

## Minutes for the East Montpelier Selectboard

# DRAFT

### December 4, 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, Zoe Christiansen, Carl Etnier, Scott Hess, Town Administrator (“TA”) Gina Jenkins, Town Treasurer Michelle Pallas.

**Remote SB Attendance:** None.

**In-Person Public Attendance:** Carol Cannaveno, All Together Now (ATN); Michael Duane, Town Moderator; Kelly Finnegan, Central Vermont Home Health and Hospice (CVHHH); Sandy Rouse, CVHHH; Janice Walrafen, ATN; Zach Zorn, Orca Media.

**Remote Public Attendance (some information is incomplete, from Zoom screen names):** Paul Erlbaum, Funding Request Study Committee; TayloreG.

Chair Gardner called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

**Additions to the agenda:** None.

**Minutes:** The board reviewed the draft minutes of the November 20, 2023 Board meeting.

**Motion: To approve the minutes from the November 20, 2023 Board meeting as submitted.**  
Made by Mr. Hess, second by Ms. Christiansen. Passed unanimously.

### **Presentation of Funding Request Study Committee Report**

Mr. Erlbaum presented the report from the Funding Request Study Committee (FSRC). The committee reviews requests for funding by local organizations for inclusion in an article to be voted on at Town Meeting. By rules adopted by East Montpelier voters, no item may be approved on the floor of Town Meeting that exceeds \$25,000. The FSRC submitted a list of 36 organizations that had requested a total of \$23,691. The FSRC recommended funding all of the organizations in the amount that each of them requested, a 7.9% increase over last year’s funding levels.

The SB traditionally votes on the FSRC recommendation in the process of finalizing the warning for Town Meeting. The SB thanked Mr. Erlbaum and the rest of the FSRC for their work in vetting these requests and creating the report.

### **Consideration of Winter Roads Policy**

TA Jenkins presented a draft winter operations plan for the Town's highway department, unchanged from last year's plan. The plan details how the highway department approaches the arduous task of maintaining Town roads during the winter. A key provision of the policy is: "Given the circumstances involved with changing weather conditions, the Town of East Montpelier does not have a bare road policy. Travelers who use town roads should exercise due care and reasonable caution during winter conditions."

**Motion: To accept the 2023-2024 Winter Operations Plan as presented.** Made by Mr. Hess, second by Mr. Etnier. Passed unanimously.

#### **Consideration of Vermont Rural Fire Protection Task Force Town Appropriation**

TA Jenkins presented a request from the Vermont Rural Fire Protection Task Force for the Selectboard to include a \$100 town appropriation in the FY2025 budget. The organization funds dry hydrants for rural firefighting. The town last provided funding in November 2021.

**Motion: To appropriate \$100 in the FY2025 budget for the Vermont Rural Fire Protection Task Force.** Made by Mr. Hess, second by Ms. Christiansen. Passed unanimously.

#### **Consideration of Avenu Contract Revision for Cloud Based Services**

TA Jenkins presented for Selectboard consideration an amendment to the existing contract with Avenu for land records management to convert to the cloud version for land records management. There is no additional cost for the conversion to the cloud version. Some of the benefits of converting to the cloud version are enhanced remote access to land records if there was a need for town staff to work remotely and a simplified IT infrastructure to manage the land records system by shifting to a cloud-based version that is fully managed by Avenu.

**Motion: To accept an amendment to the existing contract with Avenu to convert to the cloud version for land records management.** Made by Ms. Christiansen, second by Mr. Etnier. Passed unanimously.

#### **FY2025 Appropriation Discussion: Central Vermont Home Health & Hospice (CVHHH)**

Ms. Rouse presented the work CVHHH does in the community, along with a request that the SB include an article on the Town Meeting warning for a floor vote on the question, "Shall the Town raise the sum of \$6,500 for Central Vermont Home Health & Hospice for operating expenses during fiscal year 2025." The amount is the same as requested last year. The organization serves health needs of people ranging from expecting and new parents to people in the last months of their lives; helping people remain living in their own homes is a key part of their work.

She described how the organization is serving East Montpelier and the other 22 communities in their service area, with increasing demand for their services, staffing shortages, and cuts in Medicare reimbursements.

The SB traditionally votes on funding articles in the process of finalizing the warning for Town Meeting. The SB thanked Ms. Rouse and Ms. Finnegan for their work and for their presentation.

### **Consideration of Invitation for Vermont 250th Anniversary Resolution**

Ms. Christiansen communicated with the East Montpelier Historical Society and received confirmation that the organization will collaborate with the Town in observances and activities to be held in commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the events associated with the American Revolution. TA Jenkins presented the SB with two draft resolutions, one with a paragraph stating that the town may provide funding for the planning and implementation of the 250th related commemorations; the alternate version omits the paragraph on possible funding.

The SB agreed on the version of the resolution including the paragraph on funding; all attending SB members signed it.

