

**Mount Holly Select Board Meeting**  
**April 14, 2020**  
**Minutes**

**Zoom Meeting: 700 733 635**

**Present: Select Board:** Jeff Chase, Jennifer Matthews, Mark Turco

**Town Officials:** David Johnson, Jon McCann, Jim Seward, Brigid Sullivan, Andy Tanger, Clinton Woolley

**Members of the Public:** Barbara Hazelton, Steve Hazelton, Annette Lynch, Stephen Michel, Donna Seward, Amy Turco + others unidentified on the phone

1. **Call to Order** by Mark Turco at 6:30 pm.

2. All recited the **Pledge of Allegiance**.

3. **Changes and/or additions to the agenda** – Jennifer Matthews asked to add information about a grant agreement that had recently arrived regarding the replacement of Bridge #7 on VT Route 155 to **New Business/Other**. It was agreed to do so.

4. **Approval of March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020 Minutes** –Ms. Matthews asked to amend the minutes for item #5j pertaining to the time of the regular meeting. She stated she had recorded the motion made on the time, but not the vote itself. She would like to add that she and Jeff Chase voted for the motion to start the regular Select Board meetings at 6:30 pm; Mark Turco voted against the motion. Mr. Turco made a motion to approve the amended minutes, seconded by Mr. Chase, unanimously approved.

5. **Reorganization (continued from 3.10.2020 meeting)**

a. **Select Board Chair** – Previous motion had been tabled. No new motions were made. Brigid Sullivan suggested a six-month alternating Chair, with Mr. Turco serving for six months followed by Ms. Matthews serving for six months. Mr. Turco thanked Ms. Sullivan for the suggestion. With no motion made on that suggestion and no other motions put forward, the Board moved on.

b. **Emergency Management Director** – Ms. Matthews made a motion to appoint Mr. Chase, seconded by Mr. Turco. Motion unanimously approved.

c. **Rutland County Solid Waste District Alternate (RCSWD)** – Ms. Matthews noted that at the March meeting, the Select Board had appointed Clinton Woolley to be the RCSWD representative; the Board also needed to appoint an alternate. Ms. Matthews made a motion to appoint Mr. Chase as the alternate, seconded by Mr. Turco. Motion unanimously approved.

6. **Reports**

a. **Highways & Transfer Station – Clinton Woolley**

i) **Update** – Mr. Woolley advised that there were six trees in Belmont that needed to come down. He had a quote from G.M. Tree Tech for \$1600 to take all six down; they would leave the wood for the road crew to use. Ms. Matthews asked how many more trees around town would need to be removed. Mr. Woolley responded there were quite a few, but he thought the road crew could take those down. Brigid Sullivan noted the six trees were part of the Village Center Designation funding. She asked if the trees could come down in stages and if there was a replacement plan for trees. There was additional discussion about the location of the trees (two on Belmont Road at the Herbst property, one by cemetery, a large ash and two dead maples on Maple Hill Road) and the health of the trees. Mr. Woolley stated the trees are dead and they need to come down, and in response to a question from Mr. Turco, the trees do pose a hazard to the roadways and nearby property. Mr. Chase stated he thought the quote was very reasonable. Mr. Woolley offered to put tape around the trees so Select Board members could inspect them. Ms. Matthews suggested they

table any decision on the trees until the next meeting and after Select Board members had a chance to look at the trees.

ii) **One-Ton Truck** - Mr. Woolley had two quotes for the truck from Ford of Claremont and Stewart's. He had three quotes for the truck body and plow: \$20,283 from Iroquois, \$21,386 from Earle's Truck Repair, and \$28,682 from HP Fairfield. Mr. Chase asked if there was any difference between the Western and Fisher equipment. Mr. Woolley replied that either was fine in meeting the needs of the road crew. Mr. Woolley stated the truck would take anywhere from four-to-six weeks for delivery and the body would take an additional three weeks. He thought the order could be placed in June with delivery in July. Ms. Matthews noted the funds for the one-ton truck were included in the FY'20-21 budget (start of that fiscal year is July first). Mr. Turco said this item will be placed on next month's agenda for further discussion.

