

# Mount Holly Select Board Meeting

## October 12, 2021

### Minutes

In-Person with Zoom Meeting: 898 6126 5487

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

**Town Officials:** Jim Corvin, Dennis Devereux, Carol Garrow-Woolley, Russ Garrow, David Johnson, Annette Lynch, Jon McCann, Stephen Michel, Christine Pratt, Renee Sarmiento, James Seward, Clinton Woolley

**Members of the Public:** Zena Gates, Judy Hyjek, Donna Seward

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** – Jeff Chase spoke of the need to appoint two individuals to the newly-formed Regional Emergency Management Committee, mandated by a law enacted by the Vermont Legislature. One individual should be the local Emergency Management Director or designee; the other, a representative from local emergency services (fire, EMS, public works). Mr. Chase will reach out to members of the latter. These two appointments will be made at the November Select Board meeting.

4. **Approval of September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021 Meeting Minutes & September 23<sup>rd</sup> Special Select Board Meeting Minutes** – Mr. Chase made a motion to approve both sets of minutes with the following corrections to the September 14<sup>th</sup> minutes: on page one, “ended up with 3510 tons”; on page three, “advance payment to LMHUUSD.” The motion was seconded by Mr. Turco, unanimously approved.

#### 5. **Reports**

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

i) **Monthly Update - Clinton Woolley** reported: he gave Mr. Turco the Grants-in-Aid FY’21 reimbursement form to sign which asks for the maximum amount of \$20,340 with a Town match of 8%; he doesn’t have enough time to submit a Better Back Roads grant this year. From the Rutland Region Transportation Advisory Committee: the road foreman meetings are starting again and they would like to hold one in Mount Holly this winter. From the Rutland County Solid Waste District: they have a new website; we need to look at our prices as the Household Hazardous Waste prices are going up. He said we need to charge to take florescent light bulbs as there’s an abundance coming in. Jennifer Matthews asked from where, and should we require stickers to dispose of the light bulbs? Mr. Woolley will ask the transfer station attendants to watch for who is disposing of the light bulbs. Mr. Turco said we will have to address pricing changes.

ii) **Yale Road Clarification** – Town Clerk Carol Garrow-Woolley spoke with both the State and the USPS about the need to designate Yale Road as Yale Road South and Yale Road North. Discussion ensued about stolen signs and the material necessary for the signage. Mr. Woolley will reach out to the State to ask about other materials and their willingness to cover the cost of the sign on VT Route 155. Mr. Chase made a motion to remark Yale Road as Yale Road North and Yale Road South, seconded by Ms. Matthews, unanimously approved.

iii) **RFP for Summit Road Box Culvert Design – Open Bids** – Mr. Chase stated the Town received three bids: from Marble Valley Engineering, a base proposal of \$20,720; from Otter Creek Engineering, \$13,500; and, from Bannon Engineering, \$16,800. Select Board members reviewed the bids and the accompanying bid information. Discussion ensued. Mr. Chase stated he was comfortable with Otter Creek Engineering as they do a lot of this work and they do Shrewsbury’s engineering. Ms. Matthews noted that Otter Creek was substantially less than the other two. Mr. Chase made a motion to accept Otter Creek Engineering’s bid for the Summit Road Bridge 49 Box Culvert engineering, seconded by Mr. Turco, unanimously approved. Mr. Chase will put together a bid summary sheet and he will reach out to Otter Creek to get the ball rolling so as to have the box culvert built next year.

iv) **Road Commissioner Position?** – Ms. Matthews noted we briefly touched upon this subject last month. Mr. Turco stated that Shrewsbury has a Road Commissioner and no Road Foreman, and that Ludlow has a Road Foreman. As far as he could tell, it was hit or miss, and that towns have one or the

