

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

October 2, 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, Zoe Christiansen, Scott Hess, Jon Jewett, Town Administrator (“TA”) Gina Jenkins

**In-Person Public Attendance:** Michael Duane, town resident; Robert Fitch and Nick Van Den Berg, Recreation Board; Zach Zorn, Orca Media

**Remote Public Attendance:** Deborah Fillion, Board of Listers.

Chair Gardner called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

**Additions to the agenda:** Listers Errors & Omissions; Consideration of VLCT PACIF Membership Renewal

**Minutes:** The board reviewed the draft minutes of the September 18, 2023 Board meeting.

**Motion: To approve the minutes from the July 24, 2023 Board meeting as amended.**

Made by Mr. Hess, second by Mr. Jewett. Passed unanimously.

### Listers Errors & Omissions

The listers provided an Errors & Omissions Certificate for Selectboard review and approval with the following adjustments:

SPAN 195-062-10852: Reverse merger with SPAN 195-062-11426 that was done in error.

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Lister Deborah Fillion explained that the two parcels share a common owner. A boundary adjustment with a neighbor created a strip of land that now connects the parcels. The listers then merged the two parcels, since they appeared to be under common ownership. However, each parcel has a co-owner, and they are different co-owners. Therefore they are not under common ownership, and the merger was an error. The Listers have submitted an Errors and Omissions Certificate to the Selectboard to undo the erroneous merger.

The Selectboard agreed to sign the Certificate, and all members did so.

Board Work Session to Discuss Zoning Administrator Interview Questions

Zoning Administrator Candidate Interview

Board Work Session on Zoning Administrator Position

The SB decided by consensus to address the above three agenda topics in one continuous 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.

The SB entered executive session at 6:40 pm and resumed its open session at 7:40 pm.

**Motion: To authorize the TA to offer the candidate the zoning administrator position.** Made by Mr. Etnier, second by Mr. Hess. Passed unanimously.

#### Discussion with Recreation Board

Mr. Van Den Berg and Mr. Fitch presented a proposal from the Recreation Board for a new process of processing payments for Recreation Board activities using the point-of-sale app Square. The goal with this new process is to mitigate the concerns noted by the town external auditor (Sullivan & Powers) regarding the timeliness of deposits for recreation activities. The ability to accept electronic payments is expected to mitigate the concern surrounding the timeliness of deposits. Also, the Recreation Board expects that electronic payments at concession stands, for example, will be a popular alternative to paying with cash. They estimate that around six thousand dollars a year in payments are received by the Board.

Treasurer Michelle Pallas has worked with Northfield Savings Bank to set up a separate bank account for payments to the Recreation Board that are processed via Square. The separate account will make it easy to keep any security issues with Square payments from affecting the rest of the Town's finances. The Treasurer and TA will be the only people allowed to sign checks on the account.

Finally, Treasurer Pallas has worked with the Recreation Board to create a new payment processing policy to be considered by the Selectboard for adopting. It uses the Town Cash Receipts policy as a template and is customized for the Recreation Board.

The SB thanked the Recreation Board for the work in this area and agreed to support it.

**Motion: To approve the Recreation Board Cash Receipts Policy as presented.** Made by Mr. Hess, second by Ms. Christiansen. Passed unanimously.

#### Discussion on ARPA Funding

Since the previous SB meeting, TA Jenkins has received updated guidance from Katie Buckley, Director of Federal Funding Assistance Program for the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT), regarding the Town using ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act of 2021) funds to support local nonprofit organizations. According to this guidance, the SB is authorized to use ARPA funds to provide funding for nonprofits. If East Montpelier chooses to award funds to local nonprofits, then they are considered "beneficiaries," not "subrecipients," and therefore the nonprofits' use of the funds would not be restricted by the rules of ARPA. Some municipalities are simply asking for letters of request from their local nonprofits and then writing them checks. Others are putting more process/procedure in place so

they can show clear consideration and selection as they make their decisions about who to fund, how much to award and the required documentation that will be supplied. Many are choosing to maintain the tenets of ARPA in their requests for funds even though they are not required to do so.

TA Jenkins asked the Selectboard whether/how they would like to proceed with engaging nonprofit organizations for this purpose.

The SB noted that some of the ARPA funds have already been committed or given to a local nonprofit (\$30,000 to the Four Corners Schoolhouse Association for mold remediation) and a municipality created to provide high-speed internet, operating on a not-for-profit basis (\$100,000 to CVFiber). And Twin Valley Senior Center approached the SB soon after the ARPA funds were awarded to the town about receiving a grant; the SB was not ready at that point to commit the funds to specific projects or organizations.