Steve Hazelton asked if the tree at the bottom of his driveway on Healdville Road which was right up against a utility pole with a transformer on it was on the road crew's list. Mr. Woolley said no. Mr. Turco recommended Mr. Hazelton call Green Mountain Power; they would assess the situation and remove the tree if need be.

#### **b. Treasurer – David Johnson**

i) **Monthly Income & Expense Report** – Mr. Johnson noted the following: there was no delinquent tax report and very few payments were made in March; not much revenue is received this time of year; interest income is still good, even with some lower interest rates.

Mr. Chase asked about the Snow Plowing Income. Mr. Johnson explained that the Towns of Wallingford and Plymouth are billed in May after the Select Board decides at its May meeting whether to make any adjustments to the plowing rate due to the severity of the winter. Mr. Chase also asked about the State Aid for Roads. Mr. Johnson noted that a \$29,000 payment had been received over the weekend, so the amount received will be more than anticipated in the budget. Mr. Johnson continued, noting the following: the Solid Waste Labels Sold continue to be strong; there is a new expense category for Public Safety – COVID-19 expenses with one expenditure of \$108 for the sign at the transfer station; the Casella bill for March has not yet been received, but solid waste expenses remain within the budgeted amount; State Education Fund finalizes its amount due about this time of year with what should be a little less than the \$399,509 listed on the P&L due; the Vehicle/Equipment Repair & Maintenance Expenses remain under budget; winter labor expense will be over budget due to storms on weekends that are paid at the overtime rate, but with winter materials expense under budget, winter road expense should come in under budget. Mr. Chase asked if the summer road expense would be under budget. Mr. Johnson replied there was about \$40,000 still available for summer road materials and about \$30,000 for summer road outside services. Some of those funds could be used for culverts. Ms. Matthews noted there was \$70-75,000 to come in FEMA funds. Mr. Johnson pointed out expenses for the repair of Freeman Brook Road, and the early receipt of some FEMA funds.

Ms. Matthews asked about the current timetable on tax bills as the income tax filing deadline has been pushed out to July 15<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Johnson replied that we have to wait for the State to set the education rate which could be delayed this year. He noted that the inspections of properties had been mostly completed before the social distancing order, so the Listers work was about a month ahead of a normal year, and the Grand List was pretty much ready to go. With the July 15<sup>th</sup> deadline for Homestead filings, he thought tax bills would go out sometime in the first weeks of August, about a two-week delay from the normal mailing time. He said that the discount on taxes is set for payment within the first 30 days of the mailing date, so no change would be needed there; the final due date of November first will, hopefully, be fine. Ms. Matthews congratulated the Listers and Doug Lemire for a job well-done again this year. Mr. Turco echoed that sentiment and thanked Mr. Johnson for his report.

ii) **Tax Sale Attorney** - Mr. Johnson stated that Delinquent Tax Collector Peter Perrino would like to continue using Kevin O'Toole as the tax sale attorney. Ms. Matthews made a motion to continue to use Kevin O'Toole as the Town of Mount Holly's tax sale attorney, seconded by Mr. Turco, unanimously approved.

**c. Rutland Regional Planning Commission – Jon McCann** submitted a report as he was single-parenting this evening. Ms. Matthews read from his report that Rob Fish had given a

presentation on rural broadband connectivity at the March RRPC meeting. Mount Holly was well served with close to 100% coverage by broadband. Brigid Sullivan alerted the Select Board that Jon McCann was on the phone, and he needed to be un-muted. Mr. McCann added that Mount Holly has 98.3% of the buildings in town served with 100 mg/second download & upload speed, which is quite exceptional for Rutland county and Vermont in general.

