

Mount Holly Select Board Meeting September 8, 2020 Minutes

Zoom Meeting: 837 5767 2917

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

Town Officials: Sue Covalla, David Johnson, Jon McCann, Don Richardson, Jim Seward, Brigid Sullivan, Clinton Woolley

Members of the Public: Jim Corven, Phil Crane, Barbara & Steve Hazelton, Craig Hutt Vater (Principal, Mount Holly School), Annette Lynch, Stephen Michel, Rhonda Rivers

1. **Call to Order** by Mark Turco at 6:32 pm.

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

3. **Changes and/or additions to the agenda** – Jeff Chase asked to add an update by Craig Hutt Vater on the well testing for the Mount Holly School. Jennifer Matthews asked to add an update by Don Richardson on Button-Up VT. It was agreed to add both under ‘Ongoing & Old Business.’

4. **Approval of August 4th/10th, 2020 Minutes** – Mr. Chase made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Turco, unanimously approved.

5. Reports

a. Highways & Transfer Station Update – Clinton Woolley

i) **New Snowplow for New Truck** - Mr. Woolley had a \$10,995 quote from Byrne’s for the sander and plow. Discussion ensued on previous quotes, plow and sander makes and models, blade types. Mr. Chase made a motion to purchase the Fisher plow and stainless sander from Byrne’s, seconded by Mr. Turco, unanimously approved.

Mr. Woolley reported that about 800 lbs. of food scraps are now being collected every two weeks at the transfer station, with a two-hour round-trip necessary to dispose of all in Rutland. Mr. Chase & Mr. Woolley will confer with Rutland County Solid Waste District’s compost expert about starting our own composting operation at the transfer station.

ii) **Land Pride Ditch Mower Bids – Open** – No were bids received. Mr. Chase suggested listing the mower in the spring on Auctions International, a site the State uses. Mr. Woolley suggested Craigslist, which Mr. Turco will look into.

b. Treasurer – David Johnson

i) **Monthly Income & Expense Report** – Mr. Johnson reported the tax bills were mailed on August 14th and tax payments are coming in at a good rate with 50-60 more payments in the first two weeks this year as compared to last year. Looking at the Profit & Loss, he noted the \$12,000 revenue item for the sale of the old one-ton truck; Solid Waste Labels Sold is just shy of \$5,000; Solid Waste Disposal is running 15-20 tons more than a year ago with quite a bit going into the open-top container; 4500 tons of winter sand is now in; Shunpike Road expenses are \$8,200 for the contractor and state permit which will be reimbursed once grant paperwork is submitted.

ii) **LMHUUSD Advance** – Mr. Johnson stated the State figures were not yet in nor a school payment schedule, but the town always advances some funds to the school at this time of year; he suggested \$350,000. Mr. Turco made a motion to allow an early advance of \$350,000 to the school to cover expenses, seconded by Mr. Chase, unanimously approved.

iii) **Delinquent Taxes Update** – Mr. Johnson reported there were only 2-1/2 properties still delinquent: one property owner paid half the amount due; one property will probably go to tax sale; and one property is a situation. Ms. Matthews asked if Kevin O’Toole would handle the tax sale. Mr. Johnson replied in the affirmative.

iv) **Outside Audit – Firms & Costs?** – Mr. Johnson is still gathering information. He will have figures for the October meeting.

c. Rutland Regional Transportation Council Update – Clinton Woolley – No report.

d. **Rutland County Solid Waste District Update – Clinton Woolley** reported they discussed the hazardous waste collection on September 26th with the same health & safety requirements in place as in June.

e. **Mount Holly Planning Commission: Town Plan Revisions Update** – Jim Seward reported the Planning Commission had started to work on rewriting the Town Plan and that the process was going better than expected.

6. New Business

a. **Mount Holly Conservation Commission Appointments** – Ms. Matthews noted that last month the Select Board had created the new Conservation Commission to be comprised of five members. Ms. Matthews reported that nine Letters of Interest were received from community members. After a brief discussion, it was decided to discuss the Letters of Interest in executive session. Ms. Matthews thanked all those who were interested in the positions. She noted the breadth of experience and knowledge that was being offered to the Town of Mount Holly by a very diverse group of applicants. She thanked them all for their interest and for their willingness to devote some of their time and talents to the community in order to help protect what we all so value here.

b. **Municipal Planning Grant (MPG)** – Jon McCann reported the Rutland Regional Planning Commission had alerted the Planning Commission to the MPG as a possible funding source for help with the town plan revisions. The Planning Commission discussed various options and decided that pursuing the grant to update the natural resources inventory would be very helpful, particularly in regards to land use planning. Discussion ensued on who should take the lead on the grant. Ms. Matthews made a motion for the Select Board to move forward with applying for the Municipal Planning Grant in order to update the natural resources inventory, seconded by Mr. Chase, unanimously approved.

c. **EAB Grant** – Mr. Chase noted that the Emerald Ash Borer would eventually come to Mount Holly. He came across this \$5-15,000 grant program to help municipalities manage their ash trees. He spoke with Mr. Woolley and decided that the removal of a group of ash trees along Belmont Road was most pressing with removal costs at \$5,000 and road crew labor to move and chip the downed trees as the match. There would need to be a plan to replace the trees and a tree inventory of the roadside ash trees to start. Mr. Turco made a motion to apply for the EAB grant, seconded by Ms. Matthews, unanimously approved.

