

Mount Holly Select Board Meeting

June 8, 2021

Minutes

In-Person with Zoom Meeting: 898 6126 5487

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

Town Officials: Jim Corven, Phil Crane, Dennis Devereux, Carol Garrow-Woolley, Diana Garrow, David Johnson, Annette Lynch, Jon McCann, Stephen Michel, Renee Sarmento, James Seward, Clinton Woolley

Members of the Public: Paul Barton, Zena Gates, Bob Herbst, Craig Hutt Vater (Mount Holly School Principal), Alice Perry, Christine Pratt, Donna Seward, Amy Turco

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 Letter of Interest for the Tree Warden position and a request to hold yoga classes at Star Lake to the agenda. It was agreed to add the latter to ‘New Business – Other’ and the former to ‘Ongoing & Old Business – Other.’ Jeff Chase asked to move Agenda Item #6.a. up in the agenda. It was agreed to do so.

4. **Approval of May 11th, 2021 Meeting Minutes** – Mr. Chase made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Turco, unanimously approved.

6.a. **Mount Holly School Biking & Hiking Trail** – All Select Board members expressed support for the trail revision and the project as a whole. Ms. Matthews noted she had spoken with both the Town’s insurance agent and attorney about the trail. In order to protect the Town from any liability, both the attorney and the insurance agent asked that the Town be named as an additional insured on the school district’s liability insurance policy, as far as the trail is concerned. Mr. Chase made a motion to approve the trail with that one condition, seconded by Mr. Turco, unanimously approved. Craig Hutt Vater thanked the Select Board for their support for the project.

5. Reports

a. **Highways & Transfer Station Update** – **Clinton Woolley** reported that the town did not receive a paving grant for the coming fiscal year but did receive a structures grant for Summit Road. It is time to order winter sand. Mr. Chase will develop a bid request. Mr. Woolley also reported that Casella is now picking up food scraps. He will ask them for a price for providing this service to the town.

b. Treasurer – David Johnson

i) **Monthly Income & Expense Report** – Mr. Johnson reported he had met with the Delinquent Tax Collector and there are now only four-and-an-half accounts outstanding, one of which is a foreclosure; Railroad Taxes were received in the amount of \$385, which is less than the past couple of years; the State Reappraisal Funds in the amount of \$10,421 were received; the Solid Waste Labels Sold amount of \$28,804 is now over budget with \$1,970 received this past month for labels; the leaf blower grant funds have been received in the amount of \$4,239; the Solid Waste Hauling & Disposal Expense for \$1,532 of C&D Disposal is high as two loads instead of the usual one went out in May; a \$326,245 payment was made to the Statewide Education Fund; ten grader blades were purchased at a cost of \$1,650 under Vehicle/Equip Repair & Maintenance; and, the town office needs a new air conditioner which will cost between \$279-\$379 with funds available in the budget to cover the purchase. Ms. Matthews asked about the tracking and accounting for the Records Fund income and expenses.

ii) **Independent Audit Update** – Mr. Johnson reported the auditors have been on-site twice, and they are due back next week. They have made good progress with a draft of the 2019 audit expected by month’s end. Mr. Johnson found the auditors easy to work with and all is going well.

iii) **Waive Late Filed Homestead Declaration Penalty** – Mr. Johnson explained the Select Board must decide annually whether or not to waive the late filing penalty fee for those residents who file their Homestead Declaration form late. Mr. Chase made a motion to waive the penalty fee for late Homestead Declaration filers, seconded by Mr. Turco, unanimously approved.

iv) **Delinquent Tax Report/Tax Sales** – Mr. Johnson reported that only four-and-an-half accounts were outstanding: only one is possibly going to tax sale; one is making partial payments; and one may need some extra work by the tax attorney. All the big outstanding accounts were paid last month.

