Remote SB Attendance: Jon Jewett

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

Remote Public Attendance: Rosie Laquerre, Scott Hess, Rachael Grossman, Paul Earlbaum, Bob Harnish, Betsy Bishop, Al Wakefield, David Delacore

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 November 7, 2022 board meeting and made a few edits for clarity.

Motion: To approve the November 7, 2022 with tonight's amendments. Made by Mr. Jewett, second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

Public Comment: Rachael Grossman asked if the board had an update on when the road crew might address speeding concerns at the intersection of Brazier and Town Hill Road. She noted that the previous town administrator had said it wouldn't be addressed until the road was repaved. Chair Gardner confirmed that the area wouldn't be addressed until it came up for repaving. He added that it should be coming up for repaving in the next year or two since it was last repaved around 10 years ago.

County Road Celebration

Larry Gilbert thanked the board for their support in closing County Road for the event and reported that approximately 100 people came out to walk, bike, skate, and recreate along the newly repaved road. He shared a comment from a participant who said it was the first time since moving to the area that they felt like they lived in a neighborhood. Mr. Gilbert asked if the board would be willing to consider future closures for similar events in the spring. The present board members were generally supportive, and Chair Gardner and Mr. Jewett both suggested Mr. Gilbert draft a proposal to bring to the board at a future meeting.

Discuss Diversity and Inclusion Statement

TA Jenkins briefly explained that the Declaration of Inclusion had come up at the last meeting and that Mr. Earlbaum had suggested adding sexual orientation to the list of identities in the first paragraph. The creators of the declaration, Al Wakefield and Bob Harnish, were in attendance to provide some background information. Mr. Harnish explained that the intention of the declaration was to encourage Vermont towns to be more inclusive, welcoming, and respectful. It's not meant to be a one-time action,

but the beginning of community conversations about what inclusion means for each town. Ms. Bishop asked if Mr. Harnish or Mr. Wakefield knew how many towns had brought the declaration to a town meeting for a vote. Mr. Wakefield explained that in most towns, the Selectboard voted to adopt the declaration for the town. He and Mr. Harnish encouraged town discussion about inclusion, but for the purpose of adopting the declaration they felt that selectboard members can take the responsibility of voting on the declaration as the elected leaders for their town.

Chair Gardner said it sounded like the board should adopt the declaration without waiting until town meeting. Mr. Willis said she was comfortable with that since it was still unclear if town meeting would happen. She added that she agreed with adding sexual orientation to the first paragraph after “sex” and before “gender identity”.

Motion: To adopt the amended Declaration of Inclusion. Made by Ms. Willis, second by Mr. Jewett. Passed unanimously.

Consideration of Quote for Completion of Land Digitization Project

Town Clerk Laquerre explained that this quote is in addition to the quote from last June. The increase is due to the number of handwritten documents per page that need to be digitized. TA Jenkins noted that this expense could be eligible for ARPA funds.

Motion: To authorize TA Jenkins to sign the Avenu quote for document digitization for \$8,521.41. Made by Ms. Willis, second by Mr. Jewett. Passed unanimously.

Review of Quote for Road Foreman Truck Plow

TA Jenkins explained that RF Perry is working to sell the old truck and plow to offset some of the cost of the new plow. She noted that there was not documentation on where this plow expense was budgeted. Chair Gardner explained that it is a capital expense and so should come out of the capital fund.

Motion: To authorize RF Perry to proceed with the purchase of a truck plow up to \$9,000, and that the town utilize money from the capital reserve for the purchase and return any funds from the sale of the old pickup and plow to the capital reserve. Made by Mr. Jewett, second by Ms. Willis. Passed unanimously.

Town Treasurer Report

TA Jenkins noted that there was nothing extraordinary to point out in the October report, and that she is working on reforecasting the current year to help with budgeting next year.

Delinquent Tax Collector Update

TA Jenkins noted that just over \$300k is outstanding with approximately \$30k that still needs to be posted. Late notices were just sent out and Town Clerk Laquerre noted that an unusual number of people are late this year who have never been late before. Town Treasurer Pallas is keeping an eye on this and may ask the Selectboard for guidance on handling delinquent taxes in the coming months.

Discuss Tree Warden Stipend

TA Jenkins explained that there was a note on the appointment schedule for this year that said the Selectboard should consider paying the full \$2,000 budget for Town Tree Warden to the current Warden if a Deputy Tree Warden was not identified. The present board members discussed the idea and concluded that because this was the first year of the stipend to the Tree Warden, the stipend for the

Deputy should be absorbed back into the budget for this year. Chair Gardner noted that the Tree Warden does excellent work, and that the town needs to prioritize identifying a Deputy in the next year.

Preliminary Discussion on 2023 Town Meeting Warning

TA Jenkins noted that she had drafted the warning for an in-person meeting. The board discussed whether to hold an in-person town meeting. Chair Gardner noted he had recently read that Duxbury had opted out of an in-person town meeting this year. Mr. Delacore explained that Duxbury had formally ended in-person town meetings and changed to Australian ballot, but it was a decision separate from the legislature's Covid rules. Ms. Laquerre added that the Covid emergency rules from the legislature ended January 1, 2023 and so, unless those rules are extended, the town will need to hold town meeting in-person. The present board members agreed that the town will need to plan for an in-person town meeting.

Ms. Laquerre noted that regardless of how town meeting is held, the school board is going to come to a future Selectboard meeting to ask if the board will consider mailing ballots to all voters. She added that the board will want to think about whether they want to do this for town ballots as well and bundle the ballots into one mailing. She also pointed out that Central Vermont Career Center ballots can't be mailed out at the same time; due to their charter they will be sent out by request only. Chair Gardner thanked her for bringing this up and noted that they will probably want to mail the town and school ballots together, but that the board should discuss it further at a future meeting.

Chair Gardner noted that the town forum would be at the Selectboard meeting before town meeting. TA Jenkins looked at the calendar and noted that the date for that meeting and forum would be Monday, March 6.

Preliminary Discussion on FY2024 Budget Development

TA Jenkins explained that this is a preliminary budget and it does not have updated highway costs yet. She intended this document to be a preview for the budgeting process and asked for any comments or suggestions. Mr. Hess pointed out that with rising inflation, the Selectboard may want to consider a multiplier or increase for capital improvements. Chair Gardner said he would like to look at the capital plan in more detail before deciding. He added that he would like to try to keep a flat budget if possible, but is sensitive to rising costs.

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: 30.82
- New COVID-19 admissions per 100,000 population: 6.5
- Staffed inpatient beds in use by patients with confirmed COVID-19: 2.5%

Warrants: November 28, 2022 Regular Expense Warrant

Motion: To authorize Chair Gardner to sign the warrant on behalf of the Selectboard due to a lack of an in-person quorum. Made by Ms. Willis, second by Mr. Jewett. Passed unanimously.

Town Administrator Report

TA Jenkins noted that the County Road project is complete and she is working to get the final invoices from Pike Industries. She will have a full recap of that project at the next meeting. Town Treasurer Pallas is following up with the auditors for their report.

There were 5 new permit applications since the last meeting for a total of 77 this year.

Meeting Schedule:

- December 5, 2022 6:30 p.m Regular meeting date
- December 19, 2022 6:30 p.m Regular meeting date
- January 2, 2023 6:30 p.m. Regular meeting date

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

Meeting adjourned at 7:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Deirdre Connelly.

Approved: December 5, 2022 East Montpelier Selectboard Meeting