Mr. Gardner raised the possibility of covering large, planned expenditures with the Town's ARPA funds, which would meet the Federal requirements for using the money in a timely manner and allow us to use the funds budgeted for those other expenditures on projects of our choice, unencumbered by Federal restrictions on ARPA funds. He mentioned a \$116,000 expenditure on a new fire truck for East Montpelier Fire Department as an example.

The SB discussed whether they wished to open up applications to "local" nonprofits that have an address in East Montpelier or those that serve East Montpelier residents, even if they are based elsewhere. The consensus seemed to settle on calling for applications from nonprofits "based in East Montpelier." Also, Mr. Etnier proposed that the money be reserved for special projects by the nonprofits, like the mold remediation project, rather than paying ongoing expenses like a director's salary.

By consensus, the SB decided to ask TA Jenkins to provide an overview of Town ARPA funds that have already been committed or spent, at a future meeting. The SB will then decide how much total to allocate to grants to nonprofits, the cap on the award to each organization, and the language to use in describing process of applying for the funds. To avoid creating confusion with the annual appropriations to nonprofits that townspeople vote on at Town Meeting, many of which face an application deadline in October, the SB will wait until after its first November meeting to announce any potential grants via the ARPA money.

#### Town Garage Project Update

Mr. Gardner and Mr. Etnier met the wetlands consultant from Arrowwood at the Town Garage site on September 22. From a phone call with Road Foreman Perry, it became clear that the site he had in mind was 600 feet back from Templeton Road and would require constructing both the building itself and the road to the building through or near wetlands and a creek. Mr. Gardner and Mr. Etnier that more investigation of using the existing site was warranted. At a subsequent meeting of Mr. Gardner, Mr. Jewett, TA Jenkins, and RF Perry, a proposal was developed that would fit the new garage on the existing site. This could be kept far enough from the stream and wetlands that it would not require a

state permit. The building would be partially constructed where the existing garage is, so the construction would need to be done quickly, over one summer, while the equipment is stored outside.

The Town owns three parcels in the area; the Town Garage is on one; another houses the East Montpelier Fire Department Station #1; the third is part of the Town Forest. The boundary lines do not neatly delineate the activities; the current Town Garage site, with its work area and outbuildings, is partially on the Town Forest parcel. Mr. Etnier asked that the Town consider a boundary adjustment, so that no buildings and activities related to the Town Garage are in the Town Forest.

Mr. Gardner brought up the property the Town owns in the village, now with a residential house on it, as a site for an adjunct Town Garage. It could be used for temporary storage of some equipment while the new garage is being built and permanent storage of equipment used only in the village, like sidewalk cleaners. He raised the prospect that the Fire Department might prefer to have its equipment stored at Station #1 on the site in the village, too.

The board discussed how to proceed with the Request for Proposals (RFP) that Cathleen Gent is drafting for designers and builders of the Town Garage. Andy Shapiro of the Energy Committee has emailed Mr. Gardner and Mr. Etnier, reiterating his offer to participate in the process of designing and building the Town Garage, and he has said that the earlier that energy considerations are included in discussions, the better the chances for incorporating them in a way that saves money in the long run. Mr. Shapiro is incommunicado until October 18. Mr. Jewett and Mr. Gardner indicated they could wait until after Mr. Shapiro's return to proceed on the RFP draft. Mr. Jewett will send the current draft to Mr. Etnier, for forwarding to Mr. Shapiro, and Mr. Jewett and Mr. Gardner will subsequently meet with Mr. Shapiro to discuss possible edits, before the RFP is presented to the SB for approval.

#### Monthly Financial Reporting Package

Treasurer Pallas provided the July 31, 2023 financial reporting package for Selectboard review. TA Jenkins reported that there were no red flags; SB members had no immediate questions.

#### Warrants

The October 2, 2023 Regular Expense Warrant was approved via signature of all the SB members.

#### Consideration of VLCT PACIF Membership Renewal

The 2024 Renewal Application was sent via email on Friday, September 29, with a due date of October 13, 2023 for completion. PACIF is the insurance arm of VLCT. TA Jenkins started the application and will update as needed for any changes since last year. She anticipates minimal adjustments to the information provided by VLCT and will update/submit the application pending Selectboard approval. The deadline for completion is before the next regular SB meeting.

Rather than hold a special meeting, the SB decided to authorize the TA to complete the routine annual renewal process.

Motion: To authorize the Town Administrator to update, sign, and submit the renewal application for the VLCT PACIF membership program. Made by Mr. Etnier, second by Mr. Jewett.

**Town Administrator Report**

There has been one zoning application since the last SB meeting. A curb cut application will be presented to the SB at its next meeting, once it is reviewed by RF Perry.

**Adjourn**

**Motion: To adjourn.**

Made by Mr. Jewett, second by Ms. Christiansen. Passed unanimously. Adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Carl Etnier.