

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STRAFFORD SELECTBOARD

November 11, 2015

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

Other active participants: Michael Scanlan, Anne Peyton, Calvin Benjamin, Chris Gex, Steve Gex Steve Willbanks, Rocky Fuller

Meeting called to order in the Town Office at 6:00 p.m.

1.) Citizen Concerns:

Calvin Benjamin was concerned that town equipment and personnel were being used on a private contractor's job. He said that the town trucks were being loaded with rip rap (large stone) from the job site, and then hauling it to the backhoe to spread on the edge of the road. That private contractor is Brent Cadwell and he made it clear that he did not load any town trucks. He had a private trucking company hauling the material off the job site. The material was donated to the town by Jim and Lindsey Evans who we thank. The town has in the past taken free fill from other contractors/homeowners, as long as Jon MacKinnon looks at it first and confirms it is something that the town can use.

2.) Correspondence

The Board received correspondence from Martha Pullen indicating John Hemenway's appreciation at the efforts to rename Sawyer Mountain Road to Hemenway Road. The Board also received letters from the Historical Society and Conservation Commission supporting the change. Changing the name of a road is a 16 step process and should only be allowed for extraordinary circumstances. This is certainly one of those circumstances because of John's lifelong contributions to preserving this area of town. A motion was made by Brent and seconded by Brian to change the name of Sawyer Mountain Road to Hemenway Road. All approved.

The Board received and reviewed a letter from Thomas Cain-Appraiser Consultant and the Listers, RE: List of Tax Changes, including Errors and Omissions, changes to Homesteads and Current Use, as well as combining of contiguous properties of 'same owner'. The net effect of these changes reduced the Grand List by \$27,940. A motion was made by Brent and seconded by Brian to accept the letter and changes to the 2015 Grand List. All approved.

3.) Minutes:

A motion was made and seconded to approve the October 28th minutes. Brent was concerned that the "Letter presented at the 10/28/15 Selectboard Meeting" by John was attached to the minutes when the letter had been voted down and could cause confusion. Also, there was no indication that this was a draft and it should not include, "Sincerely, The Strafford Selectboard". John made the motion that the minutes be amended to have the attached letter be labeled "draft letter presented at 10/28/15 Selectboard meeting which was not approved" and to strike at the end of the draft letter the words "Sincerely, The Strafford Selectboard". His motion also included having the attached body camera draft policy letter from the Town Agent include the words "Selectboard in agreement with this advice". Steve seconded the motion to approve the minutes of October 28th with these changes. All approved.

4.) Town Highways

Highway and Equipment update – Brent updated the Board on work being done and repairs being made on one of the dump trucks.

Road crew annual personnel review – the meeting with individual road crew members to discuss their evaluations and for the Selectboard to listen to any concerns did not take place last Friday due to some road crew members being unable to attend. Jon will re-schedule a meeting and let the Board know so that a Special Meeting

can be warned.

2016 Highway Budget – Discussion was moved to the 2016 budget discussion at the end of the meeting.

Ton Truck replacement – Discussion was moved to the 2016 budget discussion at the end of the meeting.

5.) General

Town House Advisory Committee -- Rocky Fuller, Chair of the THAG updated the Board on the Group's work. He said the Backhouse is done and will be operational for Town Meeting. It has been built completely by volunteers and with donations and the Board expressed its appreciation to all who helped make this project a reality. Rocky also talked about upcoming building maintenance needs. He asked that a Town House Reserve Fund be established for money not used in the Town House line items to help build up funds to cover larger projects. Lisa will be asked to look into setting this up.

Recycling budget proposal -- Michael Scanlan, Chair of the Recycling Committee, went over the budget and options for next year for the Recycling Center. Due to collapsing markets for recyclables and increased trucking costs, they are recommending that the Town consider buying our own bins that are a bit larger than the ones now being rented from Casella. Even so, costs will go up significantly. The Board recognizes that the Town is fortunate to have the dedication of the volunteers to maintain this well run facility and we thank them for these efforts. The Board will take the recommendations into consideration as the budget process moves forward.

