

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE STRAFFORD SELECTBOARD

April 8, 2015

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

Other active participants: Lisa Kendall, Town Clerk, Jon MacKinnon, Road Foreman, Jennifer Brown, Herald of Randolph Reporter, Calvin Benjamin, Ellen Bagnato, Chris Gex, Steve Gex, Alan Donohue, Dick Josler,

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

Adjustments were made to the agenda to include correspondence from Tori Lloyd under Pay and Classification and Compensation Committee item, add dog kennel under General and Dodge Road Bridge and VTEL pole request under Highway.

1.) Citizen Concerns: Calvin Benjamin voiced concerns that while relatively small jobs like mowing are being put out to bid using the town bidding policy, larger jobs like the Dodge Road Bridge which could also potentially save money by going through the bidding process are not. Steve explained that the Dodge Road Bridge was done last year before the new bidding policy was put into effect. John agreed saying that a verbal agreement was made last year with Northwoods who were the contractors on the Watson Bridge project to move the temporary bridge from that project to be used at the Dodge Road. The understanding was the total for the project was not to exceed \$15,000. John said from now on any road projects other than emergency repairs will be brought before the Board even if under the current \$30,000 threshold in the policy to determine if putting the project out to bid would be the best course.

2.) Correspondence: John wanted to be included in the record emails regarding a request for the Town's parcel map file by the Regional Planning Commission. Parcel Map manager Mike Hebb was reluctant to send it out without Board approval and this item had initially been scheduled to be on the agenda. Follow-up by Steve Campbell, the Towns Representative to the Planning Commission found that the request originated from Chuck Sherman of Strafford to help with the ECFiber expansion in town. Mike was able to provide the needed information and there was no need to include the item on the agenda. Sharing of the entire parcel map file will be considered on a case by case basis as in the past.

3.) Minutes: Brian moved and Brent seconded to adopt the minutes of March 25. Toni suggested adding the following verbiage after the sentence "Toni reported that there is no requirement that the Town Clerk take the minutes at the Selectboard meetings." Lisa felt there was a need to clarify the role of the Town Clerk/Town Treasurer and her work assisting the Selectboard. She cited that according to the Vermont League of Cities and Towns Roles and Responsibilities, "The town clerk has many unofficial duties as well that vary from town to town. These duties may include attending and taking minutes of Selectboard meetings". Board members agreed that current system of taking minutes is working well.

Brent had concerns over how Chris Gex's correspondence was presented. A change was proposed to have it read: "In her letter Chris pointed out what she felt was a correction regarding Town payments to the Greater Upper Valley Solid Waste District".

Minutes were then adopted unanimously with these changes.

4.) General:

Mowing bids for the Town House/Common and the Evergreen Cemetery were opened. There were four bids for the Town/House Common and it was awarded to Kelly Hull Services the low bidder at \$2,475. Bids for the

Evergreen Cemetery were passed on to the Cemetery Commissioners present, Alan Donohue and Dick Josler, at the meeting as State statues are clear that “ the board of cemetery commissioners has sole control over monies received and expended for town cemetery purposes”.

Recreation Board Update: Ellen Bagnato updated the Board on their plans for the summer. Lisa noted that the Recreation Board's sponsorship of the soccer camp, the summer concert series and cabin fever courses are covered under the Town insurance.

Dog Kennel: Janet Hardy has offered to be Town Dog Office and Pound Keeper if a proper kennel for the dogs is provided. There are no funds in the budget for building a proper kennel. Brent will talk with Janet about what she would like and make sure it meets State regulations. A fund raising effort will be made to raise money for the kennel.

General follow-up: Brent reported there were no updates on the Barrett Hall generator grant. Steve is still following up on why the cell phone units installed along Rte. 132 have not been turned on. Brian reported there has not yet been a meeting of the Hazard Mitigation Committee.

