

East Montpelier Selectboard Meeting

Wednesday, Jan 21, 2026

Present: Seth Gardner, Tom Brazier

Present Via Zoom: Scott Hess, Carl Etnier (5:38 PM)

Also Present: Nathan Phillips, Joe Brooks, Celina Barton, Bill Heigis, Deb Fillion, Michael Duane

Also Present via Zoom: Simeon Chapin, Anne Mixer, Sari Wolf

The meeting was called to order at 5:32 PM.

Additions to the Agenda: Appointments to CVSWMD, Funding Study Request Committee and Selectboard. Also, request by CX Associates for additional funds to commission additional generator and heat exchanger.

Review of Minutes: Motion: Approve the minutes of the meeting held on January 5, 2026 as presented. Made: Mr. Hess. Second: Mr. Brazier. Results 3-0 The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment: None

Consideration of Harriott Shea Appointment as the Town Health Officer: Motion: To recommend Harriott Shea to the Vermont Health Department as East Montpelier Town Health Officer. Made: Mr. Brazier. Second: Scott. 3-0. The motion passed unanimously.

Discuss External Audit with Chad Hewitt, CPA, from Sullivan, Powers & Company: Mr. Hewitt noted that the town had another unqualified opinion with no findings. He mentioned that we tweak the investment policy to include Treasury bonds. When towns spend \$750,000 of FEMA money, they are required to do a single audit of those funds, so one was conducted. The General Fund and the Capitol Fund were audited, and the town's records are in great shape. The highway department was below budget this year. The town closed out their ARPA funding to the general fund. There is still about \$147,000 available for special projects.

Mr. Etnier asked the ORCA representative to change the name of the meeting to East Montpelier so that viewers would know which meeting they were in.

Discuss Municipal Planning Grant (MPG) Town Match of \$3,000: Nathan Phillips made the argument he doesn't feel that it's a good precedent to set to allow personal donations for municipal match funds. Financial backing implies that the person giving the money has more influence. Ms. Barton explained that she offered to meet the match to ensure that the stringent timeline was met and that the grant could be awarded. She has heard from the group that it has concerns about that. Joe Brooks asked what options might be available to raise the funds in a different way. It was explained that this is a planning grant that is the basis for additional grants. We have 18 months to come up with the funding. Mr. Brazier was concerned about the lack of information to approve the grant. He asked about a cohesive plan for moving forward. Ms. Barton admitted that she stepped up to do it last minute since no one else did. The group is now at the point where they are ready to do an RFP to hire a planner to help. Mr. Etnier congratulated the group for their successful application. He remembered that there was a private match offered at the time and understands the concern between mixing public money with private funding. He spoke of the Front Porch Forum funding that was solicited through fundraising. He thinks that regardless of who pays, the citizens of North Montpelier should be heavily involved.

Mr. Hess commended the Town Administrator for her work with all of these grants, and he noted that many of the grants we get require matches. He feels that this grant should be funded the same way as others. Mr. Brazier agreed that the town should provide the match so that it doesn't set a precedent of commingling private funds and grant money. Mr. Gardner suggested a compromise that the group do

some fundraising to start revitalizing the community. Whatever they are unable to raise at the end of the 18 months, the town will pay the remainder. Mr. Brazier reiterated his concern about mixing personal funds with grant funds.

Discuss East Montpelier Trails Sparrow Farm Reroute Plan: Mr. Heigis provided a map of the proposed reroute to make the trail more resilient and to bypass some steep and heavily eroded sections. The City of Montpelier Recreation Commission supports the project. All members of the town Forest Committee have had input. The blue line on the map shows the plan that is proposed. There are no mapped wetlands in the area but will ask for state input in the spring. The board agreed and had no objections. Mr. Etnier asked to see the text of the letter that was presented prior to final signature.

Easement Proposal: Mr. Heigis revisited the proposed easement. Independent of the easement, EMTI would provide the town with a hold harmless agreement. Mr. Etnier asked if it was necessary and how the arbitration clause would impact the project. Mr. Heigis noted that the arbitration approach is faster, more efficient and less costly. It also doesn't mitigate the town's right to go to court. Upon hearing the questions, Mr. Heigis will ask EMTI's attorney for clarification. Simeon Chapin, Treasurer of the MAMBO association, thanked East Montpelier Trails Inc.'s for their work and hopes to continue their collaboration.

Selectboard Candidates Interview with Kayleigh Norton: This candidate withdrew.

