

# Mount Holly Select Board Meeting

## August 10, 2021

### Minutes

In-Person with Zoom Meeting: 898 6126 5487

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

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

**Members of the Public:** Paul Barton, Caitlin Boyle, Zena Gates, Kevin Hollebeek, Judy Hyjek, Devon Neary (Rutland Regional Planning Commission), Christine Pratt, Donna Seward, Grover Taylor Jr., Amy Turco

1. **Call to Order** by Mark Turco at 6:31 pm.

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

3. **Changes and/or additions to the agenda** – Jennifer Matthews asked about the bids to replace the town office water heater. Mr. Turco stated more bids would be submitted, so the item will be added to the September meeting agenda. David Johnson asked to add a contract with Cartographic Associates, Inc. for tax map maintenance. As it is a contract for \$2,500 which the Select Board had not seen previously, Ms. Matthews asked that the item be added to the September agenda in order to give Select Board members time to review the contract. It was agreed to do so with Mr. Johnson providing a brief overview of the contract following the Highways & Transfer Station Report.

4. **Approval of July 13<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: the mowing is done; the winter sand is almost all in; the excavator will be here on Monday; following a transfer station inspection, the few issues found are being corrected; and Casella is now picking up the food scraps. He also noted that 475 lbs. of non-covered electronic waste and 3056 lbs. of covered electronic waste had been picked up.

ii) **FY'22 Retreatment Plan – Jeff Chase** noted that the Town did not receive a grant for paving this year, and with limited budget funds available (only enough to pave about four-tenths of a mile), it was best to wait until next season to do any paving.

iii) **RFP for Summit Road Culvert Design – Jeff Chase** stated he has drafted a RFP based on what other towns have done with box culverts; he will run it by VTrans' Brian Sanderson. With the 90/10 grant funding for the project, he thought it best to outsource the engineering rather than go right to the contractor. With more information to come, the item will be discussed further at the September meeting.

**ADDITION: Tax Map Maintenance Contract Overview – David Johnson** reported that Cartographic Associates, Inc. would every year prepare a new set of tax maps and data books reflecting all the changes which had been made in the Grand List. The \$2,500 contract cost is not included in the budget but could come from the Records Fund. Mr. Johnson said the Listers met with CAI and found they knew their stuff.

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

i) **Monthly Income & Expense Report** – Mr. Johnson reported: tax bills were mailed on July 28<sup>th</sup> with a discount date of September 2<sup>nd</sup>; \$8,295 has been received from the State for the Municipal Property Tax Adjustment, down significantly from last year's amount of \$14,000; only one property remains delinquent on payment of past years' property taxes; the first quarterly payment of \$30,200 from the State for State Aid to Roads has been received; another quarterly payment of \$3,342 has been received from the State for Special State Aid for Roads, part of the one-time appropriation for this fiscal year from the transportation fund; the Highway Group Health Insurance payment of \$9,383 is for premiums for two months; the Winter Road Materials expense of \$12,142 is for winter sand purchased to date.

ii) **Independent Audit Update** – Mr. Johnson reported the auditors expect to submit a draft of the 2019 audit soon.

Stephen Michel asked if the auditors would also be auditing the Mount Holly Volunteer Fire Department. He thought they should as the fire department budget is about 8% of the town budget, some of the fire department assets are included in the town's fixed assets, and the Town votes for and holds funds for fire department equipment. Ms. Matthews noted that the auditors had determined that the fire department was not a component unit of the Town, but a separate entity and therefore not to be part of the Town audit. Mr. Michel stated he disagreed with the auditors. Discussion ensued. Mr. Johnson stated he had specifically asked this question of the auditors and they stated that fire and rescue are not component units of the Town. He also said that the previous auditor included fire and rescue in the Notes, not in the financial statements. Mr. Turco noted that the audit RFP was for Town finances only. Ms. Matthews pointed out that as a non-profit, the fire department could seek its own audit.

**c. Mount Holly Planning Commission Update – Jon McCann** reported: the Planning Commission welcomed new Commissioner, Andy Schulz; they held their first in-person and hybrid meeting last month; they have a site visit and a subdivision hearing coming up.

