

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE STRAFFORD SELECTBOARD

March 25, 2015

Members of the public body present: Brent Cadwell, John Freitag, Brian Johnson, Steve Marx, Toni Pippy

Other active participants: Lisa Kendall, Town Clerk, Jon MacKinnon, Road Foreman, Courtney Hardy, Administrative Assistant, Jennifer Brown, Herald of Randolph Reporter, Chris Gex, Steve Gex, Dori Wolfe, Jane Prescott, Tori Lloyd, Calvin Benjamin

Meeting called to order in the Town Office at 6 p.m.

Adjustments were made to the agenda to include correspondence from Michael Caduto and to move up on agenda Wolfe Energy Project

1.) Citizen Concerns: Steven Gex expressed concerns over the amount of money spent in highway budget. He felt that roads were in good shape when he moved here fourteen years ago when there was a three man road crew and wondered about when and why there was a need for expansion to a larger crew and greater expense. Brent and John both mentioned the upgrades in roads and their care that have taken place over the years.

2.) Correspondence: John informed the Board of his follow-up with Marie Ricketts who in an email to the Board had suggested that the Board consider informal meetings with the public similar to the Town of Lyme. Her idea is not for formal Board meetings, but just a chance for the public to meet with Board members to express concerns and ask questions. John pointed out that at the Selectboard Institute he and Toni attended last Saturday it was recommended that all efforts should be made by Board members to make themselves available to listen to citizen concerns. John has talked with Al Wright, proprietor of Cafe 232 and he is amenable to having his side room be used on occasions for this type of informal get together. No more than two Board members could be present at a time and Board members could not speak on behalf of the whole Board. They could listen to concerns, express their own opinions, and clarify the process on how items before the Board are addressed. John will follow-up on setting up an informal meeting with the public at the Cafe in the future.

Chris Gex's correspondence to the Board regarding Solid Waste issues was discussed. In her letter Chris pointed out what she felt was a correction regarding Town payments to the Greater Upper Valley Solid Waste District. Brent shared a letter from Steve Willbanks, a former longtime Selectboard member and Representative to the Solid Waste District, regarding how things have been and are handled in Strafford. Complicating the issue are new provisions of Act 148 a solid waste law passed last year. Some discussion on then followed. John reminded people that this is an extremely complex issue with many moving parts and that there will be a Public Hearing on Solid Waste before the first provisions of the law go into effect on July 1. John said our State Representatives will be invited to that meeting as well as trash hauler Debbie Clark, the Recycling Committee and our Solid Wastes District Representatives. Brian suggested that we offer an invitation to Casella waste haulers as well and this will be done.

Bob Murray in an email expressed his concerns over poison ivy growing on the bank behind the Town House. Steve Marx will meet with Bob, and possibly a representative from the Conservation Commission once the snow is gone to look over the situation and come up with a plan for eradication.

There was correspondence from Corky Scott regarding a conversation he had with Calvin Benjamin about the problems of material from the recycling center blowing into Calvin's yard and the Varney Ball Field. Calvin attended the Board meeting with two large trash bags of material he had collected, expressed his frustration over what has been an ongoing situation for years. The Board and Dori Wolfe from the Recycling Committee agreed that addressing Calvin's concerns was a priority and changes must be made. John offered to come by the recycling center at closing time on Saturday's to help make sure that the tarps/coverings on the bins are secure. John has also arranged with Sharon Academy to send a volunteer crew to help with clean-up of the Varney Ball field and surrounding area on April 11. Calvin, the Recycling Committee and the Selectboard will continue to work on better long term solutions to the problem.

Morrill Homestead Education Director Michael Caduto wrote John requesting a letter of support to a grant that Michael is pursuing for children programing this summer. John asked the Board for permission to write a letter of support as Chair

on Town stationary and permission was granted.

2.) Minutes: Brent moved and Brian seconded to adopt the minutes of March 18. A correction was noted that Brian would be the one to contact Dick Josler, from the Cemetery Commission, regarding the bid process for the Evergreen Cemetery mowing. The minutes were then approved with this change.

3.) General

Wolfe Energy Solar Project : Dori Wolfe presented to the Board for its signature the Solar Credit Purchase Agreement to purchase power from a solar installation her company is installing on Rod and Cindy Maclay's land in South Strafford. The power will be at a discounted rate and should save about 10% or over \$400 on the town's energy bill. There is no risk to the Town. The School District which had their lawyers review and make changes to the contract have already signed the same contract for their power purchase. Brian expressed concerns over how the solar array will look. It was noted that the project did not go through the Town planning and zoning process as a recent State law has determined that the Public Service Board has the power to issue permits for solar projects based on their determination of public good. John noted that last year the Board had given a letter of support when Dori was seeking a grant for the project. Brent made a motion to sign the contract and Steve seconded. Steve, Brent, Toni and John voted yea, Brian voted nay and the motion passed.

Budget Adjustments: John passed out a list of possible adjustments to be voted on to meet the approved budget reduction of \$30,444. He noted that during investigations on items since Town Meeting it was discovered that the Board did not have the authority to adjust pay and salary line items in a budget approved at Town Meeting. John divided the areas that could be cut into four categories.

