

# Mount Holly Select Board Meeting

## December 14, 2021

### Minutes

**In-Person with Zoom Meeting: 268 110 0320**

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

**Town Officials:** Phil Crane, Dennis Devereux, Carol Garrow-Woolley, Diana Garrow, Russ Garrow, David Johnson, Phil Leonard, Jon McCann, Christine Pratt, James Seward, Brigid Sullivan, Mary Surething, Andy Tanger, Clinton Woolley

**Members of the Public:** Paul Barton, Zena Gates, Anna McGee Hanson, Marianne McGee, Stephen Michel, Jeb Porter, Donna Seward, Amy Turco

1. **Call to Order** by Mark Turco at 6:30 pm.
2. All stood and recited the **Pledge of Allegiance**.
3. **Changes and/or additions to the agenda** – No changes or additions needed this evening.
4. **Approval of November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021 Meeting Minutes** – Mr. Turco made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Jeff Chase, unanimously approved.

#### 5. **Reports**

##### a. **Highways & Transfer Station Update** –

i) **Monthly Update - Clinton Woolley** reported there were lots of trees down. He also said that the Select Board needs to make a decision about Saturday hours on Christmas at the transfer station. It was decided to close the transfer station on Christmas Day and set the hours on Sunday, December 26<sup>th</sup> from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm. The transfer station will be open its regular hours on New Year's Day.

ii) **Summit Road Construction Drawings Review & Posting Date for Construction Bid – Jeff Chase** reported the contractors' bid package on the project has been received from Otter Creek Engineering (OCE). The package includes all necessary information, drawings and permits. The project will be advertised before Christmas; it will be posted to the VT Bid System website; and calls will be made to contractors. OCE will handle the bid opening on January 13<sup>th</sup> at 3:30 pm, the compilation and management of the bids, and their contractor recommendation for a cost of \$4,500. With a 10% grant match, the cost to the Town will be \$450. Mr. Chase recommended this process given the size of the project, OCE's expertise, and to avoid any conflict of interest given his work.

iii) **Better Back Roads Grant – Jeff Chase** reported that the stormwater and road erosion inventory are in good shape, so he and Mr. Woolley looked at a riverbank stabilization project on Freeman Brook Road for this grant. Mr. Chase still has some work to do on the grant before finalizing the application for submission; the grant is due on Friday, December 15<sup>th</sup>. The project cost is \$25-30,000 with a 20% match.

Jennifer Matthews noted that \$2B will be coming into Vermont over the next five years through the **Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act**. Of that money, over \$1B will flow through VTrans with \$324.3 million for highways and bridges. There will be 26 competitive grant programs. Grant funds to keep our roads and bridges in the best shape possible will save taxpayers money, if the grants are pursued by the Town. Funding should start flowing next summer.

##### b. **Treasurer – David Johnson**

i) **Monthly Income & Expense Report** – Mr. Johnson reported: transfers for the year were made to the Solid Waste Equip Fund (\$1,000), the Asset/Equip Fund (\$65,000), the Culvert Repair Fund (\$10,000), and the Bridge Repair Fund (\$7,500); the PILOT Program payment of \$14,976 has been received from the State and includes the newly-acquired property on VT Route 155; the State Current Use payment of \$51,117 has also been received; the Solid Waste Labels Sold amount of \$14,060 is through November 30th and the amount is now half of what was budgeted; Solid Waste Hauling & Disposal Expense of \$23,677 includes Casella's November bill, and disposal is at 135 tons this year versus 152 tons last year; the first payment of \$407,000 was made to the Statewide Education Fund; the first half of the Garage Bond Interest Expense (\$6,345) has been made; transfers for Fire Department Support of \$26,750 and for Rescue Squad Support of \$15,000 were made in November.

c. **Mount Holly Planning Commission Update – Jon McCann** reported the Planning Commission: wrapped up and approved the Bolalek subdivision; continues to work on the town plan; has invited the Boards of the Mount Holly Volunteer Fire Department and the Mount Holly Volunteer Rescue Squad to collaborate on writing the utilities and facilities part of the town plan. Mr. McCann also reported that the AT&T cell tower should be operational in the second quarter of 2022.

d. **Mount Holly Conservation Commission Update – Ms. Matthews** reported that Annette Lynch could not be with us this evening, but she wanted the Select Board to know that the Conservation Commission is moving ahead with its work, and there will be a full report in January.

