

Mount Holly Select Board Meeting November 9, 2021 Minutes

In-Person with Zoom Meeting: 898 6126 5487

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

Town Officials: Phil Crane, Carol Garrow-Woolley, Diana Garrow, Russ Garrow, David Johnson, Annette Lynch, David Martin, Jon McCann, Stephen Michel, Christine Pratt, James Seward, Clinton Woolley

Members of the Public: Paul Barton, Inas & Maher Elmasri, Zena Gates, Jeb Porter, 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** – Jennifer Matthews asked to add an inquiry from David Martin about a roller for the gravel roads, and the need to purchase a microphone & speaker to accommodate virtual attendees at Planning Commission and other meetings in the town office. It was agreed to add both items: the roller inquiry with agenda item #5.a.i., and the speaker/microphone with agenda item #5.c.

4. **Approval of October 12th, 2021 Meeting Minutes & October 26th Special Select Board Meeting Minutes** – Jeff Chase made a motion to approve both sets of minutes with the following correction to the October 12th minutes, requested by Ms. Matthews: on page two under Treasurer, Monthly Income & Expense Report, “Other Support Expenses (approved ballot item expenditures) of \$60,229”, the correct figure should be \$28,735. The motion was seconded by Mr. Turco, unanimously approved.

5. Reports

a. Highways & Transfer Station Update –

i) **Monthly Update - Clinton Woolley** reported: the Healdville Road railroad crossing has now been repaved; an iPad is needed ASAP; lots of work needs to be done to bring 239 road segments up to standards by 2025 for the MRGP; town garage generator is down, awaiting Cota & Cota for the repair; and, all is well at transfer station.

Addition: Roller for Gravel Roads – David Martin commented that the gravel takes quite some time to pack down and for the roads to be smooth again after grading; with loose stones, it’s dangerous, while bike-riding in particular. Mr. Turco noted we had looked at a small roller to go on the back of the grader and it alone, without the arms, was quite expensive. Discussion ensued about roller options, their effectiveness, costs, possible grant-funding and timing. Mr. Turco stated we would look into it further.

b. Treasurer – David Johnson

i) **Monthly Income & Expense Report** – Mr. Johnson reported: the Property Taxes Receivable figure of \$307,837 is as of October 31st; on November first, another \$130,000 in taxes was paid, so there is about \$180-190,000 in delinquent taxes, which is more than last year but less than previous years; the second quarterly payment of \$30,200 from the State for State Aid to Roads and the quarterly payment of \$3,342 from the State for Special State Aid for Roads have both come in; the Solid Waste Labels Sold amount of \$11,960 is \$100 more than last year; Other Support Expenses (approved ballot item expenditures) of \$28,735 were paid this month; Solid Waste Hauling & Disposal Expense of \$14,089 does not include Casella’s not yet received October bill, but solid waste amounts are 22 tons less this year with C&D waste picked up only four times so far this year compared with six times last year; the Purchased Equipment amount of \$7,395 (for the mulcher, pressure washer, forks for the tractor loader) is over budget but will be covered in overall road expenses; no Road Retreatment expense to date, but if a large project is to be done in the Spring with additional amounts to come in next year’s budget, it’s possible to borrow from the Equipment Asset Fund until the start of the new fiscal year. Regarding the Audits, Mr. Johnson reported an additional site visit by the auditor is not necessary, and a draft of the FY’20 audit is forthcoming.

c. **Mount Holly Planning Commission Update** – **Jon McCann** reported the Planning Commission: held a subdivision hearing on October 20th and their decision on the subdivision is almost done; made some changes to the Building Construction Registration form with the Administrative Officer now to

review and approve the forms rather than the Planning Commission; have been in contact with the Mount Holly Volunteer Fire Department about the utilities and facilities part of the town plan with the dry fire hydrants in town now mapped; participated in the Crown Point Road walk led by Dennis Devereux, who will write up some information on the road for the town plan; and agreed to sign the Municipal Planning Grant resolution.