other. He said the decision would be one or the other, but he thought a Road Commissioner would be costly to the town. Ms. Matthews said she considered the Road Commissioner as a partner who would work hand-in-hand with Mr. Woolley and take some of the paperwork off his plate, especially regarding capital planning, writing grants and RFPs, and addressing issues as they arise. Mr. Turco said some of that work had been handled by the admin person in the past. Ms. Matthews replied that she works 20-40 hours a week as is on just Select Board work. She also noted the amount of work Mr. Chase does for the Road Foreman, and she did not think it right to continue to ask Select Board members to do even more additional work. She also stated the Road Commissioner could be an appointed position with a stipend, not a salaried position. Ms. Matthews noted the flooding that occurred just south of us due to the heavy rainstorms those towns experienced; that weather could hit us next time. A Road Commissioner could help with FEMA grants. She also noted the millions of dollars coming into the State from the federal infrastructure bill, some of which will be available as grants. She asked who would write those grants and submit the reimbursement requests. Mr. Woolley just stated he did not have time to submit a Better Back Roads grant. Grant funds will be available for road and bridge repairs and mitigation measures to avoid flooding in the future. She stated the cost of a small stipend to bring in grant funding would save tax payers money in the long run by not having to raise taxes to fund the work. Discussion ensued. Mr. Woolley said the grants were out there, but the town did not have the equipment to do the work. Mr. Chase said other towns contracted out the MRPG work, which Mount Holly also could do but would need someone to make those arrangements. Mr. Turco said his only concern was any extra cost to the town even reaching out for grants, as he did not want to burden taxpayers. Ms. Matthews reiterated there is so much money coming into the State for road and bridge repair and mitigation measures, money available as grants so as to prevent a cost to taxpayers. She asked who was going to reach out to bring that money, our federal tax dollars, into our town. Mr. Chase noted the town's hazard mitigation plan, which has identified items which need to be corrected, preferably with grant funding. Jon McCann spoke to the need for someone to look out for the various grant opportunities, not just for roads. He stated that the Regional Planning Commission is awash in funds and towns just need to submit proposals for funding. He stated it would be a shame to miss out on the wave of cash currently available. Ms. Matthews suggested we might want to look at a town administrator position to stay on top of grants and grant opportunities. Mr. Chase noted that admin costs for grant administration can be recouped through the grants. Discussion ensued about possible grant writers, an additional road crew member, grants and grant searches. Mr. Turco said we should concentrate on hiring an admin to stay on top of all this, and as Ms. Matthews said, that's for 30 hours a week.

**b. Treasurer – David Johnson**

i) **Monthly Income & Expense Report** – Mr. Johnson reported: the bank balances are the largest they will be this fiscal year as most of the property taxes have now been collected; Discount on Taxes is \$10,000 over budget which might come into play at year's end unless there are savings elsewhere; the second quarterly payment of \$30,200 from the State for State Aid to Roads was just received; another quarterly payment of \$3,342 from the State for Special State Aid for Roads may come shortly; the \$185, 932 is both the ARPA municipality and county funds received so far; the Solid Waste Labels Sold amount of \$8,576 is \$600 more than last year; Other Support Expenses (approved ballot item expenditures) of \$60,229 will be paid this month; included in the Vehicle Equipment Repair & Maintenance figure of \$4,918 is \$3,300 for tires; the Winter Road Material Hauling figure of \$13,560 includes the last bill for winter sand hauling. Ms. Matthews again asked if we were following our Purchasing Policy by not exceeding \$10,000 in payment to one contractor. Mr. Johnson said we might be close. Mr. Chase said next year we could put out a RFP for hauling of all materials and sign contracts with several vendors in order to stay within our Purchasing Policy guidelines. Ms. Garrow-Woolley said she thought we should support businesses in town with our tax dollars, and she wasn't saying that because her brother-in-law is a hauler in town. The Select Board agreed a RFP will be issued next year for hauling services.

ii) **Independent Audit Update** – Mr. Johnson reported the FY'19 audit is complete. The auditors are working on FY'20 with one more in-person visit possible next week. Mr. Johnson noted the one recommendation for internal controls from the FY'19 audit concerns is the need for two people to sign off on the bank reconciliations, and he and Diana Garrow, the assistant treasurer, are doing that. Ms. Matthews asked if the auditors were okay with the treasurer and assistant treasurer signing off on each other's work, questioning if that was a strong internal control. Mr. Turco requested that Mr. Johnson ask the auditors about this. The FY'20 audit should be complete the first half of November.

iii) **LMHUUSD Payment Schedule** – Mr. Johnson presented the Select Board with the Fiscal Year 2021/2022 payment schedule. The payment for FY'22 of \$2,927,985 is \$80,296 less than the previous

year in spite of a slight increase in enrollment. The payment schedule incorporates the district's need for cash in November and for tuition payments in March, and it serves as a tool in planning cash flow.