d. **Mount Holly Volunteer Rescue Squad – Kristin Veysey** was not able to be present. Mr. Turco read from the report she submitted to the Select Board. The report stated that MHVRS now has an 84% response rate with 15 calls made in a row and 28 of the last 29 calls made. Ms. Veysey had a couple of issues to raise with the Select Board about plowing at the Rescue Squad building. Clinton Woolley responded there was one storm when they had a call and he had not yet plowed the driveway; MHVRS had to drive through a snowbank to reach the road. Mr. Turco then read from a report stating MHVRS responded to 21 calls in zip code 05730, 28 calls in zip code 05742, and 46 calls in zip code 05758. Ms. Matthews noted that report was the SIREN report from the State and she was pleased to see that the numbers on it and Ms. Veysey's report agreed as there had been some discrepancies between the two in January. Ms. Matthews also noted that the response rate had risen from 80% to 84% between January and April, and she congratulated MHVRS on the great job they are now doing. She wondered what the final resolution was with Ludlow Ambulance Service (LAS) and the contract they had submitted to Mount Holly to provide mutual aid at a cost of \$500 per call. Mr. Turco replied Ms. Veysey had sent a letter to LAS refusing to sign the contract and that she was going to contact Rutland Regional Ambulance Service about mutual aid. Ms. Matthews wondered what the final resolution was.

e. **Mount Holly Planning Commission – Peter Berger** emailed he was 'not equipped' to attend the meeting electronically. Ms. Matthews noted the Select Board had asked Mr. Berger back in March to plan on attending this Select Board meeting to discuss the Planning Commission's activities of the past year and the planning issues to be addressed in the coming year. Ms. Matthews read the report Mr. Berger submitted which was a reiteration of what had been submitted for the Annual Town Report: 36 building construction registrations and two subdivisions approved; Rules of Procedure and Conflict of Interest Policy revised; appointments made by the Select Board, and the regular Planning Commission meeting day and time. As there was no additional information provided, Mr. Turco began to move on to the next agenda item. Ms. Matthews stated she had a couple of concerns.

Ms. Matthews noted the two meetings held last October to discuss the proposed FirstNet/AT&T cell tower project with discussions about view sheds, the aesthetics of the tower, health & safety issues in town and land use. She continued, noting the two meetings held in September and October to discuss the 345-acre parcel to be conserved off VT Route 155 and the lengthy discussions had at both those meetings. Topics discussed were conservation, development, taxes, the desire to keep land and housing affordable in town, our excellent elementary school and the desire to keep and attract young families to Mount Holly, and the desire to hold on to a diverse population here. Ms. Matthews stated that since those meetings, concerns about dark skies, ski resort development at the top of Okemo Mountain, and the desire to protect our side of the mountain had been raised at various Select Board meetings. Ms. Matthews again expressed her concerns about Vail Resorts, a publicly traded company with a net worth of \$6.24 billion and net income/profit of \$301 million in 2019, the second largest, it appears, ski resort company in the world, and one with no ties to Vermont. She noted that in their 10, 20 or 30-year plan, there was a strong possibility that Mount Holly and our side of the mountain came into play. Ms. Matthews stated Mount Holly is a precious community, and if we want to hold on to that, we need to take steps to protect what we treasure. Otherwise, we may end up with development here like one of Vail's recent real estate ones done in partnership with the Ritz-Carlton and with the construction of \$100 million ski mansions. This would bring higher property values but also higher property taxes, thereby making Mount Holly unaffordable for Vermonters to live here. One only need look at Ludlow with its 80-85% second home ownership rate. Ms. Matthews stated it was the Planning Commission's role to address land use issues, and she was very concerned we could lose the community we value due to inaction. There was discussion about the town plan and whether it had the teeth to stand up in Act 250 hearings, the duties of the Planning Commission, and future land use policy initiatives. Mr. Turco

stated the Select Board should ask all the Planning Commission members to attend the May Select Board meeting for a discussion of these concerns. It was agreed to do so.

