

Strafford Selectboard Meeting
January 10, 2023 6 p.m.
Town Office Building, Strafford Vermont

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

Attending in person: Lisa Bragg, John Echeverria, William Kramer, reporter for White River Valley Herald
Attending remotely: Steven Pyle, Trey Piepmeier

1. Call to order: Reading of Guidelines for Selectboard Conduct

2. Public Concerns – Brian Johnson asked about the mailbox policy after a snow event. He was directed to check the Town website under Municipal and then find it under Forms and Ordinances. This is a way people who have had a mail box damaged during a storm event can receive some compensation.

3. Minutes of the draft December 27 Selectboard meeting were approved by all as presented. The minutes of the December 20 meeting were approved with Solsaa and Freitag voting yea and Johnson nay.

4. Highways

Highway liaison Solsaa reported crew and equipment handling multiple storms with different conditions. York rake to be ordered and funds to come from equipment line item in 2024 budget.

Jeff updated the Board on a State engineer report on Freeman bridge and a email for Steve and Stephanie Willbanks just received today. As the Board did not have time to read this background material in advance, this item will be reviewed at the January 24 meeting.

A EC Fiber line break on a line crossing Swanee Bean road on December 10 was discussed. The road crew was working in that area around 6am that morning but have no knowledge of the line breaking. A motion was made to pay the full cost of \$922 for the repair. Paganelli and Freitag voted yea and Solsaa and Johnson voted nay. As a tie vote the vote did not pass. Further discussion resulted in a motion to pay the actual repair cost. Paganelli, Johnson and Freitag voted yea, Solsaa voted nay. Motion was passed and Freitag will notify EC Fiber.

5. Town Meeting timeline . Town Clerk Bragg went over timeline with the Board. There is a deadline of January 29 for those running for office to submit a form with 10 signatures as well as a candidate consent form. Bragg said that Nellie Pennington has indicated she will run for another three year term as Auditor, Tom Jacobs for another three year term as Lister, David Harris another term as Cemetery Commissioner, Jeanne Castro for another term for Delinquent Tax Collector. Freitag said David Grant would run again for Moderator and Bragg said she would run as Agent to Deed Real Estate. There are three Selectboard seats open this year. One for three years, and two for two years. Brian Johnson said he is not running. Freitag said he is leaning to run for one more term. Anyone interested in running for the Selectboard can contact a Selectboard member to learn more about what is involved.

6. Budget -

Michael Scanlan came in to discuss the Recycling Center budget and to present to the Board a Memorandum of Agreement with the National Resource Recovery Association for the handling of recycling materials. Budget will increase \$500 to \$24,500. Motion was made and all approved signing the MOA.

The Highway budget was presented by Solsaa. Significant increases in paving and bridges. Freitag said that with two major storms events in six month and a two week mud season at one of the coldest times of the year we are facing a changing climate that has and will continue to require changes in care of the roads and an increase in the highway budget. The Board expressed agreement that we need to move forward on 1/2 of the Brook Road project which will require an addition of \$300,000 to the paving line item. There was discussion regarding Bridge 30 and the need to go with the less expensive W-band metal rail rather than something historically more appropriate. Group 30 group asked for year to raise the estimated \$100,000 needed for a more historically appropriate bridge siding. The state structures grant allows for the structure to be completed in 2025 which gives time for this fundraising effort. It was felt that this year town money for that bridge could go to other major culvert projects needed to be done. It was also noted that last year \$51,600 was used as a balance forward on the highway budget to help keep the tax rate lower. This money will not be there this year.

The General Fund was looked at. Town Clerk/Town Treasurer Bragg had filled in what numbers she had at this time. Further review and decisions will be necessary.

7. Town Office update - Selectboard liaison to the Committee David Paganelli reported that the land transfer on land donated by Morgan Smith to allow for an addition to be built on the office has been completed. Committee is now focused on determining if and what portion of the building will be in the floodplain and what the implications of that would be. Since that information is not yet available, the Town Committee feels that it is not time to bring the project before the Town at Town Meeting this year.

8. Grant Update – The Town received a Municipal Planning Grant which will provide a public involved process of creating a 10 -year capital budget. This would provide a blueprint for major spending and cost estimates that could be used as a guide for the Town.

9. Freitag along with a Selectboard member from Corinth have been taking a closer look at the County budget and how it impacts the Orange County Sheriff Office and their effectiveness. He asked the Board approval to his working on this issue and help coordinate efforts with other selectboards in Orange County. All approved.

A motion was made and the meeting adjourned at 9:01 pm
Respectfully submitted,

John Freitag