**c. Listers Update – David Johnson** reported that the Listers are doing their annual drive-arounds. So far, they have found two additions on houses for which a Building Construction Registration form was not filed. He said there have been lots of changes in ownership of properties in town but little change in the properties themselves. Mr. Johnson also noted Doug LeMire's invoice on the Select Board orders. Mr. Johnson explained that Mr. LeMire's former company has disbanded, but Mr. LeMire will still do appraisals. Mr. Johnson stated it is next to impossible to hire another appraiser, so we have to continue with Mr. LeMire. He said Mr. LeMire needs an advance payment of \$3,580 to cover the cost of his liability insurance, his appraisal program, his MLS membership, and the cost of materials. Ms. Matthews asked why we are covering an independent contractor's costs. She also asked if the \$3,580 was in addition to Mr. LeMire's annual appraisal billings of \$5-6,000. Mr. Johnson said, yes, the total cost would be \$10-11,000. In response to a question from Mr. Turco, the previous year's appraisal service expense was \$5,786. In response to a question from Mr. Chase, \$9,000 is in this year's budget for appraisal services. Mr. Johnson stated there is a shortage of appraisers in the State, so next year we will have to issue a RFP for a different service with a new program costing upwards of \$40,000. In response to a question from Ms. Matthews, Mr. Johnson replied yes it would have to be a CAMA program. Ms. Matthews asked if the Listers had reached out to Ludlow as they contract with New England Municipal Consultant Services to do appraisal and Grand List work. Mr. Turco noted that they might be able to estimate what future costs might be. In response to questions from Mr. Chase, Mr. Johnson said the appraisals done now would be for this coming tax bill and that Mr. LeMire appraises about 100 houses at a cost of about \$100 per property. Discussion ensued about sales prices and appraisals and the housing market. Mr. Chase stated we probably should start looking into services for next year. In response to a question from Mr. Turco, Mr. Johnson said we could not wait a month to reach out to other appraisers because if we did Mr. LeMire would no longer be an option. Mr. Chase made a motion to continue to use Mr. LeMire's services for 2022 and to make the requested \$3,580 advance payment, seconded by Mr. Turco. Mr. Turco and Mr. Chase voted aye; Ms. Matthews voted aye with great reservations.

**d. Mount Holly Planning Commission Update – Jon McCann** reported the Planning Commission: recently issued a subdivision decision; set a public hearing for another subdivision; discussed strategies for work on the town plan, deciding to work with smaller groups on specific parts of the plan, starting with infrastructure and emergency services. Mr. McCann also reported on the Planning Commission's unanimous decision to investigate wastewater systems for the village, noting that a lack of wastewater systems has blocked economic development in the village as well as affected the quality of Star Lake, the availability of housing, and business growth. The Planning Commission offers its assistance to the Select Board on decisions regarding use of the ARPA funds. Ms. Matthews thanked Mr. McCann and the members of the Planning Commission for all their hard work.

**e. Mount Holly Conservation Commission Update – Annette Lynch** introduced herself as the new Chair, as of one week ago, elected at the Conservation Commission's annual meeting; Phil Leonard is the clerk. Ms. Lynch asked to make the Conservation Commission's annual report on the activities of the past year and those for the coming year to the Select Board next month rather than now to give her some time in her new position. Mr. Turco said that would be fine. Ms. Lynch asked that the Select Board tend to one housekeeping measure as the State Statute states Conservation Commission members shall be appointed to four-year terms. Current members are in terms of one to four years. Going forward, as appointments come up, the Select Board will make the new terms for four years.

**f. Rutland Regional Planning Commission Update – Jon McCann** reported: RRPC welcomed Mount Holly's new Alternate, Ryan Harter; RRPC's budget is way up with opportunities for municipalities to avail themselves of staff and grants; and Eric Hall spoke on ARPA funds as a once in a lifetime investment in communities and to go slow in planning on how to use the funds.

**g. Rutland Region Transportation Advisory Committee Update – Clinton Woolley** – see agenda item #5.a.i. above.

**h. Rutland County Solid Waste District Update – Clinton Woolley** - see agenda item #5.a.i. above.

## 6. New Business

**a. Packer Cemetery – Dennis Devereux** reported the Packer Cemetery Association met last week and voted unanimously to turn the cemetery over to the town. Per Statute, the town must take over the

cemetery if abandoned or neglected. Mr. Devereux said they are working with the Secretary of State's office on how best to dissolve the Association and to turn the funds over to the town.

b. **Conservation Commission Appointment** – Ms. Matthews stated only one Letter of Interest was received, from Ryan Metcalfe. Discussion ensued about term length with a decision to continue as with previous new appointments for a one-year term. Ms. Matthews made a motion to appoint Ryan Metcalfe to a one-year term on the Conservation Commission, seconded by Mr. Chase, unanimously approved.

