

## Minutes for the East Montpelier Selectboard

**DRAFT**

### Oct 21, 2024, Selectboard Meeting Minutes – Draft

#### 6:29 p.m. Call to Order

**In Person Attendees:** Seth Gardner, Tom Brazier, Scott Hess, Carl Etnier, Jennifer Devine, Deb Fillion, Karen Meisner, Par Winzell

**On line Attendees:** Brandi Thompson

**Additions to the Agenda** Listers Town Reappraisal RFP, Webcam wire unplugged and was fixed,

#### Review of the Oct 7, 2024 Minutes

- Carl Etnier suggested removing Coma between Deb Fillion and Lister in the Error & Omission Section 3<sup>rd</sup> line

#### Motion to Accept the Minutes

- 1<sup>st</sup> Scott Hess

- 2<sup>nd</sup> Tom Brazier

#### Oct 7, 2024, Minutes Accepted Unanimously

**Public Comment:** No public comment

#### USDA Rural Development Bond Option for Town Garage Discussion with Brandi Thompson

-Brandi Thompson Community Programs Director for NH & VT

Rural Development from The United States Department of Agriculture explained the USDA could offer a rate for our Town Garage project of flat rate 3.875 until end of December for either 20 or 30 year which could save a lot of money for the Town Garage Bond. They are accepting applications and have funding in their Community Facilities Program. They are receiving applications from VT & NH municipalities in the coming weeks and it is their busy season. They take 4 week turnaround to process. They have certain environmental and architectural requirements that need to be reviewed and met by engineers and architect before they can obligate funds.

- Brandi Thompson emailed the Town Administrator the Applicant Guidebook & Website link.

-The annual interest rate is a fixed rate locked at obligation. Rate changes quarterly during application process, but once the loan is “obligated” then it does not change for life of loan.

-We can borrow 100% of project cost.

-3 months ago it was 4% so it decreased slightly. Fluctuating increase or decrease last 5 years, 25 basis points on any given quarter.

-the downside is that it can be a lengthy process because it is a government lending program vs. commercial bank. But rates are low, time to get through application process.

-The schedule can go longer than 30 years but they don’t typically do that. It can go 40 years or useful life of the project. They like to start at 30 and not 40 year term, so they have option to go to 40 years if there are issues paying.

- USDA takes bond collateral they put mortgage on the real estate but depends on underwriting and is negotiable.
- There is no prepayment penalty.
- The VT Bond bank offered rates of 4.33 for 30 year schedule and 4.03 for 20 year schedule.
- If does bond vote does not pass, then we can still apply for future for when it does pass.
- TA to back to Ken Linge from VT Bond Bank to ask if VT Bond Bank can do a lower rate
- External Auditor said that it was a great opportunity to get a lower rate.
- USDA Architect and Engineer will review the preliminary designs and plans and makes sure that the site meets government regulations.
- The Selectboard wishes to apply for this asap, if possible, like this coming week. There is a 4 week turnaround.
- Brandi Thompson or USDA local specialist can help us with the application process.
- SB wants comparison on these rates from VT Bond Bank now. This is a lot of money we want to push this. Deb Fillion's neighbor suggested this as an option.

### **1495 Coburn Rd Discussion with Karen Meisner & Par Winzell (Owners)**

- Pictures of the 1495 Coburn Rd. Property damage was passed around.
- East Montpelier would lose \$9,361.84 annual tax revenue if buyout went through.
- 1495 Coburn Rd property was destroyed and is located in both East Montpelier and Plainfield.
- Carl Etnier said it seems appropriate for a buyout.
- The property keeps flooding even with a little bit of rain and it does not take much.
- Our town lawyer suggested Plainfield to own property in East Montpelier and East Montpelier would just lose taxes. In 24-25 the Non-Homestead Tax Billed was: \$9,361.84 and it would have to become green space. The newly created green space could all be owned by Plainfield & would be tax-exempt by default under the Vermont Statutes, for its "public, pious, or charitable use."
- The lands around the house and lawn are absolutely a flood plain, just turns into lakes and mud annually.
- Tom Brazier said the state needs to go back to cleaning out rivers every year because the reivers are just full. Every year from 1928- 1988 the state used to clean out the rivers and they never had statewide flooding until 1992. Tom says cleaning out the rivers annually would prevent flooding and he thinks the state should go back to cleaning out the rivers every year like they used to. The state is cleaning out river in some places.
- Karen Meisner & Par Winzell explained that they were in the house when the water was 5 feet high on the bottom floor. They working on house, staying in it and keeps flooding. The river wants to go through that land.
- The Selectboard discussed East Montpelier owning vs. Plainfield owning, then maintenance, Plainfield emergency mgt office to FEMA. Instead of 2 towns being responsible for maintenance. Boundary line adjustment would hold up property.
- Town Plainfield would own property in EM because we don't want to take care of it per Scott.
- We may need to change the deed per Seth Gardner.
- Scott Hess offered Selectboard help to the homeowners.
- Par Winzell mentioned relocating house as an option. If you raise the house the land around still going to be flooded.