e. **Rutland Regional Planning Commission (RRPC) Update – Jon McCann** reported that Barbara Noyes Pulling gave a presentation on Act 76 regarding clean water service providers for the Champlain Basin, which mainly impacts those to the west of Otter Creek. He also reported that Shrewsbury added river corridor protection to its flood hazard area regulations in order to receive additional FEMA funding in the case of any damage.

f. **Rutland Region Transportation Advisory Committee Update – Clinton Woolley** reported the meeting focused on the VT Route 22A project.

g. **Rutland County Solid Waste District Update – Clinton Woolley** reported they finished work on the annual budget, which is now ready for a vote.

## 6. New Business

a. **Shade Tree Preservation Plan Update – Phil Crane** reported on the continuing work to the Plan, a plan prescribed by Statute with a required set of elements. To begin, a shade tree must be located in whole or in part in the public right-of-way (ROW) or a public place, provided the tree was planted by the municipality or is designated as a shade tree per the Plan. There are very few trees planted by the municipality, so they are surveying the trees in town (Maple Hill Road, the Star Lake recreation area, the roads in and out of Belmont) to put together a list of possible trees to designate as shade trees. Their present focus is on which of these trees to include, along with a plan to plant new trees and a program to maintain designated shade trees, all of which will require a small commitment of funds annually. A formal plan with some financial support will facilitate access to outside funding to further support the Plan. A draft of the Plan will be presented to the Select Board in January with a public meeting on it proposed for early to mid-March. A current challenge is all the lovely maple trees planted along town roads (Shunpike & Hortonville, for example) which are not in the ROW, but should still be protected.

b. **Star Lake Bottom Barriers – Phil Leonard** asked the Select Board to agree to submit an application on behalf of the Town for two bottom barriers to be used in the swimming and boating areas of Star Lake to control vegetation and improve recreational opportunities. The barrier is a rubber/plastic sheet with stiffening material which deprives the vegetation (milfoil, lily pads, others) of light so the vegetation does not grow. Discussion ensued on cost, donations, use of Lake Ninevah's barrier, installation by divers, effective use of bottom barriers in Lakes Rescue and Pauline. Mr. Turco supported the plan as long as cost is minimal. Ms. Matthews remarked on the number of residents who are interested in seeing Star Lake "reclaimed." She wholeheartedly endorses the plan and expressed her appreciation to the Conservation Commission for its time and effort on this project. Mr. Chase asked Mr. Leonard to complete the needed application and bring it to the next Select Board meeting along with a plan for the project. Mr. Leonard also asked about regular testing to monitor the water quality at Star Lake.

c. **Mount Holly Volunteer Rescue Squad ARPA Funds Request – Anna McGee Hanson** introduced herself as a MHVRS Board member and an EMT. MHVRS's list of items and ARPA funds request are to help squad members better respond to and transport more COVID-positive patients, and to help them and their firefighter drivers protect themselves from COVID. Items like the Envo N95 masks, which are washable and reusable, are a way to do this. She also asked for consideration of hazard stipends for both squad members and drivers who have been responding to emergencies during the past two years regardless of the patient's vaccination or COVID status. In response to a question from Ms. Matthews, Ms. McGee Hanson stated the cost of the items would be about \$4,200. In response to a question from Mr. Turco, she said she will send a spreadsheet of the items with costs. The Select Board will review the list of items to be sure they qualify for ARPA funds use. If they do, the Select Board supports the use of ARPA funds for purchase of the items. Paul Barton thanked fire and rescue for their service to the community.

d. **A/V Technology for Hybrid Meetings (ARPA Funds) – Patrick Cody** of Okemo Valley TV described the options available to us: a basic system with a single camera going straight to Zoom with a couple

of mics, \$4-5,000; a middle tier system outfitting just the town office with two robotic cameras, mics, switcher/mixer, and a wall-mounted display, installed with warranty, \$11,000; and an upper tier system with connectivity between buildings, \$20,000. Discussion ensued about these three options, the need to change internet service providers (from Comcast to VTEL), the different megabyte plans and costs, and phone systems. Select Board members decided to outfit the town office only looking at the basic or middle tier system. Amy Turco will gather quotes for a VOIP system. Mr. Cody will gather quotes on the two A/V options under consideration.

