

Mount Holly Select Board Meeting December 8, 2020 Minutes

In-Person with Zoom Meeting: 898 6126 5487

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

Town Officials: Jim Corven, Sue Covalla, Francis DeVine, Russ Garrow, David Johnson, Annette Lynch, Jon McCann, Stephen Michel, Lori Norton, Renee Sarmento, Jim Seward, Brigid Sullivan, Mary Surething, Andy Tanger, Lisa Terreri, Carol Woolley, Clinton Woolley

Members of the Public: Karen Bartlett (O'Brien Shortle), Stephanie Bourque (RRPC), Zena Gates, Jim Heald, Abe Leber, Candace Neary, Gary Norton, Christine Pratt, Ron Unterman, Alison Weintraub and Donna, Fred, Lillian

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 a conversation with Karen Bartlett from O'Brien Shortle Reynolds & Sabotka, PC at 6:40 pm in order to discuss their Letter of Engagement and the services they can and cannot offer the town. She also asked to add an item regarding future Select Board meetings under New Business – Other. It was agreed to add both.

4. **Approval of November 10th, 2020 Minutes**– Jeff Chase said we need to clarify town road use by registered snowmobiles and ATVs. Mr. Turco said ATV use on main roads was not allowed, but snowmobiles can use the right-of-way on roads serving as corridor connectors to the trail system. Mr. Chase made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Turco, unanimously approved.

5. Reports

a. **Highways & Transfer Station Update** – **Clinton Woolley** reported the electronics received for recycling will be pulled this week.

i) **Plow Bills – Plymouth & Wallingford** - Ms. Matthews said when the Town billed Plymouth and Wallingford in May, we informed them of a \$100 increase in the plow bill for this winter. As they are currently working on their budgets, Ms. Matthews asked if we anticipated another increase in the plow bills for next winter. Mr. Woolley said one town would like the Town to do some summer grading for an additional \$250 charge with materials supplied by them.

Ms. Matthews asked if Mr. Woolley had read the article in the Rutland Herald about towns preparing for back-up plow truck drivers if road crew members are out with COVID-19. She asked what our back-up plans are if this should happen. Mr. Woolley said the Town had mutual aid agreements and that there are people in town to call. Mr. Turco suggested he create a call list with names and availability of back-up drivers.

b. Treasurer – David Johnson

i) **Monthly Income & Expense Report** – Mr. Johnson reported the Property Taxes Receivable was now about \$192,000 after an additional \$53,000 was received after the end of November, and he said this was the first time in years that the delinquent taxes due was less than \$200,000. Looking at the Profit & Loss, he noted: the \$52,307 State Current Use payment was received, which is \$5,300 more than what was budgeted; the Solid Waste Labels Sold figure of \$13,920 is more than half of what was budgeted; the Town just received \$63,867 from the State and FEMA for expenses incurred to repair the damage from the April 2019 flooding; the Workers Compensation and Insurance bills were just received from the VT League of Cities and Towns with the workers comp bill a bit less than budgeted and the insurance bill about \$2,000 more than what was budgeted; Solid Waste disposal is at 99.65 tons and C&D disposal is at 52.81 tons, so we are running about 22 tons more than last year; the Special Road Projects expense of \$5,839 is for the Summit Road culvert repair; the Summer Road Outside Service expense of \$10,970 includes the \$2,000 just spent for the used equipment trailer. Mr. Johnson said he had recently received invoices in the amount of \$5,930 for expenses associated with the land records digitization grant. Ms. Matthews made a motion to pay all invoices associated with the land records digitization grant by December 11th, seconded by Mr. Chase, unanimously approved.

At this point, Ms. Matthews noted Karen Bartlett from O'Brien Shortle Reynolds & Sabotka was on the phone to discuss the Letter of Engagement the firm had submitted. Ms. Matthews stated that the Town of Mount Holly needed an audit performed on the Town's financials for the fiscal years ending June 30, 2019 and

