

Select Board Meeting

Town Office

November 12, 2024

****6:00 pm****

MINUTES

Attendance: Mark Turco (Chair), Jeff Chase, Diana Garrow, Caitlin Boyle, Liz Karle, Carol Garrow-Woolley, Clinton Woolley, Ken Saccardo, Chris Pratt, Donna Seward, James Seward, Zena Gates, Ron Unterman, Dennis Cointreau, Bob Knight, Dennis Devereux, David Johnson, John Lienhart, Daniel Hefman, James McGough, Faith Tempest (Zoom), Jon McCann (Zoom), Don Patch (Zoom), Barbara Hazelton (Zoom), Steve Hazelton (Zoom), Philippe Crane (Zoom).

1. **Call to Order** at 6:03 pm
2. **Pledge of Allegiance**
3. **Consideration of any changes and/or additions to the agenda.** Mark Turco added one item to Ongoing Business regarding beaver activity on Hortonville Road.
4. **Approval of October 8, 30 and Nov 8 minutes.** The Select Board Clerk noted that a mention of David Martin was corrected to David Venter in the October 8 minutes. Diana Garrow made a motion to approve the minutes as drafted/corrected; Jeff Chase seconded; unanimously approved.
5. **Reports**
 - a. **Highways & Transfer Station Report - Clinton Woolley.** Mr. Woolley recommended that the Town purchase a used all-angle plow from the Town of Shrewsbury for \$8,000; the new retail value is \$14,000, and the plow has barely been used. The Select Board consulted the Town Treasurer regarding the budget for equipment purchases. Diana Garrow made a motion to purchase the plow using \$4,500 from the asset equipment fund and the remainder from the budget; Jeff Chase seconded; unanimously approved. Transfer Station attendant Ken Saccardo shared updates: 1) The highway and transfer station employees have created a new traffic flow and drop-off configuration to improve flow. 2) There is a need for some additional signage regarding parking and metal disposal. 3) The attendants have completed some research on resident usage and will share with the Select Board.
 - i. **Ash Tree Hazard on Howland Farm Rd:** Mr. Woolley noted that a property owner had asked for the Town to remove a tree on Howland Farm Road, believing it to be in the Town's right of way. The ANR atlas map indicates that the tree is not in the right-of-way and is not the Town's responsibility to remove. The Clerk will inform the property owner.
 - ii. **Warming Shed Cleaning.** The Select Board discussed the need for a new warming shed for employees. Mark Turco and Clinton Woolley will price out new sheds.
 - iii. **Bottle/Can Collection.** Bottle collection will continue to be organized by Rainbow Riding Center; the PTSA will not take over this task as previously discussed.
 - b. **Treasurer's Report - Elizabeth Karle.** Ms. Karle noted that the Town has been receiving 75% federal cost share for projects from the July 2023 flood reimbursement, but going forward will receive an additional 15% from federal sources. Going forward the Town will only be responsible for 2.2% of projects' costs after the State of Vermont pays the ERAF portion (after completion of all projects). She added that the Town is in its strongest cash position of the year due to the bulk of owed property tax payments being collected. Interest income also took a big jump this month. Thus far this fiscal year, \$365,000 has been received in FEMA funds. In addition, the Town's first income from recycling metal was collected from Casella; the \$450 in income offset monthly fees.

- i. Final MHVRS Account Settlement.** Ms. Karle reported that the former Rescue Squad brought in a final settlement of \$15,459.94. This was a final closure of their accounts and they presented a balance sheet and final income statement. No further assets are expected.
- c. Fire Department Update - Bill Austin.** Tabled.
- d. Planning Commission Update:** Jeff Chase made a motion to appoint Andrew Seward and Jim Seward to additional three-year terms on the Planning Commission.

6. New Business

- a. Winter Road Salt Quotes.** The Select Board voted last month to purchase salt from Apalachee; that purchase has been completed. Additional quotes from Cargill and Eastern have been filed.
- b. FY23 Grants-In-Aid Reporting Deadline.** Clinton Woolley and Elizabeth Karle are collaborating to file the report for the funded work, completed in August.
- c. 2026 Better Roads Grant Program.** The Town will apply again this cycle for Perry Road bank stabilization and for repair of the water diversion hole in Belmont Village. Jeff Chase will prepare the grant prior to the December meeting.
- d. First Aid Kits for Highway Crew.** Mr. Woolley ordered four first aid kits for the Town trucks; he recommended more should be purchased for the grader, loader and excavator. Mr. Turco made a motion to purchase the additional kits for the other vehicles; Ms. Garrow seconded; unanimously approved.
- e. Dog License Fees.** Ms. Garrow-Woolley noted that the State is raising their fees for dog licenses from \$5 to \$7; she asked the Select Board to consider whether they wanted to raise the Town's fees in tandem. Current fees are \$11 for neutered/spayed by April 1; unneutered is \$15 by April 1. The Select Board deliberated and elected not to make a change.
- f. Renew FWS Permit.** Mr. Turco made a motion to renew the permit for geese depredation at Star Lake; Diana Garrow seconded; unanimously approved. Mr. Unterman noted that the program was at its most successful this year. The clerk will file the annual report and apply for a renewal.