c. **Municipal Planning Grant – Resolution – Annette Lynch** spoke of talking with Ed Bove, the RRPC Director, about how to determine a town's best use of the ARPA funds. Using a Municipal Planning Grant to reach out to all in town and to gather ideas was discussed as a way to find out what residents think is important for the future of the town. If feasible, ARPA Funds along with other grant funds could then be used to make those ideas a reality. The Municipal Planning Grant is due November first. Working with RRPC and having worked on previous planning grants, Ms. Lynch said they could complete the grant on time. Discussion ensued about the allowable uses of ARPA funds, the \$2,000 match, who would do the work, and match options. Mr. McCann suggested that Ed Bove attend our ARPA meeting as he is the MPG expert. Mr. Turco was nervous about spending \$2,000 of town funds. Mr. McCann stated that spending \$2,000 in order to determine how to best spend \$3-400,000 seemed like a wise investment. He also suggested incorporating \$2,000 into every annual budget so as to have the option to reap thousands in grant funds for the town. Mr. Chase made a motion to accept the Municipal Planning Grant to help determine how to spend the ARPA funds and to sign the resolution, seconded by Ms. Matthews, unanimously approved. Mr. Chase thanked Ms. Lynch for her work on this project.

d. **VLCT/PACIF/VERB Annual Meetings Report** – Ms. Matthews reported on the annual VLCT meetings: VERB (unemployment insurance for municipalities) experienced a 309% increase in claims with 163 member claims filed in 2020 as opposed to 66 in 2019 resulting in the need to borrow money from PACIF; in contrast, COVID had minimal impact on PACIF (property & casualty insurance); VLCT reported only 20 positive COVID cases in municipalities, so closing the town office, requiring masks, implementing restrictions at the transfer station all helped keep our community safe; VLCT also noted that 44 of the 80 bills passed in the VT Legislature this past session impacted municipalities; and, the top issues facing towns are affordable and available housing, aging infrastructure, attracting and retaining staff, and IT security.

e. **VLCT PACIF Insurance Renewals & Cyber Insurance** – Ms. Matthews reported the insurance renewals were complete. Cyber insurance is growing more difficult to obtain. VLCT surveyed members about IT security. Of the 14 cyber security concerns raised, Mount Holly was found to have issues with six. Ms. Matthews has been working with Larry Gold on this, with a quote to address those issues just received. VLCT is also working on solutions for IT security with less cost to municipalities. More information to come.

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

## 7. Ongoing & Old Business

a. **Traffic Safety Plan Update** – Mr. Chase reported he had reached out to Devon Neary. Traffic counters should be deployed later this week with results in hand in the next few weeks.

b. **Junk Ordinance Enforcement** – Mr. Turco said he had received a phone call about a property with accumulating junk on VT Route 103. The Select Board will send a letter to the owner alerting them to the fact that they are in violation of the Town of Mount Holly's Junk Ordinance. Mr. Turco will talk with the Constable about ticketing the Blue Spruce House. Mr. Turco had spoken with the Health Officer, who said he never received any documentation from the State about health and safety violations at the Blue Spruce House. Mr. McCann stated that if issues with waste disposal were ongoing, the Health Officer could issue a cease and desist order. Mr. Turco will talk with the Health Officer.

c. **Retail Cannabis** – Ms. Matthews is awaiting additional information from VLCT, so we will revisit this issue next month.

d. **ARPA Funds Meeting – Set Date?** – RRPC's ARPA Specialist Eric Hall will join us on Tuesday, October 26<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm to discuss ideas and options for use of the ARPA funds.

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

8. **Citizen Comments** – Russ Garrow remarked that the roads are closing in with brush. He asked if there was a machine available to cut the brush back. Plymouth has one. Mr. Turco asked Mr. Woolley to look into the costs of purchasing a machine.

9. **Announcements/Other Business** –

a. **Reminder: Real Estate Property Taxes are Due Monday, November 1<sup>st</sup>**

b. **Planning Commission: Two 3-Yr. Terms End Nov. 2021 – Appts. to be Made @ Nov. 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting**

c. **Other** – There were none.

10. **Review & Sign Orders** – To be signed by Select Board members.

11. **Executive Session: Title 1 V.S.A. S 313(a)(3) – personnel** – Mr. Turco made the motion, citing Statute, to enter Executive Session at 8:25 pm, seconded by Ms. Matthews, unanimously approved. Mr. Turco made a motion to exit Executive Session at 9:00 pm, seconded by Mr. Chase, unanimously approved. No actions taken.

12. **Adjourn** – Mr. Turco adjourned the meeting at 9:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted: Jennifer Matthews

Approved: 11.9.2021\*

\*Approved with correction to Agenda item #5.b.i.: “Other Support Expenses (approved ballot item expenditures) of \$60,229” should be \$28,735.