- EM Selectboard discussed the damages and other properties that were elevated and other homes that have been moved altogether.
- Homeowners received large flood insurance in the first year from FEMA and FEMA assessed it on paper.
- The buyout process can be slow. Tom Brazier mentioned that the buyout process is taking years and is ongoing since 2023 for someone else.
- The homeowners are working with VT Emergency Management Office.
- The homeowners are pushing things forward with Plainfield and EM SB is supporting their buyout and Plainfield is leading the effort with Emergency Management.
- The EM Selectboard is receptive and wants to help.

### **Lister Cellphone Request**

- The Listers requested a cellphone for taking pictures and calls and was told at trainings this is a best practice and better for legal reasons to not use person cell or person pc's for anything work related. It is best not to take photos on your personal phone. The town has at least 3 cell phones.
- Our current town cell service is \$39.99 per month, adding an additional phone, the cost of phone is free.
- Carl Etnier said he will give Deb Fillion his old cell phone this coming week.

### **Reappraisal RFP**

- Deb Fillion provided an RFP Draft for the town wide reappraisal and has a few more changes, she said this is a cookie cutter RFP that most towns have been using and she used this as a template.
- There is a list of VT 14 approved appraisers that we need to use. She favors 5, 2 said no, other 2 said the listers would have to do site inspections themselves. One sent a bid already. You can document how many people you send the RFP out to.
- Deb Fillion discussed the pros and cons of using NEMRC software we use now that has great support vs. Catalyst/or other systems that cost more w/ questionable support.
- The Selectboard likes the idea of sticking with the same system as the rest of our suite of modules in the office.
- Deb Fillion recommended we could potentially hire our own accessor/appraiser to move us up on the schedule by one year, because it is that piece that is in high demand. He could do site visits, and he could start that piece separately and she made a recommendation for who could do this piece and has experience. He could inspect all properties in town and collect and input the data for us vs. Listers doing all the inspections and data entry.
- It used to be when the CLA (Common Level of Appraisal) dropped under 80% that would trigger need for reappraisal and now it is the COD (Coefficient of Dispersion) going above 20% triggering the need for a town wide reappraisal. Ours is above.
- Scott Hess recommended Deb to send our RFP to all 14 approved vendor list first, see what prices they are and then compare costs.
- Approve RFP soon so Scott said to when completed RFP, send it to Selectboard.
- We Need to approve the RFP so Selectboard wants to preapprove it.

**The Selectboard moved to Authorizes TA to complete the Town Wide Reappraisal RFP with Selectboard Input on the next Listers Draft.**

**-1<sup>st</sup> Carl Etnier**

**-2<sup>nd</sup> Scott Hess**  
**Accepted Unanimously**

**Town Administrator Report:**

- 600 voters voted out of our 2100 voters already.
- TA Received Funding Request Study Applications 11/7 meeting
- Town Garage Mailing was sent to the EM voters 10/17/24, thanks to Carl for writing that.
- Town Hill Paving and Sanders Circle work is now in progress
- TA & Treasurer meeting with Downstreet, 3 year program and we are in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year, meeting will be 10/28/24
- Jan 9, 2025 at 10am we are having a Tax Sale. The Town in the past put in a minimum bid and that is a best practice so we don't have to repeat the process if no one were to put in a bid.
- Auditor Discussion at 11/4/24 Selectboard Meeting, zero findings, have few recommendations.
- Reminder - Town Garage Tour is Saturday, Nov 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024, 8:30am-9:45am light refreshments will be provided at the Town Garage and Town Garage Forum at the Elementary School at 10:00am
- Reminder- Vote on Town Garage is Nov 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024, 7:00am-7:00pm
- Security Cameras at the Municipal Office are up and running and set up for multiple areas of the building.
- VLCT Insurance Prelim PACIF Survey completed.
- EECBG Energy Bloc Grant Pre award Risk Assessment was completed.

**Motion to Adjourn**

**-1<sup>st</sup> Scott Hess**  
**-2<sup>nd</sup> Carl Etnier**  
**Accepted Unanimously**

**Meeting 7:31 p.m. Adjourned**