

Town Office, 227 Justin Morrill Highway, Strafford Vermont 05072

Selectboard Members in Person: Toni Pippy, Jeff Solsaa, Andrew Duncklee, Kelly Harman, Mary Linehan

Town Clerk in Attendance: Lisa Braggs

Assistant in attendance: Chris Behr

Participants in Person: Art Hanchett, Stuart Johnson

Participants via Zoom: John Freitag, Bob & Jean Bushnell, Judie Englander

Correspondence (Agenda 9 (c))

Stuart Johnson reported that Dead River has asked for "written permission or clearance" from the town to allow delivery trucks to ignore the Eastburn Rd bridge's posted limit that "was either not previously visible or newly installed".

Jeff Solsaa explained that the State sets the weight limits and the Town will not override them. There are other fuel and propane suppliers, some with smaller trucks or who will schedule the deliveries so that the truck is not full and therefore below the weight limit.

1. Highway

a) Equipment - Nothing to report

b) Roads - Nothing to report

c) Church drainage

The church is preparing a drainage plan that will follow the drain already approved by the Town. Unless the church requests otherwise, the Town will consider this item closed.

d) Project Updates

Paving in the village is done, with aprons to follow. Brook Rd should be paved by next week. Mine Road work is planned.

e) Highway access request

Jeff Solsaa moves to approve the Highway Access Application for Mark Kutolowski on Woods Rd

Andrew Duncklee seconds

All approve

f) Grant aid FY 26

Mary Linehan moves to sign AOT Highway VTrans Aid FY2026

Jeff Solsaa seconds

All approve

2. Approval of August 14 meeting minutes

Jeff Solsaa moves to approve the minutes of the August 14 special selectboard meeting (capital budget review) and the minutes of the August 14 regular selectboard meeting

Mary Linehan seconds

All approve

3. Review & Adoption of Municipal Policies

Tabled until next meeting

4. Vandalism at Town House

Three windows and a light were broken. After that was fixed, another window was broken, someone called the sheriff, who found that Brendon Rogers was responsible. Berndon is moving to Brattleboro. The cost of the repairs will be sent to Susan Grady.

5. Town Office update on security improvements

Lisa's stalking order was granted by the judge, with stipulations to allow Keith Billian access to Town services (access to office by appointment only, etc). At the hearing, when Keith Billian complained that the Town did not answer his emails, the judge explained that the Town is not obligated to do so and that the lack of clarity of the emails makes replies unlikely.

Lisa may decide to remove the appointment requirements for the general population. The lock and camera work is complete. A tablet will be added to the system to allow easy use of the camera.

6. Liaison Updates

There are 2 openings (listers and Development Review Board). Some suggestions were made for the wording of the opening. Mary Linehan will look into the process of filling a lister vacancy.

7. Other

a) Ash tree removals

Toni Pippy moves to allow Joanne Garton of the Urban & Community Forestry program to take the lead in implementation of the ash removal grant on Turnpike Road

Jeff Solsaa seconds

All approve

Discussion about who should do the tree removal work. Under the current plan, Bob Wilson and David Paganelli have identified Brian Piper of Fairlee (who has the necessary equipment for the designed scope) without an open bid process. The amount is below the threshold required for an official bid, but because there are many people who do tree removal in town, perhaps it should be put out to bid. The current work scope may restrict bids to certain companies because

it requires specific equipment, so opening the process to bids may delay the work or cause a review of the scope.

Toni Pippy moves to continue with the contractor currently identified for the ash tree work

Jeff Solsaa seconds

Kelly Harman, Toni Pippy, and Jeff Solsaa in favor, while Andrew Duncklee and Mary Linehan oppose. Motion passes.

b) Unlicensed dog

Shane Murray-Smith is the lone remaining case. She reports that her dog Bernie has been vaccinated and that her other dog Lucy will be vaccinated on Saturday (August 30), and at that point she will send the certificates for both dogs.

The following 3 items were not on the agenda, but allowed to proceed

Flag notification

Flag to be lowered at half mast in accordance with August 27 notification of Minneapolis, Minnesota Tragedy

Republican caucus at Town Garage

Toni Pippy moves to allow the Republican party to caucus at the Town Garage on September 16 2025

Jeff Solsaa seconds

All approve

Citizen concern about Ward Road bridge

Art Hanchett voiced concerns about the Ward road bridge. In summary, Art stated:

- When the bridge was built it had a capacity of at least 80,000 lbs and as a joint venture between the DOD, the State, and the Town, was to be maintained in perpetuity
- About 14 years ago, the beams had to be replaced as a temporary measure
- In 2024 some temporary fixes were done, with poor quality
- Art understood that 2025 FEMA repairs would bring the bridge back to its original capacity of at least 80,000 lbs.
- Art was not allowed to participate in the Town meeting* with the bridge contractors who bid the repair work, adding to his disappointment
- The bridge is now rated at 24,000 lbs, which prevents Art from moving the timber harvest off his property and complicates his heating fuel deliveries.
- Art has performed some deck maintenance himself, but has not informed the Town Highway Department of these issues.
- Art is asking the Town to restore the bridge to its original capacity of at least 80,000 lbs

* It appears this was not a meeting open to the public as it pertained only to contractor bids, and not decisions about scope or the spending of public funds

Jeff Solsaa replied that FEMA changed the scope of the Ward Rd bridge repairs and it was not a Town decision to cancel any 2025 repairs.

Toni Pippy apologized to Art for his tribulations and stated that the Selectboard would review the situation and respond.

8. Executive session

At 7:25 pm Toni Pippy moves to enter executive session under 1 V.S.A., 313(a) (3) for a personnel issue.

Mary Linehan seconds

All approve

At 7:51 Toni Pippy moves to exit the executive session without any decisions

Andrew Duncklee seconds

All approve

At 7:52, Jeff Solsaa moves to adjourn the meeting

Andrew Duncklee seconds

All approve

Meeting adjourned