d. **SFY21 Municipal Highway & Stormwater Mitigation Grant Program** – Mr. Chase reported on a grant available through VTrans for large projects of \$250,000 or more. He and Mr. Woolley discussed the first culvert on Sawyer Hill Road; the bottom of the culvert is rotted out. The grant covers 80% of the project costs with a 20% local match. The project completion date is 2022. Discussion ensued on other possible projects and municipal funds available. Mr. Chase made a motion to apply for the FY21 Municipal Highway and Stormwater Mitigation Grant, seconded by Mr. Turco, unanimously approved.

e. **Town Clerk Fees (24 V.S.A. § 1179)** – Ms. Matthews read from the State Statute which requires within 30 days of the close of the fiscal year, the town clerk “to disclose to the public the total amount of fees received as part of his or her compensation during the fiscal year preceding.” Ms. Matthews noted those fees for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020 were \$20, 876.70 in addition to a salary of about \$37,000. Ms. Matthews noted that clerks can receive a salary in lieu of fees and the town then receives the fees. She asked what the agreement was with Sue around fees, as the fees and salary amounts were quite substantial and some fees might be used to cover Administrative Officer costs. Mr. Turco said he did not know. Sue Covalla stated she had been here almost 38 years and the fees go to her; that’s the way it’s always been. David Johnson said the same. Ms. Matthews said she thought it would be a good idea to have a job description which also spelled out the fee agreement. Mr. Turco said he would talk with older Select Board members about this.

f. **Designate VT League of Cities & Towns Annual Business Meeting Delegate** – Mr. Turco will serve as the delegate.

g. **Fall/Winter Transfer Station Hours with Start Date of October ____ ?** – It was agreed that September 30th would be the last Wednesday and October 4th would be the first Sunday.

h. **Other** – Ms. Matthews asked if anyone knew why and who put up a No Swimming sign at Star Lake, as the decision to do so is to only be made by the State or the Select Board. Mr. Turco said due to the dead fish and possible contaminants, he made the decision to put the sign up.

7. Ongoing & Old Business

a. **Local Hazard Mitigation Plan Report** – Mr. Chase reported that he, Russ Garrow, Clinton Woolley and Jon McCann had been working with Steffanie Bourque from Rutland Regional Planning Commission on the plan, which is required by the State. The group has worked through the first five sections of the plan, with the fifth section addressing the highest risks: flooding, ice, snow, wind and drought. Any comments on the plan can be sent to Mr. Chase until the close of the comment period on September 16th. Ms.

Matthews commented on the paragraph about phone back-up batteries and their limited life coupled with the lack of cell service in town which puts many, especially our older residents, at risk often during inclement weather.

b. **Federal CARES Act Grant Application Update** – Jon McCann reported that the application for the grant had been submitted. Additional information was requested, which he will submit after the meeting. Discussion ensued on the grant particulars. The grant awards are to be announced in the next couple of weeks.

c. **Select Board Admin. Assistant/Town Administrative Assistant** – After three recent deaths in her family, Ms. Matthews said she could no longer afford the time to be tied to the Select Board admin work. She will work on a job description listing the duties of the position, which the Select Board will review at a future meeting.

d. **Other** - Craig Hutt Vater explained there had been a glitch in the **well testing** with the town office well tested instead of that of the town garage. Town garage well will be tested soon and results of the two wells will be compared to determine which has the better water quality. Mr. Hutt Vater hopes to return to the October Select Board meeting with an agreement on the well sharing between the Town and the school, again with no expenses incurred by the Town.

Don Richardson was called away, so no update was given on **Button-Up VT**.

Ms. Matthews provided a brief update on **S.54** with the House and Senate now in agreement on the requirement for towns to vote to opt-in on retail cannabis shops opening in their communities. Tax or fee revenue sharing and distribution are still being debated.

8. Announcements/Other Business

a. **Household Hazardous Waste Collection – Saturday, September 26th, 8:00 am to 10:00 am only**

b. **COVID Response: Farm-to-Plate Program** – As Emergency Management Director, Mr. Chase was contacted by the Rutland Regional Planning Commission about this State-funded program to help farmers, restaurants, and those adversely-affected by COVID-19. Prepared meals will be made available through the end of the year. Mr. Chase will provide more information via the Newsflash and Chit Chat.

c. **2020 Census - Please Complete** – Ms. Matthews noted Mount Holly's 38.5% response rate, one of the lower rates, and she stressed the importance of completing the census.

d. **Town Office Health/Safety Requirements Reminder: Masks Required, Social Distancing, Contact Log** – Mr. Turco stated these measures need to be taken seriously and he thanked everyone for complying.

e. **Other** – Mr. Chase reported that all 275 masks received through Emergency Management for distribution at the town office are now gone. Brigid Sullivan said that if more masks are needed, they were available through Rotary.

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

10. **Executive Session: Title 1 V.S.A. S 313(a)(3) – personnel** – Motion to enter Executive Session, citing Statute, made by Mr. Turco, seconded by Ms. Matthews, unanimously approved. Motion to exit Executive Session was made by Mr. Chase, seconded by Mr. Turco, unanimously approved. After returning from Executive Session, Ms. Matthews explained the Select Board was very impressed by the breadth of experience offered by the nine applicants for the Conservation Commission, so the Board is going to expand the Conservation Commission to nine members for the first year. Ms. Matthews made a motion to appoint Jim Corven to a four-year term, Fra DeVine to a two-year term, Peter Smith to a one-year term, Jay Ummel to a one-year term, Mark Zelis to a one-year term, Phil Crane to a four-year term, Phil Leonard to a two-year term, Fred Garrow to a one-year term, and Annette Lynch to a three-year term, seconded by Mr. Turco, unanimously approved.

11. **Adjourn** – Mr. Turco adjourned the meeting at 9:05 pm.

Respectfully Submitted: Jennifer Matthews

Approved: 10.13.2020