### **Discussion on Updated Guidance for American Rescue Plan Act (“ARPA”) Funds**

TA Jenkins presented updated guidance from the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT), based on an update from the Federal government, for the commitment of ARPA funds. VLCT is now recommending that ARPA funds be fully committed by March 31, 2024. She provided an overview of ARPA projects, commitments, and spending to date.

There are four outstanding projects with funds committed with anticipated completion in early 2024:

- Town Office Phone System; the new system has been installed.
- Town Office Network Server; the payment has been made for the purchase of the new server, and rbTechnologies will be installing the new server in early 2024.
- Cybersecurity User Suite; the implementation and training will be completed in early 2024.
- Town Office Network Cable Upgrade; the new network cable was run the week of November 27th and will be functional soon.

There are two expenditures that may be reassigned from Capital Reserve expenditures to ARPA. If these purchases were reclassified as ARPA expenditures, there would be \$216K of Capital Reserve funds available for future projects, such as the design of the town garage and ash tree management. TA Jenkins recommends that the Selectboard consider reclassifying these expenditures in accordance with the latest VLCT ARPA guidance to commit funds by March 31, 2024. The expenditures are purchasing a fire engine chassis (\$115,925 for East Montpelier’s share of the costs) and the build costs for a 2024 Mack Truck (\$99,648).

She also reported that the Resilient Roads Committee is planning to spend approximately \$60K for ash tree management in 2024 and would like confirmation from the SB that this approach aligns with SB expectations.

If the fire engine and mack truck costs are reclassified, the remaining uncommitted ARPA funds balance is \$58,768. The remaining project that has already been discussed but not yet committed is contributions to the nonprofit organizations that presented requests to the Selectboard at the November 20, 2023 meeting.

The SB agreed to assign the fire engine chassis costs to the ARPA funding. Because the SB had previously voted to expend this money, and the current decision was simply on where to take the funds from in the Town accounts, the SB made the decision by consensus rather than through a motion.

### **Consideration of Contributions to East Montpelier Nonprofits**

The SB discussed the requests from town nonprofits that had been presented at the previous meeting. While the SB expressed interest in using ARPA funding to help the Twin Valley Senior Center, the requested \$50,000 contribution for repaving their parking lot was higher than SB members seemed willing to make. Since TVSC indicated that they did not have capacity to raise any of that funding themselves, partial funding from ARPA would not lead to the project being completed. The SB asked TA Jenkins to invite TVSC to return for further discussion, particularly with a request for funding for a smaller capital project.

Ms. Walrafen responded to questions from SB members about the work at AllTogether Now that she presented at the previous meeting. She said they had raised a total of \$12,000 in checks and pledges for the fire safety projects; they are still requesting \$30,000 of the Town to replace the boiler in the farmhouse.

No decision was reached on any contributions.

### **Presentation of FY2023 Financial Audit**

TA Jenkins presented the the Sullivan, Powers & Co., P.C. FY2023 audit of the town's financial statements for the SB to review; she characterized it as a "clean audit."

### **Discussion on FY2025 Budget Development**

TA Jenkins presented a draft of the budget for Selectboard review; the budget is still very much a work in progress.

### **Discussion on 2024 Town Meeting Warning**

The draft of the 2024 Town Meeting Warning includes potential articles based on prior year Warning. These draft articles do not reflect any current determination by the Selectboard and are presented to provide potential formatting should the board decide to move forward with some of the articles as presented.

TA Jenkins said the Energy Committee inquired whether they could be allocated approximately three minutes at Town Meeting for a brief introduction to their work. The committee would use this time to discuss the enhanced energy plan that is under development (alluding to future public input sessions), and also to mention the critical energy aspects of the town garage project. The SB, in consultation with Town Moderator Duane, found that it would be entirely appropriate for the Energy Committee to use time for this either under Article 2 ("To hear the reports of the several Town Officers and to act thereon") or the final article ("To transact any other business that may properly come before the meeting").

### **Warrants**

The December 3, 2023 Regular Expense Warrant was approved via signature of all present SB members.

**Town Administrator Report**

Update for Town Garage Project

- o The RFP for the town garage project is active with responses due December 15, 2023 at 4pm.
- o The responses to the RFP will be limited to the 8 firms that attended the site visit on November 20, 2023. Some of all of those firms may submit bids.
- o Mr. Gardner and Mr. Jewett have been leading the effort for the project and are evaluating the potential to hire an Owners Representative/Project Manager to oversee the project for the town and manage aspects of the project that are the responsibility of the town.
- o Chase & Chase responded that the firm will be able to survey the property and complete the Boundary Line Adjustment in the spring for a rough estimate of \$5,500-\$6,500. Once the design firm is engaged and completes a site plan for the project, the specific boundaries for the updated town garage site will be better known.

There has been 1 permit application since the last meeting: 23-043: Home Office (20x24) structure.

**Adjourn**

**Motion: To adjourn.**

Made by Mr. Etnier, second by Mr. Hess. Passed unanimously. Adjourned at 8:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Carl Etnier.

Approved December 18, 2023 SB Meeting.