June 30, 2020. Ms. Bartlett explained that they could not offer that service; the letter we have was for a compliance engagement with no disclosure. She further explained that their firm does not usually serve municipal governments, as they are not set-up for that and they cannot perform a municipal audit. She stated she had explained this to Mr. Johnson previously. She did recommend two firms in Montpelier who do municipal audits: Sullivan & Powers and Fothergill, Segale & Valley. She also knew of a firm in New Hampshire. Additional discussion ensued about the preparation of financials and the need for management's skills, knowledge and expertise so as to accept responsibility for the financials before an audit. Ms. Bartlett stated that when the latter is not possible, an outside firm can be used to prepare the financials before another firm performs an audit. She recommended speaking with the firm who might perform the audit before contracting with a firm to do the financials so as to avoid any duplication of effort and expense. Mr. Turco stated we would have to contact the other firms concerning the audit. Both Mr. Turco and Ms. Matthews thanked Ms. Bartlett for her time and the information. Ms. Matthews suggested preparing a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the audit to send to several area firms. Mr. Chase said he could prepare an outline for the RFP. Ms. Matthews said she could fill in the details, calling upon VLCT if need be. It was agreed to do so.

ii) **December 7th Tax Sale** – Mr. Johnson reported two properties were put up for tax sale: one owner paid the taxes due right before the auction, and the other property was sold. He stated that leaves only one property from 2019 with unpaid taxes.

iii) **Outside Audit – Letter of Engagement** – see above.

iv) **Budget Workshop Dates** – It was agreed to meet on Tuesday, January 5th at 4:00 pm.

c. **Listers Update**

i) **Parcel Mapping Project** – Mr. Johnson reported that draft maps are to arrive soon. The Listers will review for any errors.

ii) **2021 Grand List** – Mr. Johnson stated the State has a new Grand List program which requires the use of MS Office 365 software. He also noted that the computer in the Listers' office is seven years old and may need to be replaced; funds are available in the Listers budget to do so. He also said the inspection letters had been mailed to property owners in order to update the Grand List.

d. **Mount Holly Planning Commission – Jon McCann** welcomed new Planning Commission members Brigid Sullivan and Lisa Terreri. He stated the Planning Commission reviewed the work on the Town Plan of the past few months for the two new members. They also discussed the 12 State requirements for a town plan and discussed the best methods on how to move forward.

e. **Mount Holly Conservation Commission Update – Francis DeVine** reported that Commission members had a training session with Fish & Wildlife's Jens Hilke to go over Conservation Commissions' responsibilities. Mr. DeVine also reported that the Commission continues to refine its purpose, duties and organizational structure as part of its Policies & Procedures. The Commission hopes to hear soon about the Municipal Planning Grant awards. They continue to work with Castleton University to create a community-wide survey for use by both the Conservation and Planning Commissions. Mr. DeVine also noted that Conservation Commission members are attending Planning Commission meetings so to better understand how they can assist with the town plan revisions.

f. **Rutland Regional Planning Commission Update – Jon McCann** had nothing to report.

g. **Rutland Regional Transportation Council Update – Clinton Woolley** reported the next couple of meetings will focus on the Municipal Roads General Permits.

h. **Rutland County Solid Waste District Update – Clinton Woolley** reported they are working on the budget. He also said that residents can now get their solid waste permit for the Gleason Road facility online.

6. **New Business**

a. **Local Hazard Mitigation Plan – Steffanie Bourque, RRPC** – Ms. Bourque introduced herself and explained she had been facilitating meetings and providing technical assistance to ensure all the federal requirements were met in the Plan. She recognized and thanked Jeff Chase, Russ Garrow, Clinton Woolley and Jon McCann for all the time and effort they put into the Plan's updates. Ms. Bourque explained the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan is a five-year plan which FEMA must approve. The goal of the Plan is to reduce the severity of local hazards so response and recovery efforts are minimized. The last time Mount Holly updated the Plan was in 2009. The Plan identifies and ranks all local natural hazards, and develops strategies to mitigate them. Mount Holly's hazards include tropical storms with flash flooding, fluvial erosion, high winds, severe winter storms, and drought. Only natural hazards are included in the Plan. The Emerald Ash Borer is noted, but currently there are no FEMA funds available to deal with any infestation. The Plan outlines the

mitigation strategy for the identified hazards culminating in a list of action steps. Ms. Bourque stated that the Plan meets all federally-required content. The Plan can be found on the websites of both the Town and the RRPC. Comments can be submitted to Jeff Chase until December 22nd. The final draft of the Plan will be submitted to VT Emergency Management and then adopted by the Select Board before it is sent to FEMA for approval. With FEMA approval, the Town is eligible for an increase in emergency relief assistance funding from the current rate of 7.5% to the 12.5% rate, so more State funds can be accessed to cover any repair costs. Ms. Matthews thanked all involved for their time and efforts on the Plan. Discussion ensued on hazard mitigation, MRGP and hydrologically-connected roadways.

