

Strafford Selectboard Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, September 8, 2021, at 6:00pm
Strafford Town Office

Members participating: Toni Pippy, Mary Linehan, Rett Emerson, Pat Kelly, Jeff Solsaa

Others participating: Lisa Bragg, Jon MacKinnon, John Freitag, Colin Butler, Rebecca Seibel, Jennifer Brown, Geoff Martin

Meeting called to order at 6:04 pm

1. Public Concerns

2. Town Highways and Equipment Update

a. Highway Correspondence:

- John Freitag, RE: The language of road cracks a five-year plan
- Donna and Peter Hollinger RE: Turnpike Road closure. Road crew needs to be more consistent about notifying residents through the Listserve and signage posted on the road.
- Chair received a call from Rolf re: driveway at Linda Maher's house needs to be addressed due to stone and ditch work. Road crew has done remediation work to increase the width of the driveway at the bottom. Road Liaison confirms that the ditch work did not damage the existing driveway, however, driveway is too narrow and needs to be widened. Selectboard requests that Road Foreman provide more prompt updates on road issues.

b. Update on vacancy. Job will be reposted, but analysis needs to be done to determine whether an additional full-time person is needed during the summer months. Auditors have inquired why there is so much turnover on the road crew. Road Foreman noted that hiring is a challenge because no one wants to be on call 24/7 and be required to take the drug tests.

c. Tree removal on Common. Road Foreman made the decision to contract the work out to clear the way in preparation for the planned funeral. Going forward, Road Foreman is advised to speak to the Highway Liaison before making the decision.

d. Project updates. Road Foreman reported that the ditching work on Turnpike Road is complete and on Alger Brook Road should be complete next week. Paving has been delayed. Line striping was conducted by the State, despite Foreman notifying them that we were planning to pave the road. State should return to do the painting again after paving at no cost to the Town.

e. Sidewalk snow removal contract to be bid out. Contractor will report to the Road Crew, so better coordination needs to be improved to avoid plow dumping snow on a cleared sidewalk. Need to specify the timing for snow clearing, to be determined in coordination with the Road Crew. Salt and sand to be provided by the Town of Strafford, for sidewalk use only. Tender will be posted on the listserve, on the Town website and in the Valley News.

3. General Correspondence
 - a. Email Ed Hathaway, Elizabeth Mine Superfund Site 1898 Adit Closure & Sitewide Closure Activities – August 2021 monthly report, work to be completed end of September early October
 - b. Email Megan Asbury, 4-Town Coalition Coordinator, RE: Strafford Selectboard Introductions.
 - c. IREC report received from Geoff Martin.
 - d. Email Bruce Andrus, Access to family land at 95 Hemenway Road. In 1988 Selectboard approved a request to designate the road as Class 4, however there is no record of that happening. Culvert on the road failed recently and likely needs to be upgraded if it is designated as Class 4. Further information is required to better understand what we can do.
4. Approve minutes to the August 25th regular meeting. Motion passed to approve the minutes from August 25th.
5. Draft Green Procurement Policy – Geoff Martin, IREC, RE: Draft Green Procurement Policy. Policy guides purchasing decisions and procedures for energy efficient purchases, establishes a Green Procurement Team that reviews big ticket purchases. Designed to use Town's replacement plan and help the Town to meet energy efficiency goals. Strafford may not find a separate committee an optimal approach, given the infrequency of large purchases; suggested that the policy be focused on guiding the Selectboard's decisions, and allowing access to advice about greener options. Selectboard is concerned about tying the hands of decision-makers; Geoff clarified that the policy is not intended to restrict choices, but rather to ensure that greener options be considered and selected when they are suitable. Climate and Energy Committee could serve as an advisory resource. IREC Steering committee is interested in developing.
6. Draft Town Plan. Public hearing needs to be conducted. Selectboard opts for a separate hearing date, to be conducted on September 29th. 15-day warning is required.
7. Town Office Planning Committee Update. Mary and Rebecca presented the findings and recommendations from the Committee's work. The summary recommendations of the report are:
 - The intent of this exercise was to find a more optimal solution to meet the needs of the Town Office. Given that none of the Town-owned properties were found to be optimal, the Committee does not recommend conducting a feasibility study on any of the 10 assessed sites.
 - The Committee recommends that the Selectboard instead look beyond existing Town-owned properties and seek to acquire through donation or purchase, a structure or land site that can be converted to, or on which to build, a Town Office. The optimal structure will have at least 2000 square feet of useable space located outside a flood risk area, have adequate parking, and located in one of the two villages, but not contribute to congestion around the Lower Village and the school.

Discussion regarding the process used by the committee and sites considered, and the need to address urgent issues in the current Town Office. Selectboard wishes to express its great appreciation and thanks to the committee for its excellent work and professionalism. Motion passed to accept the report. The report will be published on the Town website.

8. Ashley Forest updates. Pat reported there has not been a lot of movement on the Conservation Easement; still under review by the VHC. Has not received feedback on the draft interlocal agreement.
9. Junk Yard Update. Jeff reported that Benjamin's attorney will provide a letter clarifying that a screen fence will be put in place and specify how high it will be, and where and when it will be placed. Received correspondence re: the property on Miller Pond Rd., which requires some assistance to complete the cleanup. A fund had been set up to assist with this clean up, and progress is being made.
10. Other
 - ARPA Funds. Toni reported that ARPA funding is restricted to designated categories. Need to be creative to match the fund use to Town priorities. Chair is attending meeting and webinars to gain further clarification about how funds can be best used.
 - Jeff reported he was able to dramatically reduce costs (60% reduction in monthly expenditures) of cleaning services and supplies provided by vendor Unifirst for the Town Garage. Prices will hold for the next year, with a potential 3% annual increase for future. Motion passed to accept the contract with Unifirst.
 - Jeff reported that ECFiber did not provide prompt utility services after the power poles were knocked down last week across from the Town Office. Consolidated, however, did provide professional and prompt services.
 - Lisa noted that a VT State MRGP FY22 grant agreement needs to be signed. Grant is for \$22,900 with a 20% match required. Motion passed to sign the MRGP grant for \$22,900. The location for this grant has not been determined.
 - New document added to litigation folder.
 - Discussion regarding public use of Town Office during non-office hours.

Meeting adjourned at 8:54 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Linehan
Recording Clerk