

Joint Sharon-Strafford Selectboard Meeting  
Morrill Education Center, Strafford, VT  
October 25, 2021

Members Participating: Toni Pippy, Pat Kelly, Kevin Gish, Mary Gavin, Joe Ronan, Rett Emerson, Mary Linehan

Other participants: Michael Sacca, Richard Ruben, Micki Colbeck, Tracy Zschau, VLT, Steve Willbanks, David Paganelli, Nicole Antal (Sharon recording secretary), Donna Foster VLT, JT Horn, Meagan Asbury, Warren Johnston, Gus Speth, Mark Black

1. Meeting called to order at 6:30 pm by Toni Pippy
2. Kevin Gish, Sharon Selectboard and Ashley Forest Committee member, presented the language voted on by the two towns during Town Meetings in 2021 as background for the meeting. In Strafford:

*Shall the voters direct the Strafford Selectboard to acquire from the Alliance for Vermont Communities approximately 106.7 acres of land (Strafford land parcel number 05.488), contingent upon the Selectboard's subsequent agreement:*

- *on the terms of a conservation easement for the property;*
- *on the terms of an agreement for the acquisition of the property; and*
- *on other terms relating to future management of the property with the*

*Town of Sharon (owner of an adjacent land parcel in Sharon), the Alliance for Vermont Communities, and the Vermont Land Trust and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board?*

3. Conservation Easement. JT Horn, Strafford Conservation Commission and Ashley Forest Committee member, presented the general terms of the CE. Discussion about the elements of the conservation easement and terms; the exclusive right of the VLT and VCHB to determine limitations on use and access; the amount of the grant from VCHB to AVC and the role of taxpayer funds in purchase of the property by AVC; role of selectboards in management plan and financial resource management; role of VLT and VCHB oversight and enforcement; balance of conservation versus recreation; towns' responsibilities for management of the land; options for terminating or exiting ownership by either towns; possible language that will provide greater flexibility for the towns. The following requests were made for changes to language and clauses of the CE:
  - Modifications to language regarding sole discretionary rights of VLT and VCHB to approve activities in the community (including use of land, structures, leases, transfer of property, etc.) to allow the towns more flexibility, options to dispose of the property and terminology that ensures reasonableness of VLT decisions.

- Addition of language to allow at least one building site to remain on each of the parcels, to allow towns to sell the parcels for residential ownership should they wish to do so in the future.
4. Interlocal Agreement. Pat Kelly, Strafford Selectboard and Ashley Forest Committee member presented an overview of intent and vision of the IA. Discussion re how Ashley Forest Board will work; how funds will be handled; clarification that the board will operate just as all boards and committees of the towns, serving at the pleasure of the selectboard, including replacement members; compliance with Open Meeting Law; clarification of role of selectboards for oversight of finances; how long the IA will be valid and how it can be amended. Additional clarifications and additions were requested for the following:
- annual budgets to be presented to the selectboards
  - quarterly financial reporting to both selectboards
  - expenditures beyond approved annual budget need approval by both selectboards
  - clarify how funds will be managed by treasurer in one town or the other
  - clarify insurance liability in the event of accident or lawsuit
  - specify an interval for review of the IA (ideally every 3-5 years), in addition to the option to review and modify as needed
  - specify the reservation of rights for each town: towns are not required to expend funds; each town can take whatever steps it needs to transfer the property within the terms of the CE
  - clarification of the VT law that governs termination of Interlocal Agreements
  - how the board will comply with towns' policies (purchasing, conflict of interest); details need to be worked out
5. Committee members were thanked by Selectboard members for their hard work developing the IA and management plan approach. An interim management plan must be drafted before closing on the properties. Committee will try to make changes to CE and IA and present to the selectboards for consideration at separate selectboard meetings. Joe Ronan will prepare proposed language for the CE to be included in the drafts.

Meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Linehan  
Recording Clerk