## 7. New Business

a. **Local Emergency Management Plan – approve** – Jeff Chase explained he had been working on the annual updates to the plan. So as to better acquaint himself with the Emergency Operations Center guidelines and the LEMP in general, he expanded the plan from the previous short form to the long form. He added some additional contacts and a number of community organizations. He explained this was basically the same document as last year's but with more detail. Ms. Matthews thanked him for taking this off her plate and expanding the plan with additional information. Discussion ensued about various pieces still to be completed, and about how the debris management information page would provide an additional 2% in FEMA funds to cover those costs in a disaster. Mr. Chase will fill in the last needed bits of information, and he will have the Rutland Regional Planning Commission review the plan. Mr. Turco stated the Select Board will have to finalize the plan and approve it at a special meeting. It was agreed to do so.

b. **Social Media Policy - approve**– Mr. Chase explained due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was much information that needed to be provided to the community using the Town website and the Newsflash. It became evident that a Town Facebook page could supplement both. The Facebook page would be for information purposes only with no public comments permitted. Ms. Matthews stated she thought a Town Facebook page was a great idea and that it would add another tool for communication with the community. Mr. Turco thanked Mr. Chase for pulling the policy together. Ms. Matthews made a motion to approve the Social Media Policy, seconded by Mr. Turco, unanimously approved.

c. **Animal Control Officer Appointment** – Ms. Matthews stated there were two individuals interested in the position, so the appointment would need to be discussed in executive session. Mr. Turco agreed.

d. **Temporary Junk Ordinance Waiver** – Ms. Matthews explained that there was an individual in town who had complained about junk in residents' yards. Nobody likes junk in residents' yards, but as Ms. Matthews explained, removing junk at the moment is challenging. Governor Scott's Executive Order and numerous Addenda state residents are to stay at home, only go out for essential business, practice social distancing, and that all non-essential businesses are to be closed. Ridding one's yard of junk is further complicated by the fact that the Gleason Road facility has limits on what it is currently accepting: only trash, recycling and food scraps. While residents are at home, many are doing intensive clean-outs which are further straining the solid waste disposal systems in the State. Ms. Matthews stated the junk ordinance would be difficult to enforce at present given the inability to dispose of junk, and she recommended a temporary waiver of the ordinance. Ms. Matthews made a motion to temporarily waive the enforcement of the junk ordinance, seconded by Mr. Turco, unanimously approved. Mr. Turco noted that the Governor's orders were in effect until May 15<sup>th</sup>, so the Select Board would revisit the issue at its June meeting.

e. **Act 148 – Ban on Food Scraps in Trash effective 7.1.2020** – Ms. Matthews reminded residents that as of July first, no food scraps would be allowed in the trash for disposal. She noted the containers at the transfer station were available for food scrap disposal. She also noted that the costs were increasing for the disposal of the food scrap containers through the Rutland County Solid Waste District. She wondered if there was any interest in town for a community-wide composting program. Mr. Turco questioned whether there were any regulations concerning this. Mr. Chase said he would check with the Agency of Natural Resources and Casella Organics about any rules and regulations that may apply. It was agreed to revisit the idea at the May meeting.

f. **Other – State of Vermont Grant Agreement re: Municipal Expenses associated with the Bridge #7 Replacement on VT Route 155** – Ms. Matthews explained that a grant agreement had arrived for bypass mitigation for this bridge replacement project; grant is for \$10,226. Included in this sum are \$2,600 for maintenance, \$1,126 for dust control, and \$6,500 for law enforcement. The replacement work is to occur this summer with an anticipated 35-day closure of VT Route 155. The detour will use Maple Hill Road on the south end and Tarbellville Road on the north end. The State will post signs on Route 100 on the south end and Routes 103 & 140 on the north end to

detour traffic. The law enforcement funds are to keep trucks off the local roads and to stop any speeding along the detour routes. Mr. Chase offered to contact the sheriff's department about a contract and costs for law enforcement during the project. Clinton Woolley will look into the cost of chloride for dust control. Ms. Matthews will talk with VTrans about including town officials in the pre-construction meetings. It was agreed to revisit the issue in May with the additional information.