c. **Listers Update – David Johnson** reported that annual grievances were held May 21st and 22nd. There were six property owners who grieved: after review of the property value with two property owners, the owners were okay; one grievance was denied; and the Listers lowered the value on the other three properties. No appeals have been filed. The Grand List grew by 1% this past year.

d. **Mount Holly Planning Commission Update – Jon McCann** reported the Planning Commission has two subdivisions in process. The Commission has also revised the application forms so as to gather more of the needed information and to improve the process.

e. **Mount Holly Conservation Commission Update – Phil Crane** reported on the need for a tree warden to continue with the Shade Tree Preservation Plan. After consultation with others, he has submitted his Letter of Interest for the position. If appointed, the Conservation Commission can continue to move forward with the shade tree preservation plan program. An immediate concern to the town, as far as trees are concerned, is the imminent arrival of the Emerald Ash Borer; an ash tree inventory needs to be completed. The Commission is also focused on Star Lake and what can be done to preserve it. Looking to the immediate future, the Health Officer will test the lake every other week for E.coli and the like in an effort to be sure any summer swimmers will be safe. Commission members continue to work on updating the town's natural resources inventory, and they are awaiting the final report on the town-wide survey from Castleton University. Commission member Jim Corven continues to recruit residents for the iNaturalist biodiversity project, a project which is proving to be of great interest to many.

f. **Traffic Safety Concerns Study Committee Report – Dennis Devereux** read the Report of the Traffic Safety Committee (see attached). Mr. Turco thanked Mr. Devereux and the committee for their time and efforts in putting the report and suggestions together. Amy Turco asked about the flashing lights and blinding, bright light on Old Turnpike Road. Mr. Turco said they would have to determine if the light was in the town right-of-way, and if it is, a request will be made for its removal. Annette Lynch asked if the suggestions by the committee were supported by data and/or accident reports. Mr. Devereux replied they were only the committee's observations in the hopes of starting the conversation. Bob Herbst stated that signage was okay but enforcement was also needed by perhaps hiring either the sheriff or the VT State Police to occasionally patrol and enforce the speed limit. Discussion ensued. The Select Board decided to hold a Special Meeting devoted to this topic on Tuesday, June 29th at 6:30 pm.

g. **Rutland Regional Planning Commission Update – Jon McCann** reported that Devon Neary gave a presentation on all the transportation-related initiatives at the Rutland Region Transportation Council. He also noted that the RRPC staff is busy answering questions about the coming ARPA funding.

h. **Rutland Region Transportation Council Update – Clinton Woolley** was not able to attend the RRTC meeting due to personal issues going on, so there was no update.

i. **Rutland County Solid Waste District Update – Clinton Woolley** was not able to attend the RCSWD meeting due to personal issues going on, so there was no update.

6. Ongoing & Old Business

a. **Mount Holly School Hiking & Biking Trail** – see above.

b. **Junk Ordinance Enforcement** – All three Select Board members had looked at the properties currently in violation of the ordinance and found that all the property owners had taken steps to clean up the accumulating junk, debris, trash, and/or junk cars. Mr. Turco noted that others in town are now aware of the ordinance, and he stressed the importance of keeping yards clean for a healthy environment for the home and for the aesthetics of the town. Discussion ensued about follow-up letters: one will thank an owner for the complete clean-up of his property; the other letters will encourage the owners to keep working on property clean-up with a re-evaluation of each property by the Select Board at the July 13th meeting.

c. **Select Board Admin. Assistant Position** – Ms. Matthews stated she had spoken with another temp agency, but they do not have offices or candidates in the area. She also noted that two individuals had expressed interest in the position. The ad for the position will continue to run.