7. Ongoing & Old Business

- a. Beaver Issues on 1668 Hortonville Road.** Mr. McGough of 1668 Hortonville Road noted that due to beaver activity, his shed and deck are compromised; the stream water level is rising and infringing on both buildings. Mr. Turco recommended Mr. McGough be in touch with the regional game warden regarding remediation.
- b. Re-sign NEMRC Contract.** The Board Chair re-signed the contract, which was misplaced after the last meeting.
- c. Revisit FY24 Municipal Planning Grant.** Jeff Chase noted he, Jon McCann, Elizabeth Karle and Faith Tempest had considered responses to the Town's RFP for a housing study to be funded by the FY24 Municipal Planning Grant. There were five responses; Mr. Chase noted that SEG offered the best proposal. SEG's bid is within the grant amount (\$33,333K - \$29,999K from State with a \$3,336K Town match). Mr. Chase made a motion to select SEG to conduct the study; Ms. Garrow seconded; unanimously approved.
- d. Conservation Commission Appointments.** Ms. Garrow made a motion to appoint Alexandra Yuster to the Conservation Commission; Mark Turco seconded; unanimously approved.
- e. Health Insurance Plan Selection.** Ms. Karle noted that Blue Cross Blue Shield VT rates are projected to rise between 13-15% next year, which would put the Town over budget for health insurance costs.. She has compared the Town's current BCBSVT Platinum plan to comparable MVP plans, to consider whether a change in provider could offer cost reductions to the Town

without significantly impacting coverage or out-of-pocket costs for employees. She shared research and scenarios with the Select Board to inform a decision, noting that MVP offers an integrated Health Reimbursement Account (HRA) that can be paired with an insurance plan to keep employees' out-of-pocket comparable to the current plan while saving the Town \$17,000 per year.. Jeff Chase made a motion for the Town to select the MVP VT Gold 3 QHDHP Plan as the health insurance plan offered to Town employees; Mark Turco seconded; unanimously approved. Mr. Turco also made a motion for the Town to adopt an HRA at the level of \$2,000 per individual/year and \$4,000 per family plan/year; Ms. Garrow seconded; unanimously approved.

- f. **Reppoint Rutland REMC Voting Members.** Mr. Turco made a motion to reappoint Jeff Chase as emergency management representative and Billy Austin as emergency services representative for the Rutland Regional Emergency Management Committee.
- g. **New Highway Employee.** The Select Board reviewed applications for the open position on the highway crew and interviewed the qualified candidate that had expressed interest in the position. Mr. Turco noted that the candidate had a Class A CDL, was formerly the Mount Holly School bus driver, and had done some part-time seasonal work for the Town in the past. Mr. Turco made a motion to hire Dennis Cointreau as the new highway employee; Mr. Chase seconded; unanimously approved.

8. **Citizen Comments.** None.

9. **Announcements**

- a. Town Office Closures: Thanksgiving: November 27th at noon - November 28th; Christmas: December 24th at noon- December 26th; New Year's Day

10. **Review & Sign Orders**

11. **Executive Session: Title 1 V.S.A. S 313(a)(3) – personnel.** Mr. Turco made a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss employee compensation and benefits matters; Jeff Chase seconded; unanimously approved. While in executive session, the Select Board held a 6-month personnel employment review for a Transfer Station Attendant, in which compensation was discussed and a pay raise previously voted on was shared with the employee. The Board also discussed and set pay rate and employment offer details for its new highway department hire. Finally, the Board discussed pay rate and benefits being offered to existing employees. After deliberation, Mr. Turco made a motion to shift the compensation and benefits package for Town employees such that employees will pay 10% of health insurance premium costs, and the Town 90%, effective January 1, 2025, and that current employees will receive a 10% raise in wages at that time, as well as an additional 5% raise in July 2025.

12. Adjourned at 8:28 pm