

## **Minutes for the East Montpelier Selectboard**

### **June 5, 2023 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, Jon Jewett, Town Administrator (“TA”) Gina Jenkins

**Remote SB Attendance:** Zoe Christiansen, Scott Hess

**In-Person Public Attendance:** ORCA Media; Deirdre Connelly; Larry Gilbert; Jon Boucher; James Mansan

**Remote Public Attendance:** Town Clerk Laquerre

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

**Additions to the Agenda:** Mr. Hess requested time during the Town Treasurer Report to update the Board about investment opportunities. Mr. Etnier requested time during “other business” to discuss posting minutes.

#### **Minutes:**

The board reviewed the draft minutes of the May 15, 2023 Board meeting and made a few changes for clarity.

**Motion: To approve the minutes from the May 15, 2023 Board meeting with tonight’s amendments.** Made by Mr. Jewett, second by Mr. Etnier. Passed unanimously.

**Public Comment:** None.

### **Board Work Session to Discuss Municipal Coordinator Interview Questions**

#### **Municipal Coordinator Candidate Interview**

#### **Board Work Session on Municipal Coordinator Position**

**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 Mr. Hess. Passed unanimously.

The Board entered executive session at 6:36 p.m. and exited at 7:33 p.m.

**Motion to offer the candidate the position of Municipal Coordinator and direct TA to take further steps.** Made by Mr. Etnier, second by Ms. Christiansen. Passed unanimously.

#### **Discussion on County Road Celebrations**

Mr. Gilbert gave a recap about the history of this request. He explained that after the County Road repaving project he requested permission from the Selectboard to close County Road to automobile traffic

on a Sunday morning for a celebration and the Board agreed. Around 200 people came out during the first closure to walk, bike, and skate along the road and many participants asked when it could happen again. Mr. Gilbert assembled a group and brought a proposal to the Selectboard earlier this year for six closures over the course of summer 2023. The Selectboard was concerned about liability. To address the liability concern, Mr. Gilbert approached the Recreation Board to see if the County Road Closure committee could function as a sub-committee of the Recreation Board. The Recreation Board agreed and now the events and activities planned by this Closure sub-committee will be covered by the Town's liability insurance. Mr. Gilbert added that the other concern raised by the Selectboard was around complaints from residents that the closure would trap them in their homes if they lived along the route. He explained that these concerns are unfounded because the closure will allow residents to drive in and out of their homes at slow speeds. Emergency vehicles will also be able to drive along the route as needed.

Mr. Gilbert asked the Selectboard to reconsider the proposal now that the liability issue is addressed. He proposed a closure on County Road from Barnes Road to Templeton Road on the second Sunday of the months of July, August, September, and October of 2023.

Mr. Etnier mentioned that he spoke with Larry Smith at VLCT and was assured that the town's liability insurance would cover the event if it was run by the town or a town committee. VLCT also offered flagger training for the volunteers who would staff the event.

TA Jenkins asked who the contact person would be for the event. Mr. Etnier offered to respond to calls and Mr. Gilbert mentioned that Karen from the Recreation Board was also willing to help. Mr. Jewett asked who would coordinate with the Washington County Sheriff to staff the event. Mr. Etnier volunteered to make the call.

Chair Gardner asked the Board for their opinions on the proposal. Mr. Jewett stated that he feels more comfortable with the liability issue resolved and flagger training available, but he was not in favor of multiple events. He suggested starting with one closure and gauging the response. Ms. Christiansen liked the idea of an event to foster community. She mentioned that she had a hard time envisioning how residents and emergency vehicles would be able to pass along the route. Mr. Hess voiced support for the idea and suggested fewer events, perhaps just two in 2023 to gauge the response from residents. Chair Gardner also liked the idea for an event to foster community in town but wasn't sure about approving four closures in a row. He suggested the Board might approve one closure and then survey residents to get feedback on the event. Mr. Etnier supported the closures. He suggested that it may take time to build momentum and support for the events, and so a single closure may not offer enough time for people to come out and enjoy the event for themselves.

Mr. Jewett noted that it seemed many people were misunderstanding the closure and suggested Mr. Gilbert advertise the event with clear information on how it will work. TA Jenkins agreed that explaining how emergency vehicles and residents will still be able to use the road may clear up some of the confusion. Mr. Etnier and Ms. Christiansen both agreed with taking extra steps to communicate about the event.

