

Strafford Selectboard Meeting  
November 8, 2023 6pm  
Town Office Building, Strafford Vermont

Selectboard members participating in the meeting: Brian Johnson, Jeff Solsaa, John Freitag, Hannah Levinger, David Paganelli

Attending in person: June Solsaa, Susan Liepmann, Curt Albee, Lisa Bragg, Rocky Fuller, Sherm and Maureen Wilson

Attending via zoom: Nellie Pennington, Michael Scanlan, Anni Preatorius

Call to order: Reading of Guidelines for Selectboard Conduct

Public Concerns – none

Minutes of the October 4 Special Meeting were approved as presented, Minutes of October 25 Meeting were approved with a minor change to the item Unified ByLaw and Flood Hazard Zoning Ordinance. It will now read: “The Board read and discussed Tim McCormick’s letter regarding wetland distinctions in the Unified ByLaw. A motion was made and approved by all to remove the sections on Class III wetlands by making the following changes.”

Auditors – Insurance and Budget

Auditors Suzanna, Liepmann and June Solsaa discussed with the Selectboard a discrepancy found by Town Clerk Lisa Bragg in the dental policy between what the policy stated and what is in the Employee Handbook. This discrepancy goes back to 2016. It needs to be resolved before a deadline for new benefits is due at the end of November. It also needs to be resolved whether compensation adjustments need to be made for going back to 2016. It was agreed that Freitag would gather relevant information and seek the advice of our town attorney who specializes in Municipal law.

There was also discussion about setting the compensation for Selectboard members. Compensation for Selectboard members is set by the Board and approved as part of the budget. Auditors set the compensation if it is not a line item in the budget or an adjustment is made during the year. There was some discussion about the need, due to the current work load for the Selectboard, recent resignations, lack of candidates for the Board and Board members leaving after one term, about raising the current \$750 stipend next year. No decision on this was made. A motion was made and approved to have Hannah Levinger, who receive the whole \$750 stipend for the term she is filling till the next Town Meeting. This is in line with previous decisions for partial terms after a resignation.

There will be a need for an audit in 2024 due to the Town receiving FEMA funds for the July Storm event. A Request for Quotations (RFQ) will be sent out to auditing firms in December and funds budgeted in 2024 to pay for it.

The Town's employee health insurance was discussed. It was decided to put this off until our November 22 meeting.

#### Town Cemeteries

Cemetery Commissioner Sherm Wilson came in to discuss budget. He asked that any unspent funds from their budgets each year to go into the Evergreen Cemetery Reserve Fund. A motion was to approve and all voted in favor. Wilson also asked that the Town Cemetery be level funded next year.

#### Highways

Highway liaison Jeff Solsaa reported that the needed Bridge 16 (Mundell Road bridge) work has been completed. Solsaa is continuing to look into what is needed for upgrading highway crew members reflective clothing. Work is being done towards putting out to bid work on Bridge 30 (near the Town House on Brook Road) and work on Brook Road for next year. Solsaa is also following up on the Freeman Bridge replacement which will be done as part of the FEMA recovery next year. Temporary access is currently in place. Solsaa will also follow-up on how best to proceed with protecting the town drain pipe that runs under the Chesnut property which may also qualify for FEMA funds.

The Board discussed a request from a resident of the private Willey Road to make it a Town Road. The Board decided, given the amount of current highway needs not to add this road to our highway system.

#### Unified ByLaws and Flood Hazard Zoning Ordinance vote

Vote in Thursday November 16 at the Town Office from 10 a.m – 7 p.m. Town Clerk Lisa Bragg has sent out schedule of those helping out at the polls and counting ballots.

#### Inter-Municipal Regional Energy Coordinator

The Board received a request for renewal of our participation in funding a this position which helps Strafford with energy related projects. All agreed to renew and put the \$7,000 in the budget for next year.

#### Grant update

A Municipal Planning Grant to help the Town prioritize and create a capital budget has been submitted.

The Municipal Energy Grant for the Town Garage has been approved to go to the next stage which is an energy audit.

The Transportation Alternative Grant for Bridge 30 has been denied.

\$325,000 of Congressional Directed Spending for the Town Office Project included in the Senate Budget by Senator Peter Welch, is being held up from going forward due to lack of budget action by the House of Representatives.

#### Dogs

Only one dog has not been licensed. Board is awaiting on Dog Officer to recommend what steps to take.

#### Vermont 250 Anniversary

The Board has been asked to participate with other towns in Vermont in activities making the 250<sup>th</sup> of the 1776 signing of the Declaration of Independence, the Revolutionary War between 1775 and 1777, and the founding of Vermont in 1777. The Board approved being involved in setting up a local committee to work on this. Freitag will take the lead.

#### South Strafford Recreation Area – School Agreement

While the Recreation Board and Selectboard would rather a memorandum of understanding, the School Board prefers a legal agreement. A motion was made to send a copy of the legal agreement with revisions to the School Board. Freitag, Paganelli, Levinger and Johnson vote Aye Solsaa abstained.

#### Town Office

Transfer of project is getting closer. David Paganelli will follow-up on status of wastewater permit which is now in the hands of the State. GbA architects have submitted a proposal broken down in 4 tasks that would take the Schematic Design we now have, though Full Design, Bidding, and Contract Administration. Discussion followed on how best to proceed. It was decided that as soon as the property transfer has gone through, a public Informational Meeting will be held. The Board is looking to have a Town Meeting Day vote on the project. It may be worthwhile to have the first task - Design Development be done before Town Meeting. Freitag will follow-up on the cost for this and whether it would need to go to out to bid.

#### Liaison Updates

Freitag asked permission of the Board to post the Winter Road Policy on the listserv. All approved.

\* In the break between the Information Hearing and the Selectboard Meeting, the Board went into Executive Session at 5:35 p.m. to discuss the property line dispute between the Town's property on Mine Road and the Hout property. The Board came out of Executive Session at 5:43 p.m.

A Motion was made to adjourn at 8:07 p.m. All approved.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Hannah Levinger