**d. Mount Holly Conservation Commission Update – Phil Leonard** reported on the Commission's on-going activities: developing a case study to update the natural resources inventory, and utilizing iNaturalist for information on local plant and animal species; formulating a plan on how to restore Star Lake and participating in recent clean-up efforts; working on the shade tree preservation plan with five volunteers (more are welcome) helping out and establishing a good relationship with their counterparts in Shrewsbury.

## **6. Ongoing & Old Business**

**a. Traffic Safety Plan Update – Mr. Chase** reported he had made a map which shows the location on town roads of the various signs the Select Board agreed to put up; the signs are now on order. Mr. Chase also met with Devon Neary from the Rutland Regional Planning Commission (RRPC) to discuss an ordinance and traffic studies. Mr. Neary introduced himself as the RRPC's transportation planner. He noted he was working on a similar project in Shrewsbury, a town which is also experiencing lots of speeders on rural roads. Mr. Neary stated that to change a speed limit without a traffic study is not enforceable, the traffic study is data driven, and a blanket speed limit on all roads is not allowed. The RRPC uses a counter on the specified roads for about week. The data collected is utilized for any speed limit changes in conjunction with information on land use, road geometry, school zones and the like. He recommended developing a priority list of roads to be studied. Given current commitments, he said it would probably be late September or October before the RRPC could conduct the traffic studies. Mr. Turco asked about cost. As a RRPC member town, Mr. Neary replied there is no cost. Mr. Neary also recommended setting up a road advisory committee comprised of the road foreman, Select Board and Planning Commission members to meet every month or so to look at and address traffic safety issues. In response to a question from Annette Lynch, Mr. Neary replied that the data collected includes the number, class (axles & weight), and speed of vehicles, and the time of day. In response to a question from Mr. Michel, Mr. Neary stated that radar speed signs are available to towns from the Vermont State Police and the Sherriff. The signs are loaned to the town for anywhere from a week to a month and they are most effective if moved around. The signs can also be purchased for about \$5,000 with a grant possible to cover half the cost. In response to a question from Paul Barton, Mr. Neary stated that any markings on town roadways must comply with federal MUTC standards and towns are limited by those standards in what they can do. In response to a question from Dennis Devereux regarding VT Route 103 at the flashing light, Mr. Chase responded that would be a good topic for a road advisory committee. Discussion ensued. The Select Board agreed to do traffic studies based on a prioritized list of roads with the studies to be done in late September/early October by the RRPC. The priority roads are Belmont, Healdville, Tarbellville, Maple Hill, Old Turnpike, Shunpike and Hortonville. Gates Road is also possible.

Mr. Chase also reported on his meeting with the property owner along Old Turnpike Road regarding complaints about the lights the owner had installed there. They discussed the property owner's concerns about speeding cars and safe crossing of the road by his employees. Mr. Turco expressed his concern about the lights being in the town right-of-way and liability issues. Discussion ensued about types of lights, placement, various solutions, and use of the GMP pole. Ms. Matthews pointed out that the property owner was working on moving the lights out of the right-of-way and asked if a Local Traffic Only sign could be put up to dissuade some from using Old Turnpike Road as a shortcut. Mr. Chase will look into this and he will reach out to the property owner again to discuss possible solutions.

**b. Junk Ordinance Enforcement – Ticket to be Issued?** After some initial clean-up was done, Ms. Matthews reported that the Select Board still had concerns about one property on VT Route 103; a letter was mailed to the property owner's son last month. As of this morning, she noted more vehicles had been removed and more clean-up had occurred on the property. Grover Taylor Jr explained that his father was an elderly man, who considered the vehicles to be gold. It was a challenging situation. Still, 14 vehicles and 50 tires had been removed. Another half-dozen vehicles could be sold if his father could find the keys. Select Board members thanked Mr. Grover for his efforts. Ms. Matthews asked that the property and the remaining vehicles, which Mr. Taylor says are registered and insured, be kept as neat, clean and orderly as possible. The Select Board agreed to give Mr. Taylor additional time to continue the property clean-up. Discussion ensued about the other properties in need of junk clean-up with a decision to mail follow-up letters to two property owners giving them until September 14<sup>th</sup> to do additional clean-up of accumulating debris and junk, or a ticket with fine will be issued.