Chair Gardner voiced concern about approving four events. Mr. Gilbert suggested the Board approve the four events with the caveat that if the first one or two closures raise significant resistance the remaining events can be cancelled. He added that he did see value in offering multiple opportunities for residents to participate in the events. Chair Gardner was open to the idea of approving the events with an opportunity to respond to feedback after the first closure. Mr. Gilbert offered to attend the first Selectboard meeting after the July event to report back.

**Motion: To give revocable authorization to the Recreation Board for four celebrations closing County Road on the two-mile stretch from Barnes Road to Templeton Road on the second Sunday of each month, from July through October, with the Selectboard receiving report after the first event.** Made by Mr. Etnier, second by Mr. Hess. Passed 4-0. Mr. Jewett abstained from the vote.

#### **Consideration of Cemetery Services Contract**

The Board reviewed the contract for cemetery services. TA Jenkins noted that the term was not set in the contract and suggested June 6, 2023 through December 31, 2023. She added that the contract marries the template from the town's attorney and the contract initially provided by Mr. Mansan.

Chair Gardner asked about the materials for corner posts. Mr. Boucher explained that the cemeteries used to use granite, but the material is expensive, takes a long time to procure, and can sink below the ground and make it difficult to find the corners. The cemeteries have switched to metal stakes that can easily be pushed into the ground and found later with a metal detector. He added that individuals may choose granite instead of metal for their corner posts, but they are responsible for the additional cost.

Mr. Etnier asked how Mr. Mansan's work will be overseen. Mr. Boucher stated that the Cemetery Committee will oversee his work. Mr. Etnier suggested the Board pass a motion thanking Mr. Morse for his years of service as Sexton.

**Motion: To approve the cemetery services contract between the Town of East Montpelier and J.M. Yard Services, LLC and authorize TA Jenkins to sign the contract.** Made by Mr. Jewett, second by Ms. Christiansen. Passed unanimously.

Mr. Boucher mentioned he knew of someone interested in joining the Cemetery Committee; he will have them email TA Jenkins. Mr. Boucher asked if the Board wanted to approve the price structure he proposed at an earlier meeting. The Board will review the proposed prices and consider them at the next meeting.

**Motion: To thank Elliot Morse for his long service to the town on the Cemetery Commission, on the Cemetery Committee, and as sexton, and to direct the Town Administrator to convey our thanks to him in a letter.** Made by Mr. Etnier, second Mr. Jewett. Passed unanimously.

#### **Consideration of Warrant to Impound Unlicensed Dogs**

The Board reviewed the warrant. Mr. Hess asked where impounded dogs go. Mr. Etnier stated that the town does not have facilities to hold dogs, but he thinks the Central Vermont Humane Society would be open to taking impounded dogs. Town Clerk Laquerre added that the constable can also get involved in impounding dogs if necessary.

**Motion: To approve the updated warrant to impound unlicensed dogs.** Made by Mr. Jewett, second by Ms. Christiansen. Passed 4-0. Mr. Etnier recused himself from the vote.

#### **Town Treasurer Report**

TA Jenkins commented that this is the standard financial reporting package and noted that Town Treasurer Pallas is having some trouble reconciling reports from the credit card processing company. She noted the budget status report and commented that there were no red flags at this time.

Mr. Hess mentioned that he has been working with TA Jenkins and Town Treasurer Pallas to look into investment opportunities with Northfield Savings Bank. They will meet with a bank representative next

week to talk through their options. Mr. Etnier asked what statutory power towns have to invest their money. Mr. Hess mentioned that the town does have an investment policy, but he didn't know the specific statutory authorization. He will look into it.

### **Delinquent Tax Collector Report and Policy Review**

The Board reviewed the delinquent tax report from Town Treasurer Pallas. Mr. Jewett noted the David Rogers estate was on the list and he was fairly certain that at least some of those properties had been sold. Mr. Etnier suggested Town Treasurer Pallas speak to Town Clerk Laquerre about any recent sales. Mr. Jewett noted that many names on the list were delinquent for more than five years and should go to tax sale.

