

Strafford Selectboard Meeting Agenda

June 24, 2020

Justin Morrill Education Center and via Zoom

Members present: Toni Pippy, Patrik Kelly, Rett Emerson, Mary Linehan, Brent Cadwell

Others present: Lisa Bragg, Jon McKinnon, Jennifer Brown, Jason Loomis, John Freitag, Aileen Lem, Cameron Speth, Bob Wilson, David Paginelli

Meeting called to order at 6:04 pm

Public Concerns

John Freitag noted the board received an email on mine update, requests that the report and most recent email from Brett Kay is posted on the website. Lisa has posted the report and will post the email on the Town website

Emergency Management COVID 19 update

Meetings are being maintained, no new updates, may be moved to every 3 weeks due to reduced need for discussion. Emergency Operations center will stay open till July 15 (state's state of emergency)

Town Highways and Equipment Update

Summer Projects list

- Jon McKinnon reported that ditching has been completed at Freeman, Kendall, and half-way through ditching on Alger Brook—one more week required to complete
- Ann Adams is concerned about water running down the intersection of Finn Road and Alger Brook that in spring can flood her barn. Jon noted that this problem has been going on for many years, is a complex situation and needs investigation to figure out what solutions may be feasible.
- Two bids for new Truck have been received: Clark's Truck Center - \$179,838 (total package); Freightliner - \$177,131 (total package). Jon will review the bids and return with his recommendation
- Excess road material from Kendall and Freeman roads was used on the side of Morrill Highway. Hydroseeding bill of \$600 will be coming.

Correspondence

- Email updates from the State Emergency Operations Center Situation Reports, re: **COVID 19**, Vermont Department of Health. We also received emails from The Office of the Governor, TRORC and VLTC
- Email from Tim Briglin, re: COVID-19 Municipal Lending Program. Based on eligibility, the program will cover interest incurred for short-term borrowings that were made for the purpose of managing the cash flow effects of statewide education property tax deferrals and delays as a direct result of COVID-19. Eligible "short-term borrowing costs" do not include principal payments, fees, or any interest on borrowings not directly attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic. Not yet clear what the Town's needs are.
- Email from Charles Denton, re: Dogs this AM. Discussion regarding possible responses. Janet Hardy will follow up with this particular complaint but has also resigned from the

position. May require some mediation between neighbors. Pat will contact Ed Eastman to follow up with clarifying the situation and possible response.

- Email from Brett Kay, Project Manager, Nobis, re: E-Mine – Update on Mine Road, Tyson Bridge, and Route 132 Work. Will be posted on Town website as requested
- Email from Bob Frenier to Toni, Mary, Rett and Pat, re: Shame on You. Acknowledged.
- Email from Allan Wylie to Toni Pippy re: Board of Selectmen action. Acknowledged.

Approve minutes. Motion passed to approve the June 10th regular meeting minutes

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) mitigation

David Paganelli presented: EAB is spreading in Vermont rapidly, and when it gets the Strafford it will kill all ash trees (98% death rate; 5-6 years to display disease, 5-6 years to cause widespread tree death). Commended the Selectboard decision to initiate culling trees near the roads. More expensive to cut the trees after infestation or death due to instability (loss of branches); best strategy is to cut before the trees are infested, and while demand for tree services are not in high demand and more costly. Bob Wilson, Tree Warden, clarified that if trees are healthy and landowners do not want them cut, it may be necessary to hold a hearing to clarify the issues. May need to seek written permission from landowners. Several large ash trees on Downer Forest Road have been tagged. Very expensive to remove the very large trees (requires crane rental). A number of smaller trees on Mine Road have also been tagged. Some trees will be cut by GMP, but only the ones near power lines. Recommended annual commitment of funds for 10-15 years to deal with this issue, to avoid having to deal with a huge number of trees that need to be removed, and potentially requiring \$150,000 in one year. Recommended using the \$5,000 on Mine Road to maximize use of the funds. Pat suggested finding trees that can be sold, to recoup some costs. Bob noted that most ash trees on the side of the road are useful for firewood but have hardware in them and are likely to be rejected by mills.

Motion passed to spend the currently budgeted \$5,000 to cut as many ash trees as possible on Mine Road, starting from Tyson Road and heading out of town.

Approve tent on Murray Field for One Planet Program

Jason Loomis noted that the location of proposed tent will not interfere with septic and is as far as possible from the playground and the soccer field. Rec board member will attend installation and coordinate with Kirsten for the set up. Motion approved for the One Planet Program tent to be placed on Murray Field for the period June 29-Aug 7.

Code of ethics next steps

Discussion re: what Selectboard needs to do to establish standards of behavior for Town officers and elected officials, as well as the need for such a code and how it would be enforced? Proposed that we start by reviewing behavior standards from the Town Personnel Policy, search for codes that may have been established by other municipalities, and work with the public to determine any actions that may need to be undertaken as a result of the Selectboard's June 10th statement. Also noted that the Selectboard's authority is limited and voting remains the most direct method for ensuring ethical conduct by Town officers. Community has an essential role in ensuring anti-racism, not solely the Selectboard's responsibility.

Reclassification of Route 132 from a Class 2 to a Class 1 state highway

Strafford is requested to consider joining Thetford, Sharon, and Norwich in pursuing the reclassification of Rte 132 from Class 2 to Class 1. Not clear that the rate increase (an estimated additional \$32,000 additional funds for 6.43 miles in Strafford) would be adequate to meet the higher construction and maintenance standards required of Class 1 roads. Likely those additional funds can only be used on Rte 132 and the State would not take on the maintenance. Not clear what the grant opportunities would be for Class 1 v. Class 2. Need to have more information to make an informed decision, specifically re: grants, and the possibility that State would take over maintenance.

Budget

Discussion re clarification of budget expenditures for first half of 2020, Selectboard will review in more detail and pose any additional clarification questions to Lisa.

Liaison updates

Discussed the need for permits to burn brush. Calvin Benjamin issues burn permits. Going out to fires is an expensive activity for the fire departments of multiple towns who respond to brush fires. Pat will contact Shawn Harlow to see what other fire structures may be used.

Discussion re: septic tank and odor issues at the Town Office.

Town Office closed July 2 for Fourth of July holiday. Lisa taking leave July 6-10, but Town Office will be open.

Toni Pippy will be taking personal leave from the Selectboard for a couple of weeks. Motion passed for Mary Linehan to serve as co-Chair.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:55 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Linehan
Recording Clerk