## 8. Ongoing & Old Business

a. **Road Crew Uniforms** – Mr. Chase did a comparison of the two quotes presented at March's meeting: one from Unifirst, the other from Foley. Costs are similar and service comparable. One has a four-year term, the other five years. Foley is slightly cheaper in costs over the four-year term. Mr. Chase made a motion to use Foley for the road crew uniforms, seconded by Mr. Turco, unanimously approved.

b. **Cemetery Tree Removal Bids** – Ms. Matthews discussed the need expressed by Cemetery Commissioner Dennis Devereux to address dead and dying trees at the Town's cemeteries. She explained there would need to be a small financial commitment over the next few years to address these trees before damage is done to buildings, fencing, and/or headstones. Mr. Devereux had two quotes: one from G.M. Tree Tech and one from Jason Barrows, with the G.M. Tree Tech quote substantially less. Mr. Devereux would like to remove the four dying maples at Old Mechanicsville Cemetery near the Herbst home as soon as possible so the trees do not come down and damage the home or garage. He would like to remove the five dying maples at Carlton Cemetery after July first. Mr. Chase asked how many more trees might need to come down. Mr. Woolley thought there were another eight to ten trees in addition to these nine. David Johnson stated there was \$3,000 in next year's budget for cemetery tree removal. Ms. Matthews asked if there was \$2,400 available to do the four trees at Old Mechanicsville Cemetery now. Mr. Johnson stated there was \$11,200 in extra interest income that could cover that cost. Stephen Michel asked if these cemetery trees and the other Belmont trees could be taken down at the same time. Ms. Matthews suggested a motion to accept G.M. Tree Tech's quote for \$2,400 to remove the four trees at Old Mechanicsville Cemetery, leaving the wood, and inquire if this work could be done at the same time as the Belmont tree removal in order to realize some cost savings. As no decision had yet been made about the trees in Belmont, Mr. Turco made a motion to accept G.M. Tree Tech's quote for \$2,400 for the cemetery trees, seconded by Ms. Matthews. Mr. Turco and Ms. Matthews voted for the motion; Mr. Chase voted against it.

c. **Emerald Ash Borer Update** – Mr. Chase has spoken with the EAB Committee Coordinator Don Richardson and he had attended a video conference. They are focused on organizing the inventory of ash trees in town, using GIS to identify the trees. They plan to do the inventory in a couple of months.

d. **EID Grant Program Update** – Mr. Chase worked with Road Foreman Clinton Woolley to create a list of bridges, culverts and roads that will need attention in the coming years. He would like to choose a project for the grant which is due May 15<sup>th</sup>. The grant program covers 80% of the project's cost. He would recommend the culvert replacement at the corner of Lake Street and Belmont Road. If the culvert should fail, there could be damage to several homes and other downstream culverts. Ms. Matthews asked about the projected cost of \$500,000 with only 80% covered by the grant; how would the additional \$100,000 be covered so as the cost does not fall on the town. There was discussion of other State grant possibilities. There was also discussion about box culverts, hydraulics from VTrans and current delays, designs, other culvert sizes. Mr. Chase will explore the costs of the project further and provide an update at the special meeting next week. He will also investigate the Sawyer Hill culvert project as a fallback, given its anticipated lower cost.

e. **Bob Bryant's Concerns** – Mr. Bryant was not present.

f. **Other** – There was no other ongoing and/or old business.

9. **Announcements/Other Business** – Ms. Matthews announced that the Household Hazardous Waste Collection scheduled for this Saturday, April 18<sup>th</sup> at the transfer station had been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ms. Matthews also reminded residents to continue to abide by Governor Scott's Executive Orders by staying at home, leaving only for essential reasons like grocery shopping, medicine, medical care, and exercise. She thanked residents for staying home as a way to keep each other healthy and to get through this pandemic more quickly. She also thanked all our frontline workers who reside in town and work at grocery stores and other essential businesses. She thanked our nurses, doctors, and healthcare providers, postal workers, and delivery drivers & personnel.

**10. Review & Sign Orders** – to be signed one Select Board member at a time at the town office.

**11. Executive Session: Title 1 V.S.A. S 313(a)(3)** –For personnel to discuss the animal control officer appointment, Ms. Matthews made a motion to enter executive session at 8:38 pm, seconded by Mr. Turco, unanimously approved. Motion to exit executive session at 9:29 pm was made by Ms. Matthews, seconded by Mr. Turco, unanimously approved. Ms. Matthews made a motion to appoint Laura Swartz Animal Control Officer, seconded by Mr. Turco, unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted: Jennifer Matthews

Minutes Approved: 5.12.2020