

Minutes for the East Montpelier Selectboard

September 18, 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, Scott Hess, Town Administrator (“TA”) Gina Jenkins

Remote SB Attendance: Zoe Christiansen

In-Person Public Attendance: ORCA Media; Deirdre Connelly; Alison Underhill; Cheryl Moyer, Director of Home Ownership, Downstreet Housing & Community Development

Remote Public Attendance: Kimberly Meeks, Ginny Callan, Sarah Kinter

Vice Chair Etnier called the Selectboard meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Additions to the Agenda: None.

Minutes: The board reviewed the draft minutes of the September 11, 2023 Board meeting and made a few edits for clarity.

Chair Gardner joined the meeting at 6:31 p.m.

Motion: To approve the minutes from the September 11, 2023 Board meeting with tonight’s amendments. Made by Mr. Hess, second by Mr. Etnier. Passed unanimously.

Mr. Etnier reported that he is running for the Hunger Mountain Co-op Council. This group has previously met on the first Monday of the month, but they are discussing moving their meetings to another day. If they continue to meet on the first Monday of the month, Mr. Etnier intends to withdraw his candidacy.

Public Comment: Ms. Connelly noted that this is her last meeting taking minutes for the Board, thanked the group for the opportunity, and expressed her admiration for the time and consideration they bring to their meetings.

Warrants: September 18, 2023 Regular Expense Warrant

The Board reviewed and signed the warrant; there was no discussion.

Conversation with Funding Request Study Committee

Chair Gardner explained that the Funding Request Committee must keep total requests below \$25k. He noted that last year’s requests totaled \$22,166, so there is room to honor increase requests while keeping the total under \$25k. He also pointed out that the committee is not obligated to fund a group that has been funded in past years if the group doesn’t submit a request this year. TA Jenkins noted that she emailed the application to all the organizations that were funded last year, as well as two organizations that didn’t apply last year but were funded in the previous year. She added that she plans to take time off around the deadline for applications, so she is planning to offer a grace period if organizations have questions while she is out of the office.

Mr. Etnier suggested the committee ask organizations to address how the July flooding affected their finances and operations. He mentioned Kellogg-Hubbard Library and Montpelier Senior Activity Center

as two examples of organizations affected by flooding. The present committee members thanked the Board.

Conversation with Downstreet Housing & Community Development

Chair Gardner explained that the Board has had past discussions about what to do with the town's revolving loan fund. Sandy Pines received a loan through the fund, as well as a few other individuals, but the town does not have the bandwidth or expertise to vet applicants on a regular basis. TA Jenkins explained that the fund is not in compliance with the state, so the town can either return the money to the state or assign the money to Downstreet Housing & Community Development. TA Jenkins added that the current fund balance is \$263,700.

Ms. Moyer explained that Downstreet can use the funds for their programs offering low-to-moderate income homeowners funding to repair their homes, with a focus on health and safety issues. Depending on the applicant's income, the funds may be issued as a grant, a deferred loan, or a loan. Downstreet has also been approved to offer funding to homeowners impacted by this year's floods.

Chair Gardner asked if the \$263,700 would be used exclusively for East Montpelier residents. Ms. Moyer explained that the agreement could reserve the funding for East Montpelier residents for the first one to three years, but after that period the funding would be open to anyone in Downstreet's service area, which includes East Montpelier. Mr. Etnier asked about the size of the loans and Ms. Moyer explained that most are around \$20k, as construction projects have gotten more expensive in recent years. Chair Gardner asked if the town would ever have the option to take the funds back from Downstreet and TA Jenkins stated they would not. Mr. Jewett pointed out that the town could apply for other funding from the state or community development groups for future projects, and that the intention of the revolving loan fund is that the money is in use.

Mr. Hess suggested the town publicize the funding options available through Downstreet. TA Jenkins agreed and proposed scheduling an information session for town residents with Downstreet in the coming months.