Addition: Microphone & Speaker for Virtual Meetings - Mr. McCann explained that the Planning Commission was in need of a microphone to accommodate those attending meetings virtually in order for all to be able to hear the proceedings. Discussion ensued about microphones, webcams and cameras, computers. On the recommendation of Patrick Cody from Okemo Valley TV of the Jabra Speak, Ms. Matthews made a motion to purchase the item for use at the Planning Commission and other meetings, seconded by Mr. Chase, unanimously approved.

d. Mount Holly Conservation Commission Update – Annette Lynch reported that the Municipal Planning Grant (MPG) has been submitted; a letter of support for the grant was received from the Okemo Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce; and only three towns in Rutland County have applied for the MPG giving Mount Holly a good chance of success in the grant award process. Ms. Lynch reported that much of the first year's work of the Conservation Commission has been previously reported on by the former Chair, Fra DeVine, which includes: from the survey, support overall for conservation in town; and, individual members stepping up and taking on projects like Star Lake issues, the Shade Tree Preservation Plan, the iNaturalist program, and an update of forest fragmentation in town. For the coming year, the Commission plans to focus on a number of areas. The first is to know the town's resources by completing and maintaining inventories of the town's natural resources and lands, especially those that have historic, educational, cultural, scientific, architectural or archeological values. The Commission will look at nine individual inventories, beginning with the historical inventory, over the next nine months, and members will work with the Planning Commission, Mount Holly Conservation Trust (MHCT), and residents to gather information. The second is to provide advisory environmental evaluations to the Planning Commission and others. The third is to work with the Planning Commission, Select Board, and other organizations on matters affecting the local environment or natural resources. The fourth is to enhance public understanding of the town's natural resources and conservation needs by using iNaturalist and advisory environmental evaluations. Both could serve as an aid to the Planning Commission and to individual landowners in looking at the land in town as a place where both humans and wildlife can live and thrive. The preservation and conservation of small parcels of land, like a wetland, could be purchased by the MHCT and/or the town and set aside as a public natural reserve. An environmental/ecological expert on a small retainer would assist with this work. Once the Commission has completed its work on the nine previously-mentioned inventories, they will report back to the Select Board on the priorities on which they plan to concentrate.

e. Rutland Regional Planning Commission (RRPC) Update – Jon McCann reported it was a short meeting this month. He reported to the RRPC members on Mount Holly's discussion on ARPA funds and the work on the town plan. In response to a question from Maher Elmasri, a brief discussion of wind power and wind projects ensued.

f. Rutland Region Transportation Advisory Committee Update – Clinton Woolley reported the meeting focused on the Better Back Roads grants, the process for the Grants-in-Aid program transfer to VTrans, and the repaving project on VT Route 22a. In response to a question from Mr. Turco, Mr. Woolley stated he did need an iPad, which can be purchased at a cost of \$350-400 for a refurbished one or about \$580 for a new one. Mr. Johnson stated that funds are available in the highway budget for the purchase. Mr. Chase made a motion to purchase an iPad for use in the Grants-in-Aid management, seconded by Mr. Turco, unanimously approved. In response to a question from Mr. Chase, Mr. Woolley stated the Better Back Roads grant applications are due December 12th; they could be used for bank stabilization. He will look into it, but the time to do so is short.

g. Rutland County Solid Waste District Update – Clinton Woolley reported they are working on the employee policy handbook and the annual budget.

6. New Business

a. Fowler Brook Road Request – Maher Elmasri stated he purchased a piece of property for its end of the road privacy. Fowler Brook Road melds into his private driveway with no markings indicating the end of the public right-of-way. He would like to install a gate and his mailbox at the spot where his driveway begins and the public road ends. There is some confusion as to where exactly that spot is. Discussion ensued

about the recorded plat, the length of the public right-of-way, current town plowing into the property, the construction of a turn-around, the costs to the town of plowing and maintaining the road, possible costs savings to the town, any road and mileage changes and those effects, possible solutions given the time of year. Mr. Turco and Mr. Woolley will meet with Mr. Elmasri at the property for a site visit and to discuss this further.

b. **Ash Tree Removal & Shade Tree Preservation Plans – Phil Crane** read from his Tree Warden Presentation pointing out the following: the need to plan for the arrival of the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB); the fact that 99% of ash trees infected by the EAB die within three-to-five years of infection; insecticide treatment is costly at \$20-40 per tree per treatment and must be repeated every two-to-three years; the best solution is to remove infected trees. Mr. Crane stated that the first step is to do an inventory of ash trees in the town right-of-way, prioritizing those along main roads and then moving on to lesser travelled roads. Mr. Turco stated the need to work with the road crew on the inventory. Discussion ensued on the cost of tree removal, the size of ash trees, notice to landowners. Once the inventory is complete, a plan will be developed to deal with the ash trees, prioritizing those trees at highest risk. Mr. Crane is looking for volunteers to help with the ash tree inventory.

