

Town of East Montpelier Selectboard Meeting February 9, 2026

Present: Tom Brazier, Joe Brooks, Carl Etnier, Seth Gardner
Present via Zoom: Scott Hess

Also present: Jen Devine, Town Administrator; Bill Heigis (East Montpelier Trails, Inc. (EMTI); Karin Cioffi, Emilie Connor, Bob Fitch, Stephanie Minor, Nick Van Den Berg (Recreation Board); Becca Schrader (Planning Commission); Lisa Kreis; Paul Cate (Resilient Roads Committee); Erin Clark (Generations Vermont)

Also present via Zoom: Jim Barlow (town attorney); Celina Barton; Jeff Cueto (Resilient Roads Committee); Guthrie Perry (Road Foreman)

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM by chair Seth Gardner.

Additions to the Agenda: None

Review of Minutes

Minor corrections were requested, including correcting Mr. Hess's name and striking a sentence in the Town Meeting Warning section regarding unanimity of opinion.

Motion: To approve the January 21, 2026 minutes with amendments.

Made: Mr. Hess. Second: Mr. Brazier. **The minutes were approved unanimously.**

Public Comment: None

Walk through Draft Easement for Trails with the Town Lawyer

Jim Barlow joined the meeting via Zoom to review the draft trail easement language. Bill Heigis was also present for this discussion. After a brief discussion, the Selectboard voted to enter executive session for confidential attorney–client communications.

Motion: The Selectboard finds that premature public knowledge of attorney–client communications would clearly place the Town of East Montpelier or a person involved at a substantial disadvantage.

Made: Mr. Etnier. Second: Mr. Brooks. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Motion: To enter executive discussion to discuss confidential attorney client communications made for the purpose of providing professional legal services to the body, under 1 VSA §313(a)(1).

Made: Mr. Etnier. Second: Mr. Hess. **The motion passed unanimously.**

The Selectboard, with Mr. Barlow and Ms. Devine, entered executive session at 5:39 pm.

The Selectboard reconvened in open session at 6:13 pm and announced its consensus to have Jim Barlow and Bill Heigis work together on developing a separate memorandum of understanding regarding the Town taking over the easement in the event EMTI ceases to exist and (if necessary) on revised easement language. No formal motion was made.

Discuss Recreation Proposed Park Shelter

Background: Vermont National Park Service (NPS) is reviewing the draft application for funding for a shelter at the Recreation Field the week of 2/5/26. Per Vermont Department of Forests,

Parks and Recreation, the way the LWCF (Land and Water Conservation Fund) process works is that they first submit a draft application for NPS review (where East Montpelier is now!), then they make any revisions addressing their comments, and then officially submit the corrected version to receive the regrant. The competitive decisions about funding are made at the state level (and East Montpelier has cleared that step), so this NPS review is more about compliance with program requirements and all associated federal laws.

Nick Van Den Berg led a presentation from the Recreation Board with updated information regarding the proposed park shelter project, including:

- Comparison of timber-frame versus pole-barn construction options
- Total projected project cost of approximately \$100,000
- LWCF grant covering 50% of project costs
- Approximately \$15,000 in in-kind contributions (work from Rec Board members)
- Estimated town cash contribution of approximately \$35,000
- Discussion of fundraising efforts already underway and planned community events

Recreation Board members emphasized the long-term durability and community value of a timber-frame structure and noted that Recreation Board funds currently total approximately \$25,000.

There was extensive discussion regarding grant reimbursement timing, upfront cash flow needs, and potential use of existing town funds to help cover costs while the Recreation Board awaits reimbursement from LWCF. The Selectboard encouraged the Recreation Board in its fundraising efforts and invited them to return if delays in reimbursement create cash flow issues.

Motion: To approve up to \$35,000 toward the park shelter project, funded from the Carlton Smith Fund and Opportunity Fund (Hudson House).

Made: Mr. Brazier. Second: Mr. Hess.

Results: 5–0. The motion passed unanimously.

Discuss required hearings dates for the revised Town Plan

Planning Commission chair Ben McCall emailed Ms. Devine to with an update on the current revision to the Town Plan: The Planning Commission (PC) held its formal hearing on the draft 2026 Town Plan on January 22, following a more informal open forum in November. At the hearing, there was essentially only one public comment, expressing concern about the 1/2 mile scenic buffer that applies to cell tower and large-scale, unscreened renewable energy generation. The PC decided not to make any changes to that buffer at this time, but to dive more deeply into the question when preparing the 2027 town plan revision (the "second adoption" discussed earlier). The window for written comments closed January 29, and none were received.

The email formally transmitted the draft town plan to the Selectboard, which is required to hold two hearings on the plan. The first hearing must be at least 30 days after the plan is turned over to the SB by the PC, so it must be no earlier than March 1. The current draft is available in PDF form on the town website, at

eastmontpeliervt.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/2026_Town_Plan_20251215-1.pdf

For copies in other formats, or have any questions, please let Planning Commission chair Ben McCall know.

