

East Montpelier Board Meeting December 18, 2023

Present: Seth Gardner, Scott Hess, Carl Etnier

Also Present: Gina Jenkins, Town Administrator, Sarah Swift, Caleb Grant Public on Zoom: Sue Carey, TVSC; Amelia Contrada WCUUSD. Dan Groberg, KHL. Caleb Grant, Rural Community Transportation. Deb F. Laura. Arne McMullen, Director of Recreation & Senior Services. Matt Wilson MSAC. Denise Wheeler, TVSC. Sandal Cate. Richard Brock.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Chair, Seth Gardner, at 6:30 PM. There were no additions to the agenda. Mr. Hess moved to accept the minutes of December 4. Mr. Etnier seconded. There was no discussion. The motion passed.

Public Comment: The Chair asked if there were people present for public comment. Sue Carey was present representing Twin Valley Senior Center. Amelia Contrada introduced herself as the representative from the Washington Central Unified Union School District.

FY2025 Appropriation Discussion – Kellogg-Hubbard Library: Dan Groberg from the Kellogg-Hubbard library was present and spoke to the reason for the increase in this year's appropriation. The increase is \$2 per capita.

FY2025 Appropriation Discussion – RCT appropriation: Caleb Grant presented the request support of the US 2 Commuter bus. There is no increase in their request. RCT has sought sponsorships to help fund their service to keep costs low for contributing towns.

FY2025 Appropriation Discussion – Twin Valley Senior Center: Sue Carey noted that the Twin Valley Seniors have provided a list of their accomplishments over the past year. More than 9300 meals were served to meals on wheels recipients, which is their highest priority. Over 40 volunteers and 2 part-time employees provide services. There is no increase in their request this year.

Consideration of 2024 Town Meeting Warning: The school district needs approval to mail the WCUUSD ballot to all active-not challenged voters in the district. Amelia Contrada, East Montpelier representative, was present. Mr. Etnier moved to approve the mailing of WCUUSD and Town of East Montpelier ballots to all active-not challenged voters. Mr. Hess seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Update on July 2023 Storm Repairs and FEMA: TA Jenkins consulted with Laura Trieschmann, Vermont State Historic Preservation Officer, to determine the historical significance of the Sodom Pond Rd culvert damaged in the July flood to determine the future path for repairs. Per Ms. Trieschmann's letter dated December 12, 2023, the culvert no longer retains its historic integrity. Therefore, the town is not required to work around the existing culvert in designing repairs to the area and can replace the culvert with a more sustainable solution.

TA Jenkins submitted 2 hydraulic requests to VTrans for Sanders Circle and Sodom Pond Rd. The intent is to seek VTrans support in completing the Hydrologic and Hydraulic (H&H) studies required by FEMA to design the repairs for the areas. The town may hire engineers to perform the studies, but the hope is that VTrans can assist to save on the overall cost for the projects. H&H

studies are reimbursed by FEMA only if the determination of the study is that the locations qualify for mitigation (i.e. a larger structure than what was previously installed). Once further information is available about the state's anticipated timing to complete H&H studies is available, the town can determine whether it is more prudent to hire an engineer to perform the work to move forward with the design immediately. It is important to note that the likelihood is that the H&H studies for Sanders Circle and Sodom Pond will state that the replacement structures need to be larger than the original structures resulting in FEMA reimbursement for the H&H studies.

TA Jenkins is continuing to work with both FEMA and Road Foreman Perry to submit additional projects for reimbursement and seek mitigation funds for eligible town projects.

Consideration of Ash Tree Management Grant Applications: The Resilient Roads Committee is in the process of drafting applications for 2 separate grants to support the ash tree management project:

- The Caring for Canopies grant, which is the grant the town has received in prior years (except last year). Brazier Road and Lyle Young Road for this application. About 265 trees. \$40,000 project with \$30,000 town funds. (grants are \$5-20,000 but only \$70,000 available statewide).
- Growing Urban Forests in the Face of Emerald Ash Borer Grants, a new grant program, is limited to roads within a mile of designated village centers (e.g., North Montpelier, Adamant).

The town can apply for Center Road, Haggett Road, and Sodom Pond Road, as they are within a mile of Adamant. About 100 trees. \$16,000 project with \$8,000 town funds. (bigger pot of money with \$5,000 minimum, but likely increased competition with bigger villages/cities for the funds). With Selectboard approval, TA Jenkins will submit the applications for the grants once finalized by the Resilient Roads Committee. This action was approved by consensus.

Town Treasurer Report: Monthly financials were provided. One of the taxpayers in tax sale paid their bill last week.

Discussion on FY2025 Budget Development: The planned tax rate increase is less than last year.

FY2025 Appropriation Discussion: Montpelier Senior Activity Center: Arne McMullen, Director of Recreation and Senior Services and Matt Willson, Communications and Development Coordinator presented information to the Selectboard. They are requesting \$9,500, which is the same amount as last year.

Consideration of Contributions to East Montpelier Nonprofits from ARPA Funds: The following groups were represented and requested funding: Twin Valley Senior Center, All Together Now, East Montpelier Trails Inc and East Montpelier Historical Society. The Chair suggested the Selectboard decide on these requests at the next meeting when all members of the Selectboard would be present.

Discussion on Consideration of Resident Request to Discontinue Town Right of Way: The Town's attorney created a listing of abutters for presentation to the Selectboard. The Selectboard

will need to schedule a time to examine the premises, which will require 30 days' notice of the site visit. The Chair suggested revisiting this situation after they finish budget work.

Update on EMFD Quarterly Meeting: The EMFD is asking for increases. Mr. Gardner asked for the opinions of others that attended the meeting. Mr. Etnier has concerns about the budget as presented. He talked about other options in the future, including contracting with Barre Town for ambulance services. The current staffing model is costly and may not be sustainable in the long run. There was also some discussion about changing the interlocal agreement in the future. We should discuss this again in the spring.

Warrants: Mr. Etnier moved and Mr. Hess seconded approval of the Chair to sign the warrants. The motion passed.

TA Report:

- RFP Proposals – Four proposals for Town Garage project were received
- Central VT Regional Planning Commission: Transportation Advisory Committee and the CVR Planning Commission positions are vacant. Many towns are having trouble recruiting volunteers for these positions.
- Town Attorney will be out of the office December 25 - January 8.
- TA Jenkins on vacation from July 22 – August 3
- No permits to report.

Other Business: Ms. Fillion asked for clarification regarding the abutter listing. Mr. Etnier suggested he provide draft meeting notes to satisfy the statutory requirements, then posting more detailed, approved minutes later.

Adjournment: Mr. Hess moved and Mr. Etnier seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.