**c. Town Garage Well/School Water System Letter of Reliance** – Ms. Matthews recapped the Select Board's decision to allow the Mount Holly School to access the town garage well in order to supply the School with water. She noted the Memorandum of Agreement and the Addendum both drawn up to protect the Town from any costs and liabilities associated with the design, construction, operation, permits, etc. associated with the water system. The State is now insisting that the Town as well as the School District sign all permits. Ms. Matthews reported that our attorney drew up a Letter of Reliance stating that the Town is reliant on Otter Creek Engineering's expertise in order to attest to the certifications on the permits, and any liabilities incurred by the Town signing the permits will be borne by Otter Creek Engineering and the School District. Once the School District and Otter Creek Engineering sign the letter, we will sign it. Mr. Turco stated these steps were all taken so there would be no cost to taxpayers.

**d. Other** – Ms. Matthews reported that the federal government has now reached the conclusion that Vermont does not have county governments, so the ARPA funds earmarked for county governments here will now be distributed to the municipalities. These funds will be in addition to the ARPA municipal funds; \$65,000, the first half of the municipal funds, has now been received. Mr. Turco noted we now need to decide how to utilize the funds.

## 7. New Business

**a. Cider Days Road Closure – Kevin Hollebeek**, from the Mount Holly Community Association, requested that Maple Hill Road be closed for Cider Days, October 9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup>, from 9 am to 5 pm on Saturday and from 11 am to 5 pm on Sunday. This is the same as in past years. Mr. Turco said it was good to see community events happening again, and he made a motion to close the road as requested, seconded by Ms. Matthews, unanimously approved. Mr. Woolley asked that they put a notice out on the Newsflash and in the *Chit Chat* to notify community members of the road closure.

**b. Fuel Bids** – In order to save taxpayers money, Mr. Turco would like to reach out to at least three fuel companies for bids on fuel. Discussion ensued on which fuels and which companies. Mr. Chase will draw up a RFP for home heating fuel and on-road diesel. Fire and Rescue will be offered the option to purchase heating oil through this bid process. Companies mentioned to receive the RFP are Marcell, Champlain Oil, Cota & Cota, Gecha, Keyser and Irving. Bids will be opened at the September meeting.

**c. Conservation Commission – Four Terms Expire September 2021** – Ms. Matthews noted that the Select Board created the five-member Conservation Commission last August. The Select Board then received nine Letters of Interest from residents and decided to appoint five to multi-year terms and four to one-year only terms. The Select Board agreed to reassess those four seats at the one-year mark. Currently, Ms. Matthews reported one of those seats is empty and one is held in name only; the other two Commissioners would like to be reappointed. Mr. Turco stated he had heard from the Commission, and they are very active and need volunteers; he did not want to disrupt their momentum. The Select Board agreed to extend those four seats for another one-year term. Mr. Turco said to put a notice out for interested townfolk to submit letters of interest for those seats, which will be filled at the September meeting.

**d. Other** – There was no Other New Business.

**8. Citizen Comments** – Caitlin Boyle spoke of the drug activity occurring on Gates Road where she resides with her children. She has spoken with the VT State Police, who are monitoring the activity there. Ms. Boyle is also concerned about the neighboring property where there is lots of nighttime activity and lots of needles around. Christine Pratt spoke of her concerns about the person from that area who wanders into other people's houses. Mr. Turco recommended calling the VT State Police immediately. He also suggested Ms. Boyle contact

the Town Constable about the neighbor's property and the activity occurring there. He will reach out to the property owner.

9. **Announcements/Other Business** –

a. **Reminder: Town Office Closed for Bennington Battle Day, Monday, August 16th**

b. **COVID-19 Memorial Service @ VT Statehouse, Sunday, September 19<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 pm**

c. **Other** – Mr. Turco encouraged all unvaccinated folks to wear a mask given the new Delta variant.

Mr. Barton also encouraged mask wearing so as to protect others. Mr. Michel said there is a 9/11 Memorial in Ludlow on September 11<sup>th</sup>.

10. **Review & Sign Orders** – Signed by Select Board members.

11. **Executive Session: Title 1 V.S.A. S 313(a)(3) – personnel** – Ms. Matthews made the motion to enter Executive Session at 8:23 pm, seconded by Mr. Turco, unanimously approved. Mr. Turco made a motion to exit Executive Session at 8:53 pm, seconded by Mr. Chase, unanimously approved. No actions taken.

12. **Adjourn** – Mr. Turco adjourned the meeting at 8:53 pm.

Respectfully Submitted: Jennifer Matthews

Approved: 9.14.2021