d. **ARPA Funds** – Ms. Matthews explained that there was not much new information. She said she had received an email from Rutland Regional Planning Commission just before the meeting about the county funding, which was originally to also go to the municipalities in VT as there are no county governments per se. The US Treasury decided that Vermont does have units of county government in judicial and law enforcement, so where the county funding ends up is still in flux. The first-half of the municipal funds, however, will be available sometime this month. Ms. Matthews noted the steps that could be taken now in preparation for

drawing down that funding, including the need to name an authorized representative and a contact person. Ms. Matthews made a motion for Mark Turco to serve as the Town of Mount Holly's authorized representative, seconded by Mr. Chase, unanimously approved. Mr. Turco made a motion to name Jennifer Matthews as the contact person, seconded by Mr. Chase, unanimously approved. A Special Meeting will be held in July to discuss possible projects.

e. **Other – Tree Warden Letter of Interest** – Phil Crane submitted a Letter of Interest for appointment as Tree Warden. Ms. Matthews thanked him for being willing to take on the position and its responsibilities, and she made a motion to appoint Phil Crane Mount Holly's Tree Warden, seconded by Mr. Turco, unanimously approved. Mr. Turco thanked and congratulated Mr. Crane on his appointment.

7. New Business

a. Appointments

i) **FY'22 Road Foreman** – Mr. Turco made a motion to appoint Clinton Woolley FY'22 Road Foreman, seconded by Ms. Matthews, unanimously approved.

ii) **FY'22 Rutland Regional Planning Commission Representative & Alternate** – Ms. Matthews made a motion to appoint Jon McCann our FY'22 RRPC Representative, seconded by Mr. Chase, unanimously approved. The Alternate position remains open and will be advertised.

iii) **FY'22 Rutland Region Transportation Council Representative & Alternate** – Mr. Turco made a motion to appoint Clinton Woolley our FY'22 RRTC Representative, seconded by Ms. Matthews, unanimously approved. Ms. Matthews made a motion to appoint Jeff Chase our FY'22 RRTC Alternate, seconded by Mr. Turco, unanimously approved.

b. **COVID-19 Restrictions** – Ms. Matthews noted the Governor had said earlier in the day that Vermont was just 3,139 vaccines shy of 80% of Vermonters being vaccinated. At that point, all COVID-19 restrictions will be lifted and the Executive Order will be rescinded. Currently, municipal boards are to operate under Universal Guidance, of which there are five major tenets: the main one being the need to wear a mask, keep six-feet of distance and avoid crowded places if you are unvaccinated. The Select Board decided to lift the COVID-19 restrictions at the town office and the transfer station, except for those who are unvaccinated; they will need to continue to wear a mask and practice social distancing.

c. **Future Select Board Meetings** – If the Governor lifts all restrictions, the Select Board will meet in the town office in July with the Zoom component continuing to be available.

d. **Other – Star Lake Yoga Classes** - The Select Board agreed to the request to hold a yoga class once a week at Star Lake once a Certificate of Insurance is received from the individual leading the class.

8. **Citizen Comments** – Paul Barton would like to donate American flags with mounting brackets for every classroom at the Mount Holly School, so the students know that we are all one country, one nation, one people caring for each other. Mr. Barton is making the donation in memory of an Air Force Master Sergeant who spent her life serving the flag. Mr. Turco will check with the School Board on the donation. He also thanked Mr. Barton for his donation of the flags at the town office.

9. Announcements/Other Business –

a. **Reminder: Town Office Closed for Independence Day Holiday, Monday, July 5th**

b. **Other** – Ms. Matthews encouraged residents to enjoy all the summertime activities taking place in town with the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions. Ms. Matthews also expressed her appreciation to Mary Nortunen and Kevin Stillwell for their time and efforts in keeping the Swap Shed neat and tidy and full of only treasures – no junk!

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** – Mr. Turco made the motion to enter Executive Session at 8:15 pm, seconded by Ms. Matthews, unanimously approved. Mr. Turco made a motion to exit Executive Session at 8:50 pm, seconded by Ms. Matthews, unanimously approved. No actions taken.

12. **Adjourn** – Mr. Turco adjourned the meeting at 8:50 pm.

Respectfully Submitted: Jennifer Matthews

Approved: _____ 7.13.2021 _____