e. **Municipal Planning Grant (MPG) Award** – Ms. Matthews announced that the Town of Mount Holly was awarded a MPG for 2022, fully funded at \$20,000 with a \$2,000 match, for a total project cost of \$22,000. Ms. Matthews expressed her appreciation and congratulations to Annette Lynch, who wrote and gathered all the documentation for the grant. Mr. Chase made a motion to accept the grant, seconded by Ms. Matthews, unanimously approved.

f. **Health Insurance & HRA Renewals** – Ms. Matthews noted we need to approve the health insurance and HRA renewals for the coming calendar year. After a sizeable rate increase last year, BlueCross BlueShield actually lowered their rates this year. Mr. Chase made a motion to renew the same BlueCross BlueShield health insurance plan and the HRA plan with a \$650 per person contribution for town employees for 2022, seconded by Mr. Turco, unanimously approved.

g. **Mask Mandate – Municipal Properties** – Ms. Matthews introduced the topic noting the Governor turned the mask question over to municipalities, which is unfortunate given the contentious nature of the issue. She noted the large increase in COVID cases (1,000+) over the weekend; do we want to take this precautionary step? Discussion ensued about the reasons to wear masks, the pros and cons of doing so, vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals, municipal vs. other properties, and enforcement measures. Mr. Chase and Mr. Turco stated they did not think a mask mandate was necessary. Ms. Matthews again noted the increasing infection and death rates as well as the new variants. She asked if a mask recommendation could be agreed upon so as to protect town staff, employees, residents and visitors, and to safeguard everyone's health. Mr. Turco and Mr. Chase agreed with her suggestion of a mask recommendation for municipal buildings.

h. **Board of Adjustment** – tabled until the January meeting.

i. **Planning Commission Appointments – Two Terms to November 2024** – Mr. Chase made a motion to appoint Jim Seward to a three-year term on the Planning Commission, seconded by Mr. Turco, unanimously approved. Mr. Turco made a motion to appoint Stephen Michel to a three-year term on the Planning Commission, no seconds.

j. **Other** – There was no other New Business this evening.

## 7. Ongoing & Old Business

a. **Traffic Safety Plan Update** – Mr. Chase reported the traffic study report just came in from Devon Neary at the Rutland Regional Planning Commission. Mr. Chase thought it best to review the data and a draft of an ordinance with Mr. Neary at the January meeting. Discussion ensued about various pieces of the data collected, the need for the enforcement of an ordinance, a contract with the sheriff's department or VT State Police, and costs. Andy Tanger suggested any enforcement costs be listed as a separate item on the warning so as to avoid the whole budget being voted down. Mr. Turco will reach out to Constable Paul Faenza about the police presence in town.

b. **Junk Ordinance Enforcement** – A citation will be issued to the owners of a property on VT Route 103, as the property stands in violation of the Junk Ordinance. The Select Board will write a letter to the health officer asking him to do a thorough health investigation of the same property. The health officer was called into the Blue Spruce House and found black mold from floor to ceiling. A letter has been sent to the State concerning this.

c. **National Opioids Settlement – sign participation forms** – Mr. Turco signed the forms.

d. **Retail Cannabis** – The Select Board agreed last month to put an item on the ballot so residents could vote yea or nay on retail cannabis in town. An informational session about retail cannabis will be held at the February Select Board meeting scheduled for Tuesday, February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2022 at 6:30 pm.

The Select Board set the budget meeting for Tuesday, January 4<sup>th</sup> at 4:30 pm.

e. **Other** – There was no other Ongoing & Old Business this evening.

8. **Citizen Comments** – Zena Gates asked about the status of the Green Mountain Power (GMP) project in her area. Mr. Turco suggested contacting GMP for an update.

9. **Announcements/Other Business** – Carol Garrow-Woolley announced the town office would close at noon on Thursday, December 23<sup>rd</sup>.
10. **Review & Sign Orders** – To be signed by Select Board members.
11. **Executive Session: Title 1 V.S.A. S 313(a)(3) – personnel** – Not needed this evening.
12. **Adjourn** – Meeting adjourned at 8:26 pm.

Respectfully Submitted: Jennifer Matthews

Approved: 1.11.2022