

Selectboard 2023 Town Report

The town continues to respond to the ever-changing uncertainties of the world today and leverage local resources and talent to support the community. Some of the highlights of 2023 included some changes to the Selectboard composition, continued transition in town office and the catastrophic floods impacting our local region.

The Selectboard membership changed in 2023 with two board member seats. Amy Willis decided to step down from her Selectboard seat in 2023 and did not run for re-election. Amy was a member of the Selectboard from 2017 until 2023. The Selectboard benefited from Amy's professional background in finance/economics and active involvement in the local community for her 6-year tenure. Judith Dillon also did not run for re-election of her position on the Selectboard in 2023. Judith was a Selectboard member from 2020 until 2023 providing a unique perspective to the Selectboard with her legal background and engagement in local organizations. On December 18, 2023, Selectboard member, Jon Jewett, resigned his position as a member of the town's Selectboard. Jon's background in town government management and as a native Vermonter helped guide many initiatives for the town. The Selectboard appreciates the contributions of these members. The Selectboard welcomed two new members during 2023. Scott Hess ran for the open 2-year seat on the Selectboard at the Annual Town Meeting. As a member on the Planning Commission for a decade, Scott was well versed in town operations and brings a different perspective from his background in commercial finance and commodities combined with his extensive involvement in local organizations to the Selectboard. Zoe Christiansen was appointed to the Selectboard to fill Judith's position in April. As a native town resident, Zoe brings a fresh perspective and historical understanding of the town to her position on the Selectboard. The Selectboard will be welcoming a new member in 2024 and look forward to the contributions that the new member will bring in leading the town.

The town office transition continued in 2023 with the departure of Jessica Adam as the Municipal Assistant in January. During her 5-month tenure, Jessica supported the office and assisted the team in the transition of the new team. In making her difficult decision to leave, Jessica couldn't pass up an opportunity to work closer to home. In June, the office welcomed Patricia Canada to as the Municipal Coordinator. Patricia brings many years of administrative experience to her position and has hit the ground running. She has quickly become an integral member of the team and continues the work on ushering the town office into its new era. Tyson Brown took the helm as Zoning Administrator in June 2022 and oversaw the town's zoning process until October. Tyson left us to rebuild his family's business after it was damaged in the July 2023 flood. Mikaela Engert joined the town staff in October as the Zoning Administrator and is quickly acclimating to her new role. Patricia and Mikaela join Town Administrator Gina Jenkins, Town Clerk Rosie Laquerre and Town Treasurer/Business Manager Michele Pallas to round out the talented town office team. The Selectboard thanks the departing staff members, welcomes the new staff members, and appreciates all the town office team wholeheartedly.

The Road Crew continued to excel under the steady leadership of Road Foreman Guthrie Perry. Road Crew members, Frank Campbell, Ken Lorden, and Craig Seadeek welcomed a new part-time road crew member, Steve Levenberg to the team in 2023. 2023 turned out to be one of the most challenging years faced by this road crew with the July flood and continuous heavy rain experienced by the region. The town's talented road crew fought on the evening of July 10th to mitigate as much of the flood damage as possible and worked very hard in the weeks/months that followed to repair the roads as

much as possible before winter. The Selectboard is tremendously thankful for the seasoned road crew's efforts in maintaining the town's 64 miles of roads.

2023 will forever be marked by the flood experienced in July. East Montpelier fared better than neighboring towns overall but sustained significant damage to many of the town's roads. Road Foreman Perry and TA Jenkins led the efforts to manage the town's response and continue to work with federal and state representatives to repair the damage. The Selectboard appreciates the contributions and hard work by the team to respond to the flood and manage the process of rebuilding.

The town has continued identifying and funding town projects and improvements with the American Rescue Plan Act ("ARPA") funds received in response to the pandemic. The funds have been used thus far to improve the information technology for the town office to enhance the resiliency of the systems, for repairs to the aging town hall building, to replace the town office furniture, to digitize land records, ash tree management, purchase of fire engine chassis and purchase of a new 10-wheel dump truck and supporting the mold remediation efforts at the historic Four Corners Schoolhouse. The Selectboard has taken the opportunity to use the ARPA funds to invest in and improve the town's infrastructure while preserving funds in the capital reserve that may have otherwise been used to fund these efforts.

The Town is embarking on a significant project to replace the current town garage at its current site. The garage is outdated and does not meet the needs of the town. The town issued a Request for Proposals ("RFP") in November to identify and hire a firm to perform architectural and engineering services to design a new town garage. More information on the project will be available in 2024. Rest assured that the Selectboard will engage residents in the process as the project unfolds.

The East Montpelier Fire Department entered 2023 being led by interim Chief Albert Petrella. Albert was officially voted as Chief at the May 2023 meeting. The department has continued efforts to focus on training and staff development while implementing a pay structure to attract and retain talent.

The FY2025 budget reflects the town's effort to manage expenses in a difficult economic environment. The general fund has increased 3.0% due to an increase in EMFD costs (\$30.1K or 1.4%), increased highway management costs (\$26.4K or 1.2%) and salaries and benefits costs (\$18.9K or 0.9%). The resulting tax rate is increasing 4.7% or 3.4 cents due to the Grand List is staying relatively flat from FY2024 to FY2025 and the increase in the overall Selectboard budget.

As we look forward to 2024, the Selectboard looks forward to welcoming new members to the Selectboard and furthering the great work of the past Selectboard members.

Selectboard Members

Seth Gardner, Chairperson
Scott Hess

Jon Jewett

Carl Etnier, Vice-chairperson
Zoe Christiansen