State Building and Recreation Grants -- Ellen Bagnato, a Co-Chair with Hilary Linehan of the Recreation Board discussed with the Board about the Town applying for a Recreation Facilities Grant through the Vermont Building Communities Grants Programs to help with the costs of rebuilding the tennis courts. There is a 1:1 match from the recipient and awards are capped at \$25,000. The Strafford Athletic Association would provide the matching funds. A motion was made by Brent and seconded by Steve to move forward on the application of this grant. All Approved. John will write the grant with the assistance of Hilary and Lisa.

The Vermont Building Communities Grants Programs also offers the Historic Preservation Grant Program which is administered by the Division for Historic Preservation that could help with the rebuilding of the walkway and stairs at the Municipal Building (a historic building). There is a 50/50 match and awards are capped at \$20,000. A motion was made by Brent and seconded by Steve to move forward on the application of a grant to assist in the expense of the improvements to the Municipal Building. All Approved. John will write the grant with the assistance of Lisa.

Mowing contract for 2016 – The Board discussed putting all the spring clean-up and mowing for the Town House, Town Common, and Recreation fields out as one bid. It was decided to see if we could do it this fall so that a firm figure could be included in the 2016 budget. Brent and Scott Moore from the Recreation Board will work on developing specs to be considered at the November 18 meeting.

Dog Kennel update – Brent needs volunteers to help put together the hoop structure that covers the kennel. Steve and Brian offered to help as well. A price for a large insulated dog house was received but felt that it was too expensive. We have \$500 in the budget that could be used and Brent will explore alternatives.

Cell phone and VTel update – Stephen received a call from Jim Masland informing him that ECFiber will provide the strands necessary for the cell phone equipment along Route 132 to be hooked up.

We have not heard from VTel on when their wireless broadband equipment will actually be in operation. After some discussion a motion was made by Toni and seconded by Brian to send a letter to VTel stating that if the equipment is not in operation by December 15 to have them take it down (located on Turnpike Road) as it is an eyesore. All approved.

Insurance update – This item has been tabled for the November 18th Selectboard meeting.

Selectboard Assistant Job Description – A draft of a job description for a Selectboard Assistant was reviewed. Currently Lisa is doing this work which are separate from her Town Clerk and Town Treasurer duties and funded under the line item Selectboard expenses. Lisa and John have worked on this draft. Final approval was put off until November 18 meeting.

2016 Budget Schedule and Discussion --The Board reviewed a first draft of the budget with figures provided by departments and organizations receiving money from the Town. Many of those responding asked to level fund their budgets recognizing that property taxes are an issue for many in Town. However there are projects like the Municipal Building repair, Recycling Center costs, a new sand screen at the Town Garage, and proposed increases in highway budget that potentially could have an impact on the final budget. The Board will continue to work on getting as much information as possible on the numbers and provide a way to include public involvement. The Board also discussed the best timing for putting out to bid a new ton truck to replace this nine year old piece of equipment. No final decision was made but it will be put out to bid before Town Meeting in order to have an accurate figure when the budget comes before the voters.

6.) Other –

Stephen was concerned over the price of three trees that were purchased and planted as part of the recently completed bridge project on the Justin Morrill Highway. It was decided to hold the payment until next week so Stephen can find out more information.

Toni made a motion to adjourn and Brent seconded. All approved and the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Next Meeting: Wednesday November 18 at 6 p.m. At the Justin Morrill Education Building. The regular meeting will be preceded at 6 p.m. by a presentation and recommendations from the Pay, Classification, and Compensation Sub-committee. This Sub-committee has been working for the last 6 months to see how our pay and compensation compares with other similar towns. All are welcome to attend this presentation as well as the rest of the regular Selectboard meeting that evening.

Respectfully Submitted, Toni M. Pippy