

# Town of East Montpelier Selectboard Meeting Minutes Draft

## August 5, 2024

Present: Seth Gardner, Zoe Christiansen, Carl Etnier, Tom Brazier, Scott Hess

Also Present: Jen Devine, Town Administrator; Rosie Laquerre, Clerk; Ron Koss, Ben Graham, Ben McCall (via Zoom) Emily Levin (via Zoom)

The meeting was called to order by Seth Gardner, Chair, at 6:37 p.m.

Agenda Changes: Addition to the agenda – appointment for Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC).

Public Comment: None

Review of Minutes: The July 15 minutes were reviewed. Mr. Etnier asked that he be added to the minutes as present since he was at the meeting. He also noted that page numbering in the header was incorrect. Mr. Hess moved, and Mr. Brazier seconded approval of the minutes as amended. The motion passed.

Public Comment: Mr. Koss stated that he wished to speak about culvert and bridge replacement and is on the agenda.

Private Road Name: Mr. Hess moved, and Mr. Brazier seconded the name Wyvern Way be applied to the private road behind 170 Cherry Tree Hill. The motion passed.

Energy Efficiency and Conservation Grant: Mr. McCall and Ms. Levin answered a question regarding a concern raised about a possible conflict of interest concerning the Collective Well Foundation. Upon discussion, it was found that there is no conflict. The grant will be used for project management and outreach. Ms. Christiansen moved, and Mr. Etnier seconded authorizing the Town Administrator to submit the grant application on behalf of the town. The motion passed.

Dirt Roads and Future Roads Discussion: Mr. Koss was present to inquire about the status of the bridge on Sanders Circle and the repair of Horn of the Moon Road. The temporary bridge originally acquired for Sanders Circle was taken by the state for communities that flooded out during a recent storm. After discussion, it was determined that the Town Administrator would get finalized plans from the engineering company and put out an RFP for a permanent bridge for Sanders Circle. Mr. Etnier moved, and Mr. Brazier seconded authorization for the Town Administrator to submit an RFP for a permanent structure as designed by DeWolfe Engineering on Sanders Circle. The motion passed.

Hudson House: The board toured the building and property prior to the meeting. They asked that the Town Administrator arrange for the landscaping to be cleaned up and for the old tractor to be removed. The Town Clerk will continue to search for a survey of the property.

Town Garage Documents: Mr. Gardner noted that by using funds in the capital improvement fund, the costs of the proposed project can be brought down to \$4.95M. Postcards are being sent out regarding informational meeting dates and notices will be placed in the Times Argus and Front Porch Forum to alert voters of the tour on the 18<sup>th</sup> and the first informational meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Etnier moved, and Ms. Christiansen seconded approval of the Resolution Certificate, Warning and Ballot as amended. The motion passed. Mr. Etnier moved, and Mr. Brazier seconded approval of the Declaration of Official Intent. The motion passed.

Appoint e911 Coordinator: Mr. Etnier moved, and Ms. Christiansen seconded appointment of Kevin Thompson as e911 Coordinator. The motion passed.

Approve Curb Cut: Mr. Etnier moved, and Mr. Hess seconded approval of the access permit #24-032 for 1105 Gallison Hill Rd. The motion passed.

Tax Rate: Mr. Brazier moved, and Mr. Etnier seconded approval of the tax rates as presented. The motion passed.

Waiving Penalty for Homestead Declaration: Mr. Brazier moved, and Ms. Christiansen seconded approval to waive penalties for late filing of Homestead Declarations. Lister Fillion noted that penalties would amount to over \$7,500 if not waived. She also indicated that due to conflict of interest in this matter, two selectboard members should abstain from voting. Mr. Etnier read into the record the following reasons supporting waiving penalties:

The town has chosen to waive the late-filing penalty in the past, for a number of reasons: 1) The penalty only affects those who do file but file late; those who are required to file but don't file are not penalized if they are not caught. 2) The town's revenues are not affected by whether someone declares a homestead in town or not. 3) It is in the town's interest to encourage accurate information about who is a resident here, and waiving the penalty encourages people to file a homestead declaration, even if it is late. 4) For a time, the state allowed a homestead declaration to remain in effect until the landowner rescinded it; the SB does not see a good reason for reverting to a system requiring filing each year. Board members determined that they had seen no new information that would cause a reconsideration of the decision from previous years.

The motion passed with Mr. Hess and Mr. Etnier abstaining.

Recreation Board Policy Change: Pursuant to the recommendation of the Recreation Board, Mr. Etnier moved and Ms. Christiansen seconded acceptance of the proposed change in the Rec Board policy.

"This request is being made after acknowledgement by the members of the Recreation Board during our March 2024 meeting that the typical business process for the Recreation Board Transaction Detail is that it is prepared by the Recreation Board Treasurer and then approved by the Town Treasurer within the first couple days of each month, long before the Recreation Board reviews it during the regularly monthly Recreation Board meeting held on the second Monday of each month. Consequently, there is little value in the Recreation Board approving a transaction detail that was already approved by the Town Treasurer. If this policy change is approved, the transaction detail will still need to be presented to the Recreation Board by the Recreation Board Treasurer during the regular Recreation Board meeting, but it will no longer require a vote for approval by the Recreation Board members."

Treasurer Report: The Treasurer report was presented. Mr. Hess asked about the percentage of interest being earned on special accounts. Treasurer Pallas will investigate and report back.

Appoint Representative to Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC): Mr. Hess moved, and Mr. Etnier seconded the appointment of Zoe Christiansen to the CVRPC. The motion passed.

Warrants: The warrants were reviewed and approved.

Town Administrator Report: The report was given.

Adjourn: Mr. Hess moved, and Mr. Etnier seconded to adjourn. The motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 8:19 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosie Laquerre, Town Clerk