TA Jenkins explained that Town Treasurer Pallas is uncertain about the actual practice for delinquent taxes and could use some guidance from the Board. Mr. Jewett indicated the town's policy, which says the town should offer a payment agreement and then the next step is a tax sale. TA Jenkins explained that it seems the policy was inconsistently applied in the past and Town Treasurer Pallas could use some hands-on guidance. Chair Gardner offered to come in to work with Town Treasurer Pallas. Mr. Jewett offered to send TA Jenkins a template for a payment agreement.

### **Consideration of Transfer of Funds from General Fund to Other Town Funds as Budgeted for FY2023**

TA Jenkins explained that these are ledger entries to move money to the named groups or funds. In past years these have required a motion from the Board.

**Motion: To approve the transfers as outlined in the Selectboard memo.** Made by Mr. Hess, second by Mr. Jewett. Passed unanimously.

### **Consideration of Municipal Energy Resilience ("MERP") Mini-Grant Agreement**

TA Jenkins noted that this mini-grant was previously approved; she was requesting a motion from the Board to authorize her to sign the documents.

**Motion: To authorize TA Jenkins to sign the MERP mini-grant agreement.** Made by Mr. Jewett, second by Mr. Etnier. Passed unanimously.

### **Consideration of Washington Electric Cooperative Service Line on Chickering Road**

The Board reviewed the permit; there was no discussion.

**Motion: To approve the permit and authorize Chair Gardner to sign the motion on behalf of the Board.** Made by Mr. Hess, second by Ms. Christiansen. Passed unanimously.

### **Discussion on Town Employee Delta Dental Plan**

TA Jenkins noted that the dental plan is essentially unchanged from the previous year. There was no further discussion.

### **Appointments**

CV Fiber Town Representative alternate: Nik Khosla.

TA Jenkins explained that she and Tom Fisher received no response from the previous alternate about staying in the position. Mr. Khosla has a background in broadband and expressed interest in the role.

**Motion: To appoint Nik Khosla as the CV Fiber representative alternate.** Made by Mr. Etnier, second by Mr. Jewett. Passed unanimously.

**Warrants: June 5, 2023 Regular Expense Warrant**

The board reviewed the warrant; there was no discussion.

**Town Administrator Report**

TA Jenkins gave the Board an update on the trash issue at the Route 2 residence. Ryan McCall, Vermont Environment Enforcement Officer, visited the site and spoke with the resident; he noted that an aggressive dog is on the property and cautioned TA Jenkins or any other representative from the town not to visit the property alone. He indicated that the trash is in violation of state regulations. Ms. Christiansen suggested that now that the state is involved, they will follow through to resolve the trash issue. Mr. Jewett suggested the Board let the state continue to work on the situation until the next Selectboard meeting, and also suggested the Board members do some research on what the Town Health Officer could do to move the situation along. Ms. Christiansen volunteered to keep in touch with the state.

TA Jenkins added that Ginny Burley officially resigned as Town Health Officer. Chair Gardner was appointed Town Health Officer as the default per statute. TA Jenkins has not heard from anyone interested in the position.

TA Jenkins explained that in the past the calls for burn permits went straight to the fire department, but their current staff are not trained to handle these requests. Requests should now go directly to Fire Warden Ty Rolland. TA Jenkins will update the town website with this information.

There have been three new permit applications since the last meeting.

Meeting Schedule:

- June 19, 2023 6:30 p.m. Regular meeting date
- July 24, 2023 6:30 p.m. Special meeting date
- August 7, 2023 6:30 p.m. Regular meeting date
- August 10, 2023 7:00 p.m. EMFD meeting date
- August 23, 2023 6:30 p.m. Regular meeting date
- September 11, 2023 6:30 p.m. Special meeting date
- September 18, 2023 6:30 p.m. Special meeting date
- October 2, 2023 6:30 p.m. Regular meeting date
- October 16, 2023 6:30 p.m. Regular meeting date

**Other Business**

Mr. Etnier suggested the annotated agendas for Selectboard meetings be posted along with the minutes to provide background information for the meeting conversations. The Board agreed with this idea and TA Jenkins will begin posting the two documents together.

**Motion: To adjourn.** Made by Mr. Jewett, second by Mr. Hess. Passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 9:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Deirdre Connelly.

Approved June 19, 2023 Selectboard meeting.