

Minutes of the Strafford Select Board
February 14, 2018

Members present: Toni Pippy, Chair, Brian Johnson, John Freitag, Stephen Marx, and Kate Siepmann. Also present, Lisa Bragg, Town Clerk and Assistant to the Select Board and Todd Binzen, reporter from *The Herald*.

Members of the public: Mike Hebb for the Conservation Commission, John Echeverria, Carin Pratt, Lianne Thomashaw, Rocky Fuller, for the Town House Advisory Group (THAG), Therese Linehan for the Alliance for Vermont Communities, Alex Buskey for the Vermont Council on Rural Development

John called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

1. Citizens' Concerns

Todd requested a copy of the full budget.

2. Town Highways

Select Board Liaison, Brian Johnson reported that roads and equipment are in good condition. He described a problem with logging debris on Alger Brook Road wherein loggers had filled the ditch at the entrance to Maria Cabri's property. The Board agreed that the debris needs to be removed and the ditch cleared by March 1 in anticipation of spring run-off.

In response to a letter from David Lamb about damage to the shoulder of the road in front of his house, the Board has asked Jon MacKinnon for an assessment and to report to both the Board and to Dr. Lamb. Toni is continuing to monitor the work of Sabil and Sons on maintenance and repair of the Town trucks.

3. Minutes

The minutes from the meetings on January 10, January 24, January 31, and February 5 were unanimously approved.

4. Correspondence

The Board received word from Lister Allan Wylie that the appeal of the Common Level of Appraisal was received and accepted, which brought us back to 103.72% resulting in a savings of 7¢ on the dollar for our tax payers.

Mark Castro has resigned as a Lister. John will draft a letter of thanks for his contribution and confer with Allan Wylie about recommendations for his successor.

A letter was circulated from the Thetford Senior and Affordable Housing Chair, Mark McMahon, about a forum on housing needs in Thetford and area towns.

We received a letter from Two Rivers-Ottawa Regional Commission (TRORC) requesting a list of candidate bridges for capital projects. We currently do not have any bridges that would qualify.

John read a letter from the Windham Foundation encouraging the Town to keep trying for a grant for the Town House.

Bob Bushway has resigned from the Planning Commission. Commission Chair, Stephen Campbell, will be contacted about recommendations for his successor. John will draft a letter of thanks.

An email was received from Ed Hathaway of the Environmental Protection Agency outlining the resumption of the EPA activity at the Elizabeth Mine Superfund site. The work, which will likely begin in May or early June, will involve filling the South Mine and partially filling the South Open Cut to eliminate the discharge of acid mine drainage to Lord Brook. Mr. Hathaway promised to brief the Board in late March or April, and promises a public information meeting before major work begins. Stay tuned.

5. Town House Spire Project

Rocky reported that THAG is closing in on its goal of just over \$100,000 to complete the Town House Spire Project, with about \$18,000 to go. THAG has drafted a fund raising letter that the Board approved.

Toni said that there is a one-time line item in the budget for \$15,000 to go to the Town House.

7. The Alliance for Vermont Communities, represented at this meeting by Therese Linehan and Alex Buskey, was established to block New Vistas, a vast planned community proposed to occupy land in four towns: Sharon, Strafford, Tunbridge, and Royalton. VCRD has worked for years to help communities

identify and advance key priorities by marshaling resources and encouraging collective action. If select boards from all four towns request the services of VCRD, we will be part of a program, provided at no cost to the towns, that will work to identify common interests and coordinated strategies. Recognizing this as a great opportunity for the Town, the Board voted unanimously to be involved in an introductory program presented by Paul Costello, Executive Director of RVDC.

8. *Furnace Flats Road*: This item on the Agenda was brought about by a request from landowners at the end of Furnace Flats Road leading to the town-owned summit of Whitcomb Hill. The landowners have requested permission to place a gate to prevent vehicular traffic at certain times of year, and that a section of a Class 4 road be reclassified as a trail. The landowners were unable to attend the meeting. The Board learned of another abutting landowner who had not been party to the discussion, and agreed that that landowner should be made aware of the discussion that might affect them. Citizens John Echeverria and Lianne Thomashow both expressed their strong feeling that town roads should not be given up under any circumstances. Mike Hebb presented wording for signs that might be placed on the right-of-way, and stressed the importance of keeping to the original intentions of the Nye family who donated the Whitcomb Hill summit to the Town. The Board agreed that no action will be taken until such time as the landowners are able to present their case.

A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved to adjourn at 8:17 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Select Board will be February 28.

Faithfully submitted,

Kate Siepmann, Recording Clerk