Consideration of the East Montpelier Final Budget: Ms. Pallas produced copies of the budget as amended and reviewed changes made since the previous meeting. Mr. Gardner observed that the tax rate includes the nine to eleven cents for the bond vote and the worst-case scenario from the state. Mr. Etnier noted that the heating line for the highway department was zeroed out due to the increased electrical costs. He asked Mr. Shapiro for clarification prior to the meeting and received responses responded to his questions. There was talk of taking \$30,000 from ambulance revenue and putting it into the general fund. If the Fire Department goes over their labor budget, which they feel they will, they will take that money out of the ambulance revenue voluntarily. Mr. Gardner felt this was a good compromise. Employees there are currently being paid 26% less than surrounding area and are paid on a per diem basis. Ms. Fillion noted that some revenue (roughly \$3,126) was given to the town to reimburse for Lister time. **Motion: To put forward the FY 27 budget as proposed.** Made: Mr. Brazier. Second: Mr. Hess. Results 4-0. The motion passed unanimously.

Consideration of the East Montpelier Mileage Certificate: The only change added .02 miles at the end of Horn of the Moon Road. **Motion: To approve the Certificate of Highway Mileage as presented, authorizing Mr. Gardner and Mr. Brazier to sign on behalf of the Selectboard.** Made.: Mr. Brazier. Second: Mr. Etnier. Results: 4-0. The motion passed unanimously.

Town Meeting Warning: A resolution proposed by Andy Christiansen was submitted to the Selectboard for discussion. The Clerk explained that it was not accompanied by a petition and was submitted after the deadline. The petitioner asked that it be Warned in the Town Meeting Warning. Mr. Gardner had concerns regarding making political statements at Town Meeting. His question was when you make a political statement, are we excluding people who don't believe the same thing? He was concerned that seeing this on the Warning would discourage voters of differing opinions from attending town meeting. The other members agreed with this opinion.

The Town Clerk then discussed the date for the informational meeting that is required to be held prior to town meeting. She made the recommendation of holding the meeting at 6:30 p.m. on February 23, following the regular Selectboard meeting. Ms. Laquerre reminded the board that last year's meeting was held on February 17 and the annual report was not yet available in print form. Waiting until the 23rd would allow hard copies to be available at the town office and have more time in electronic format

on the website. **Motion: To approve the Town Meeting and Informational Meeting Warning as presented.** Made: Mr. Hess. Second: Mr. Etnier.

Warrants dated January 21, 2026: Motion: To authorize Mr Gardner and Mr. Brazier to sign the warrants on behalf of the entire SB. Made: Mr. Etnier. Second: Mr. Hess. Results 4-0. The motion passed unanimously.

Central Vermont Solid Waste Management District (CVSWMD) Board Representative: Motion: To appoint Kevin McCollister as the Central Vermont Solid Waste Management District (CVSWMD) Board Representative for East Montpelier. Made: Brazier. Second: Hess Results: 4-0. The motion passed unanimously.

Appoint Funding Study Request Committee Member: Motion: To appoint Nora Duane to the Funding Study Request Committee: Made: Mr. Hess. Second: Brazier. Results: 4-0. The motion passed unanimously.

Appoint New Selectboard Member: Motion: To appoint Joe Brooks as Selectboard member until March 3, 2026. Made: Mr. Hess. Second: Brazier. Results: 4-0. The motion passed unanimously.

Discuss Approval of an additional \$3,350 cost for the New Town Garage Commissioning Agent CX Associates fee.: This request is made because additional equipment was requested after the original quote was submitted. This request is considered an approved item by Andy Shapiro. **Motion: We approve an additional \$3,350 cost to CX Associates' fee.** Made: Mr. Brazier. Second: Mr. Etnier. Results: 4-0. The motion passed unanimously.

Town Administrator Report

- RFPs in Progress for North Montpelier CDBG Grant, North Montpelier MPG and maintenance of the Rec Fields Grounds and Lawn contracts. Fog Line RFP for Towne Hill Road will be coming up as well.
- The MPG grant was approved through the GEARS program, and we are awaiting next steps.
- Ash tree bids are due on Feb 2
- EECGB Electric Ford Lightning was received on 1/15
- DREAM grant was given a supplemental opportunity with a two-day turnaround time for another possible \$43,000. The Town Administrator responded on 1/16.
- The lighted speed signs have arrived and will be placed in the spring. The highway foreman requests specific siting for the placement of these signs from the Selectboard. The Town Administrator will work with the Sheriff's office.
- Town Garage
 - building is now closed in and heated.
 - Windows are in and radiant tubing is complete.
 - Concrete slabs are being poured and installation of mechanicals has started
 - Siding has started to be installed and roof has underlayment completed.
- Recruiting remains ongoing for several positions. All positions can be found on the website.

Motion: To adjourn. Made: Mr. Hess. Second: Mr. Etnier. The meeting ended at 7:07 PM.

Respectfully,

Rosie Laquerre, Board Recorder