The Selectboard agreed to hold the first hearing in conjunction with the regular Selectboard meeting on March 2, 2026, starting at 5:30; the Selectboard meeting that night will start as soon as the hearing is concluded. A second hearing date will be determined.

Grants update with Celina Barton

Ms. Devine summarized her discussion with Celina Barton of the grants working group in the SB memo:

- CDBG-DR Grant update:
 - Scope Document - Currently revising the scope document & gathering inputs this week.
 - 2 CDBG-DR Meetings this week- CDBG-DR Post-Award 2/10/2026 Meeting with grantor and technical & working group meeting on 2/12/2026.
 - Discuss progress in meeting Award Conditions due March 16, 2026.
 - Address any questions that have come up
 - Review the project's draft Grant Agreement
 - CDBG-DR RFP to be finalized and posted by end of week with goals & objectives, and tangible key deliverables hashed out-Currently gathering inputs/streamlining draft.
- MPG Grant update:
 - Discuss the below fundraising ideas & preferences for the match-
 - Go Fund Me Page on the town website
 - Coin Drop at events/or office
 - Online Auction
 - Events - 4th of July Pig Roast at Riches Hollow Tavern, Rally Day at Kries Field in North Montpelier with sugar on snow & baseball, Mud Ball (community dance in North Montpelier at the Hall at the end of March/April), Winter Carnival, or Plant Swap.
 - MPG RFP to be finalized & posted by end of week with goals & objectives, and tangible key deliverables hashed out - Currently gathering inputs/streamlining draft.
- Dream Grant update:
 - Launching a survey this week with AI Clone technology, the team to provide a survey at a table at Town Meeting, gatherings with efficiency Vermont, working with Downstreet to connect residents and several houses to sign up for weatherization/resources.

Ms. Barton provided details on the update on fundraising ideas and upcoming community events. A proposal for a “coin drop” fundraiser was mentioned, with SB members expressing caution regarding VTrans transportation restrictions and safety issues in general.

Ms. Barton thanked Becca Schrader for her work as chair of the grants working group.

Discuss Resolution re: Freedom of the press and the importance of print journalism

A non-resident of East Montpelier requested that the Town Clerk send this resolution to the Selectboard, even though the deadline for including it in the Town Meeting warning had passed. No action taken.

Discuss the 2026 ash tree project and bids

Bids were requested for removal of 94 roadside ash trees that are at risk of falling into the road if killed by the emerald ash borer; eight bids were received. The low bid is \$221 per tree; the highest we paid for prior projects was \$149 per tree. Jeff Cueto and Paul Cate of the Resilient Roads Committee expected the cost would rise due to the smaller number of trees and the lower density.

Discussion included:

- Remaining number of ash trees town-wide
- Timing constraints related to mud season
- Possibility of rebidding the project to include all remaining large roadside ashes, to reduce

per-tree costs

- Potential role of the road crew in addressing smaller clusters of trees
- Safety considerations and emerald ash borer impacts

Consensus was reached to explore expanding the project scope to include all remaining large roadside ashes, consulting with bidders before moving forward. Bidders will be notified that the Town is reconsidering project scope.

Consideration of Generations Vermont project letter of support

Erin Clark, town resident and director of Generations Vermont, requested a letter of support for the organization's work to establish an intergenerational day services center serving Central Vermont, to be submitted as part of a USDA community development loan application. Ms. Clark provided text for the letter.

Motion: To sign the letter of support for Generations Vermont.

Made: Mr. Etnier. Second: Mr. Hess. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Consideration of CAI map maintenance contract

CAI Technologies maintains the Town's tax maps. This is a contract to continue their services through March 31, 2027, at a cost of \$2,000 plus \$20.00/building added or changed.

Motion: To renew the map maintenance contract with CAI.

Made: Mr. Brazier. Second: Mr. Etnier. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Consideration of WEC right of way work/access permit

Washington Electric Co-op is proposing burying a line in the Bliss Road right of way and requests a signature on a permit.

Motion: To allow WEC to work in the right away along Bliss Road as described in the permit application.

Made: Mr. Brazier. Second: Mr. Hess. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Warrants

Expense warrants dated February 9, 2026 were signed by all present

Town Administrator report

Ms. Devine reported that the town is recruiting for several positions on our webpage located here: eastmontpeliervt.org/community/east-montpelier-jobs-recruiting/

- 2 members for DRB
- 4 members for Cemetery Committee
- 1 Central Vermont Solid Waste Management Board of Supervisors Back Up needed
- 1 Board Member for Four Corners School House

Motion to adjourn. Made: Mr. Hess. Second: Mr. Brooks. Results: 5-0. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting ended at 7:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Carl Etnier