b. Ballot Machine Programming for Town Meeting Day Vote – Sue Covalla would like to have ballots made and the ballot counting machine programmed for the Town Meeting Day vote at a cost of \$1,000 to \$2,000. Ms. Matthews made a motion to have the ballots created and the ballot machine programmed for the Town Meeting Day Vote at a cost of \$1,000 to \$2,000, seconded by Mr. Chase, unanimously approved.

c. BCBS & HRA Insurance Renewals – Mr. Turco made a motion to renew the town staff health insurance through Blue Cross Blue Shield with an accompanying HRA, seconded by Mr. Chase, unanimously approved.

d. Other – Future Select Board Meetings – Ms. Matthews addressed the need for an additional camera for future meetings as Zoom attendees are unable to see in-person attendees; in-person attendees already have a video screen to see Zoom attendees. Ms. Matthews also noted that the Select Board may want to continue to offer the remote option with an additional camera post-pandemic to encourage resident participation via Zoom. Discussion ensued about cameras, various options, what might work. It was agreed to try a web camera first, as it is the most inexpensive option. There was also discussion about continuing the hybrid model with residents expressing interest in the availability of both the in-person and Zoom options. Mr. Turco stated he would continue to attend the in-person part of the meeting as long as the Governor permitted such meetings.

7. Old Business

a. Town Road Use Clarification – Mr. Turco noted we had discussed this earlier in the meeting. He said that snowmobiles could use the right-of-way on those roads which serve as corridor connectors to the trails, but the Town had voted that no ATVs were allowed on town roads. Mr. Chase said we just need to clarify our notice that registered snowmobiles and ATVs must adhere to VT DMV regulations.

b. Land Records Digitization Grant Update – Jon McCann noted the Town had received \$29,000 in federal CARES Act funding to digitize the land records. At this point, the minimum requirement for the grant has been met with five years of land records typed in and online. He said it was a team effort to accomplish this, thanking Mr. Chase and Ms. Covalla. He also said that all plats and maps had been scanned, and they have images back to the 1900s. All expenses associated with the grant are to be submitted by December 11th for reimbursement. Ms. Matthews thanked all three for their work to meet the grant requirements within a very short timeframe.

c. Social Service Appropriation Policy – Ms. Matthews explained the need for a written policy given the increasing number of requests received from organizations for tax-payer funds. The policy puts in writing our informal verbal policy. Organizations need to know the procedure for a request. The initial request requires a signed petition by tax-payers, which also demonstrates support for that organization in town. After that initial request is approved by voters, the request will be added to the Social Service list on the warning. Ms. Matthews spoke with the VT League of Cities and Towns and no warning period is needed for the policy. Discussion ensued. Ms. Matthews made a motion to adopt the Social Service Appropriation Policy, seconded by Mr. Turco, passed unanimously.

d. Select Board Admin. Assistant – Item skipped.

e. Permit Application Fee Schedule – No additional discussion was necessary.

f. Junk Ordinance Enforcement

i) **Bussino – Shunpike Road**

ii) **Wyman – Shunpike Road**

iii) **Taylor – VT Route 103**

Mr. Turco stated he had received multiple calls about these properties and about the mobile home sitting just off of VT Route 103. Ms. Matthews said that letters had previously been sent to all three property owners listed. It was decided to have Constable Paul Faenza hand deliver another letter to Mr. Bussino and to Mr. Taylor; a certified letter will be mailed to Mr. Wyman. Discussion ensued about the mobile home. Ms. Matthews will do the additional research needed before a course of action can be determined.

g. **Other** – There was no additional Ongoing & Old Business.

8. **Concerned Citizens Comments** – There were no comments.

9. **Announcements/Other Business**

a. **Reminder: Town Office Closed on December 24th & 31st.**

b. **Other** – Ms. Matthews noted the **Rutland County Budget Meeting** will be held virtually on Thursday, December 17th at 12:00 noon. She also wished everyone **Happy Holidays!**

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) – personnel** – Not needed this evening.

12. **Adjourn** – Mr. Turco adjourned the meeting at 8:05 pm.

Respectfully Submitted: Jennifer Matthews

Approved: 1.12.2021