Motion: To authorize the Town Administrator and Town Treasurer to work with Downstreet Housing & Community Development to assign the balance of the revolving loan fund to Downstreet to be used, at least in the first three years, for loans and grants for affordable housing in East Montpelier. Made by Mr. Etnier, second by Ms. Christiansen. Passed unanimously.

Discuss ARPA Public Hearing

The Board reviewed the list of funding requests that came up at the ARPA Public Hearing. TA Jenkins noted the listers requests for a fire rated file cabinet, a laptop, and funds for the scanning projects. She explained that she would like more information on the file cabinet and noted that it might be most cost-effective to seek offsite fire rated storage. She noted that the laptop had been considered at a past Selectboard meeting. The scanning project is held up because the large format printer/scanner has not worked for more than a year. Mr. Hess asked what the listers are doing to copy maps without the scanner. TA Jenkins explained that they use the regular copier and tape together the pages to form the maps they need. Chair Gardner asked how much it would cost to repair or replace the large format printer/scanner. TA Jenkins explained that she doesn't have numbers, but if the town replaced the printer/scanner she would like to get one with a lease and service agreement. Ms. Christiansen suggested that digital photographs might be a cost-effective option for digitizing these records. Mr. Etnier added that it would be helpful to know how many documents need to be digitized and if this is an ongoing or one-time scanning project.

TA Jenkins moved to Ms. Callan's request that some of the ARPA funds go to local nonprofits. She suggested the town put out a public request for local nonprofits to come to the Selectboard with requests. Mr. Etnier asked if this would be another hearing at a future meeting. Chair Gardner suggested that the requests could instead be an agenda item at a future meeting. TA Jenkins will reach out to Katie Buckley to get some guidance on how nonprofits can use the funding, and added that she envisions requests for things like ADA enhancements to buildings.

Mr. Etnier recalled many recent conversations in Board meetings about speeding concerns and suggested using some ARPA funds for radar signs along areas of concern. Chair Gardner and TA Jenkins both voiced support for this idea.

Chair Gardner pointed out the request from Ms. Carpenter about using ARPA funding for affordable housing and flood recovery efforts and noted that it seems the town's new relationship with Downstreet might address those two areas.

Mr. Jewett noted that the Capital Improvement Committee has an upcoming meeting and he asked if the Board has any suggestions for the capital budget. The town garage project and the municipal office came up as both possible ARPA projects and possible items for the capital budget. The Board agreed that the town garage is the higher priority. Mr. Jewett suggested adding a line to the capital budget for the municipal office so that funds are set aside for future planning and services for that project.

Town Administrator Report

TA Jenkins reported that the wetlands review for the potential town garage site will be Friday 9/22 and the FEMA site inspection will be Tuesday 9/26. She noted that two zoning permit applications have come in since the last meeting.

TA Jenkins reminded the Board that she will be out of the office 9/21-25, and she will attend the VLCT Town Fair on 9/26 and 9/27.

Meeting Schedule:

- October 2, 2023 6:30 p.m. Regular meeting date
- October 16, 2023 6:30 p.m. Regular meeting date
- November 6, 2023 6:30 p.m. Regular meeting date
- November 20, 2023 6:30 p.m. Regular meeting date
- December 4, 2023 6:30 p.m. Regular meeting date
- December 18, 2023 6:30 p.m. Regular meeting date
- January 8, 2024 6:30 p.m. Regular meeting date
- January 22, 2024 6:30 p.m. Regular meeting date

Other Business

None.

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

Meeting adjourned at 7:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Deirdre Connelly.

Approved October 2, 2023 Selectboard meeting.