c. **Town Office Early Closure on Wednesday before Thanksgiving – Carol Garrow-Woolley** announced the town office would close at noon on that Wednesday.

d. **Town Office Steps** – Mr. Turco noted that someone had taken a spill off the bottom step and that the lighting is poor there. Discussion ensued about different lighting options, timers, reflective tape or paint, solar lights. Mr. Turco stated he would take care of it.

e. **National Opioids Settlement** – Ms. Matthews stated a letter had been received about the settlement. The nationwide settlement has been reached with the three largest pharmaceutical distributors and one manufacturer of opioids. The State of Vermont has joined the settlement, and municipalities can as well as subdivisions. The more subdivisions that join, the larger the funding amount will be. Ms. Matthews noted that the Town of Weston, with less than half the population of Mount Holly, might receive over \$40,000, so Mount Holly could receive \$80-90,000. The town does not need to prove adverse effects. The settlement funds can be used for a variety of projects, including syringe disposal boxes and pick-up, EMS support, and possibly, additional sheriff coverage of the town. Discussion ensued. Ms. Matthews made a motion for the Town of Mount Holly to join the National Opioids Settlement, seconded by Mr. Chase, unanimously approved.

f. **Regional Emergency Management Committee Appointments** – Per RRPC, the committee is to coordinate and support regional all-hazards emergency planning and preparedness activities in order to improve each region's ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from all disasters. Discussion ensued on possible appointees with Mr. McCann volunteering to be the second representative. Ms. Matthews made a motion to appoint Jeff Chase and Jon McCann as the Town of Mount Holly's representatives to the Regional Emergency Management Committee, seconded by Mr. Turco, unanimously approved.

g. **Board of Adjustment** – tabled until the December meeting.

h. **Planning Commission Appointments – Two Terms to November 2024** – to be discussed in Executive Session.

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

7. Ongoing & Old Business

a. **Traffic Safety Plan Update** – Mr. Chase reported that it has taken three weeks to do the studies on the agreed-upon eight roads. We are now waiting for the data, which we should have in hand by the December meeting.

b. **Junk Ordinance Enforcement** – The citation to the Blue Spruce House is in the works. A 30-day warning letter will be sent to the property on VT Route 103 currently in violation of the ordinance. There has been no additional clean-up on the other property on VT Route 103. Ms. Matthews will reach out to them about their next steps in the clean-up.

c. **Retail Cannabis** – Ms. Matthews stated that the town must vote to allow retail cannabis in town; if the town does not vote, or if the town votes down an article, retail cannabis is not allowed. Discussion ensued about an informational meeting, speakers, the article and vote. It was decided to hold a discussion at the December meeting and to put an article on the Annual Town Meeting Warning and ballot.

d. **ARPA Funds Meeting – Next Steps** – Mr. Chase suggested we start with the technology needed for hybrid meetings. Patrick Cody will send us equipment proposals from three vendors for consideration at the December meeting.

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

8. **Citizen Comments** – Mr. Turco spoke with the school about the donation of flags from Paul Barton. Mr. Barton will need to contact the school superintendent about the donation. Mr. Barton remains concerned about damage to the gravestones in Tarbellville Cemetery. Mr. Turco will talk with Brian Sanderson at VTrans.

9. **Announcements/Other Business** –

a. **Reminder:** Town Office Closed on Veteran’s Day, Thursday, November 11th & on Thanksgiving, Thursday, November 25th

b. **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** – Ms. Matthews made the motion, citing Statute, to enter Executive Session at 8:13 pm, seconded by Mr. Turco, unanimously approved. Mr. Turco made a motion to exit Executive Session at 8:33 pm, seconded by Ms. Matthews, unanimously approved. No actions taken.

12. **Adjourn** – Meeting adjourned at 8:33 pm.

Respectfully Submitted: Jennifer Matthews

Approved: 12.14.2021