The first are adjustments made to the Town Highway Fund at the recommendation of Jon Mackinnon and Selectboard liaison to the Highway Dept. Brent Cadwell. These included reductions of \$2,000 in summer materials, \$2,500 in summer contracted services, \$5,000 in chloride, \$ 2,000 in winter salt, sand and gravel, \$1,000 in winter contracted services, and \$7,500 by not replacing the sand screen for a total of \$20,000. Steve made a motion to approve these cuts, Brian seconded and all approved.

The second area for savings was canceling the Vermont League of Cities and Towns Pay and Classification System and Compensation Plan Project. The amount in the budget was \$5,000. Steve made a motion to approve these cuts, Toni seconded and all approved.

The third are adjustments to the General Fund budget and included \$1,375 to eliminate the recording secretary for the Selectboard and reductions of \$300 for advertising, \$471 for printing the Town Report, \$500 for the Development Review Board (DRB) secretary, and \$450 by level funding all community service requests for a total of \$3,096. Steve made a motion to these approve cuts, Brian seconded and all approved.

The fourth category of budget reductions included \$640 from cleaning services for Town Garage mats, \$500 from supplies due to future bulk purchases, \$800 by reducing the cleaning schedule of the Town Office and the Town garage office area, \$300 from the town garage electric line item and \$250 from the miscellaneous expenses line item for a total of \$2,490. Toni made a motion to approve these cuts Steve seconded and all approved.

In total cuts of \$30,586 were approved which meets the expectations given by the voters at Town Meeting.

The Board then discussed how to proceed with the Pay and Classification System and Compensation Plan Project now that it would not be done by the Vermont League of Cities and Towns. It was decided to set up a volunteer committee to proceed with the research and make recommendations to the Board. In order to comply with the Open Meeting Law and allow for more than two members of the Selectboard to participate, the Committee will function as a Selectboard meeting with warned meetings, posted agendas, kept minutes, and adhere to the Rules of Procedure which govern Selectboard meetings. However, no other business besides Committee work will be on the agenda. Committee meetings will be held at the Town Office at 6p.m.on the first and third Wednesdays of the month. The Board will seek volunteers to serve on the Committee by posting notice on the Town website, Strafford lists, Strafford News and in the minutes. Committee members will be appointed at the April 8 meeting. People interested should contact the Town Office before April 8. The VLCT proposed scope of work which will serve as a starting point for the project will be posted on the website and available at the Town Office. It provides an idea of what is likely to be involved. Tori Lloyd and Steven Gex both

expressed interest in serving on this Committee.

Town appointments: Upon the recommendation of the Conservation Commission, Charles Sherman was nominated to fill a vacancy on the Commission by Brent Cadwell. Brent made a motion to appoint Charles Sherman, Steve seconded and all approved. Upon the recommendation of the Recycling Committee Dori Wolfe was nominated by Steve to be the Recycling Coordinator Toni seconded and all approved. John nominated Sue Coburn to a 3year term as South Royalton Senior Center Representative (10/14-10/17) to coincide with their election cycle Steve seconded and all approved.

Hazard Mitigation Committee: Chuck Sherman will be the representative to this committee which is being set up at the bequest of the Two Rivers Regional Planning Commission. Steve Marx reported the school nurse would not be able to take part in committee work, but would remain in contact with the committee and review their findings and how it relates to the school. Brian will check with Stephen Campbell of the Town Planning Commission on the where things stand with this committee.

Brent presented a request for bid proposal for the Town House/Common Mowing and the Evergreen Cemetery mowing. They will be advertised once Brent checks with Bob Murray and Dick Josler on when they would be available for site inspections by potential bidders. The bids would be due 4:30 p.m. on April 8, so that they could be opened and potentially awarded at the Regular Selectboard Meeting that night.

Toni reported that there is no requirement that the Town Clerk take the minutes at the Selectboard meetings. Lisa felt there was a need to clarify the role of the Town Clerk/Town Treasurer and her work assisting the Selectboard. She cited that according to the Vermont League of Cities and Towns Roles and Responsibilities, "The town clerk has many unofficial duties as well that vary from town to town. These duties may include attending and taking minutes of Selectboard meetings". Board members agreed that current system of taking minutes is working well.

Lisa brought up problems with the Town septic line again freezing this winter. Brent will investigate possible options and cost to deal with this problem and report back to the Board.

No updates on Barrett Hall Generator Grant

January/February budget review was put off till next meeting when figures for March may be available as well.

Steve Max reported that he has not found a definitive answer with when the Fairpoint new mini cell phone units located along Rte. 132 will be operational. He will continue his investigations.

5.) Town Highways: Jon updated the Board on road conditions. He and Brent met with the landowners around the Farley Bridge project and secured the needed releases. Project could begin as early as April. Brent reported that the Maple Hill Road culvert project will soon be put out to bid. Over \$130,000 has been raised in grants for this project that is intended to improve fish habitat. The project will not proceed unless all expenses on the project can be covered by grants.

The Board signed the Rules of Procedure adopted at the March 11, 2015 meeting.

Steve made a motion to adjourn Brian seconded and all approved. The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

Next Meeting: Regular Board Meeting April 8 at 6 p.m. @ the Town Office

Future Agenda items:

Parcel Mapping / Mike Hebb

Solid Waste Hearing

Recreation Board update

Town Highway Grant and Annual Financial Plan- sign

January/February/ March budget review

Respectfully Submitted, Toni M. Pippy