**Town of East Montpelier
Selectboard Memo
September 18, 2023 SB Meeting**

Additions to the Agenda

None

Conversation with the Funding Request Study Committee

- Members: Ginny Callan, Sarah Kinter, Paul Erlbaum, Alison Underhill, Kimberly Meeks
 - Application packet distributed to 38 organizations on September 11th and 12th with a due date of October 20, 2023.
 - Committee report will be presented to the Selectboard at the December 18, 2023 Selectboard meeting.
- The purpose of this discussion is to set expectations for the FY2025 funding request article.
 - The FY2024 Funding Requests total was \$22,166.
 - The limit is \$25,000
- As with prior years, Four Corners Schoolhouse, Twin Valley Senior Center, Central Vermont Home Health & Hospice, Montpelier Senior Activity Center, Kellogg-Hubbard Library and the commuter bus requests for RCT & GMT will present requests directly to the SB at an upcoming meeting.

Conversation with Downstreet Housing & Community Development

- Cheryl Moyer, Director of Home Ownership, will be in attendance to discuss assigning the town's Revolving Loan Fund balance with the organization to promote affordable housing in East Montpelier.
- The amount to be assigned is \$263,700 with some potential minor adjustments due to the allocation of interest earned prior to the assignment.
- If the Selectboard is comfortable with assigning the funds to Downstreet Housing & Community Development, the Selectboard to approve the assignment via motion.

Discuss ARPA Public Hearing

- Selectboard to discuss the ARPA Public Hearing held on September 11, 2023.
- Selectboard to discuss the feedback from the hearing:
 - From Town Lister Deb Fillion
 - Fire-rated filing cabinet – This request requires more research to understand the need for fire-rated cabinets. Standard town office procedure is to store critical documents in the vault.
 - Laptop – The Selectboard previously declined a request to order a loaner laptop (May 15, 2023 meeting) to be used in the situation presented by Ms. Fillion in which the 3 Listers were in the office at the same time. The request at that time was for a loaner laptop that would remain in the office and not be set up for remote use. It is rare that the 3 Listers are in the office at the same time and require the need of separate computers. Typically, the Listers work together at one computer when more than one is in the office.
 - Large Format Printer/Scanner – The large format printer/scanner has been in disrepair since TA Johnson retired. The machine was relocated to the unlevel meeting room floor during the TA transition. The machine will currently not function properly and is out of ink. Unlike the other office machines, the printer/scanner is not under a Canon service contract. In discussion with Canon, the cost for service is \$230 per hour with no understanding of the full cost to repair the machine. TA Jenkins has been working with Canon on evaluating the office machines for future Selectboard consideration.

- Ginny Callan suggested part of the funds support local non-profits. An item could be added to a future agenda with a public announcement on Front Porch Forum to invite local non-profits to request funds from the Selectboard.
- The housing concerns addressed by Ms. Carpenter may benefit from the Downstreet discussion earlier in this meeting. In addition to potential concerns for ARPA eligibility, the challenge to creating a program is the resources available and timing to commit funds is limited.
- TA Jenkins spoke with Katie Buckley, VLCT Federal Funding Assistance Program Director, and confirmed that ARPA funds need to be spent or committed via executed contract. The town setting up and administering grant programs does not fit the intent of the ARPA program.

Warrants

- **September 18, 2023 Regular Expense Warrant**
 - The warrant should be signed by all Selectboard members present. If an “in-person” quorum is lacking, the warrant should be approved by one of the in-person Selectboard members authorized to sign the warrant on behalf of the Selectboard.

Town Administrator Report

- The preliminary wetlands review for the vacant parcel adjacent to the town garage is scheduled for Friday, September 22, 2023 at 8:30 a.m.
- The FEMA Site inspection is scheduled for Tuesday, September 26, 2023. The sites to be visited are:
 - Sodom Pond Rd. Culvert
 - Sparrow Farm Rd. Culvert
 - Sanders Circle Culvert
 - Guyette Rd.
- There have been 2 zoning permits applications since the last meeting as follows:
 - 23-035: Deck replacement.
 - 23-036: Construction of enclosed shop and carport.
- TA Jenkins is out of the office on vacation on September 21st, 22nd and 25th. TA Jenkins and Municipal Coordinator Canada will be attending the VLCT Town Fair on September 26th and 27th. Treasurer Pallas will be attending the VLCT Town Fair on September 27th. Town Clerk Laquerre will be in the office.
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