Rockefeller Policy Research Shop: John reported on his follow-up after initial contact by Chris Gex of the possibility of Dartmouth College's Rockefeller Policy Shop of the Rockefeller Center doing a student research project on Pay and Classification and Compensation Plans in Strafford and how Strafford compares with other towns of similar size and circumstances. The Rockefeller Policy Research Shop undertakes public policy research for policy makers at the state and local in Vermont and New Hampshire in a non-partisan/non-advocacy manner. There is no cost for their service. Students spend a previous quarter doing studies learning the methods needed to do such studies. The Center was given the scope of work originally developed for a Vermont League of Cities and Towns study to be done this year. However, as part of the budget adjustments made at the March 25 meeting the \$5,000 that had been allocated for this study was cut. As the quarter is just starting at Dartmouth College, the timing was right for the Center to take on some of research and have their findings be a provided to the town committee that is being set in lieu of the VLCT study. As of April 3, the Center has appointed a three person team to begin the analysis of town employee compensation patterns in Vermont. John expressed his regret that the timing was such that it could not have come before the Board for discussion before this meeting. The Board agreed that this was a valuable research project for the Town

Pay and Classification System and Compensation Plan: The Board appointed Bob Bushway, Mark Castro, Steven Gex, Tori Lloyd, and Martha Walke to a Committee to review our current pay and classification and compensation plan for town employees, compare what we offer with other towns of our size and circumstances and make recommendations to the Selectboard. The Committee will address the structure of our pay and classification system and compensation and will not involve discussion or evaluation of individual town employees. Meetings will be warned, open to the public, and minutes kept. Incorporating suggestions made in correspondence from Tori Lloyd the Board agreed to have the Committee be set up as a sub-committee of the Selectboard. John will serve on the Committee from the Selectboard and although other members may attend when they wish, no other Board members will serve on the Committee. The Committee will elect its own chair and secretary set its own schedule, and follow the provisions of the open meeting law. The first meeting will be on April 15 @ 6 p.m. at the Town Office. John will prepare a packet of information for the Committee and put together an agenda for the first meeting.

Jan/Feb/March budget: The Board reviewed the budget figures provided by Lisa. Overall, things appear to be on track. Lisa did note that propane use at the Town Garage was already over budget for the year. John noted that \$13,230 of the gravel stockpiled in December of 2014 had been carried over into this year's budget. While stockpiling gravel for use in mud season makes a great deal of sense, John asked that the Board be made aware of when there will be budget carry overs in the future. Auditor Nellie Pennington has agreed to come to the next Board meeting on April 22 to explain how the Equipment Fund works and to make sure the Board is able to track income and expenditures for that fund.

Solid Waste Hearing: John presented the Board with options regarding the Solid Waste Hearing to be held this spring. He listed possible participants as well as the need for a fact sheet that might be distributed before the meeting which explains how Solid Waste has been and is currently handled and how things will change with Act 148 and new provisions starting July 1. John will check on dates that work for participants and we will put planning for the Solid Waste Hearing again on the agenda for our next meeting.

Office Septic Update: Brent is collecting information on how we might avoid future freeze ups of the line.

5.) Town Highways:

Jon update Board on road conditions. Roads are getting muddy but slow thaw has so far helped.

Town Highway Grant and Annual Financial Plan was signed by the Board.

Jon updated the Board about two Better Back Road Grants that he would like to apply for. One is for long term planning of culvert and bridge replacement, and one for work on the Old City Falls Bridge. The Board agreed that this is a good idea. Jon also proposed applying for a bridge and pavement grant. He mentioned the need for work on the Brook Road Bridge near Wetmore Road. He also felt that in order to save the paved portion of Miller Pond Road it would need to be repaved and shimmed in the near future and a paving grant would cover most of the costs. The Board agreed with Jon's applying for the grants. There was some discussion as well of the need for longer term plans for road upgrades.

Paperwork for a VTEL pole move on Turnpike Road was turned over to Jon.

6.) Other:

The Board signed a liquor license for the Stone Soup Restaurant

Brent made a motion to adjourn, Brian seconded and all approved. The meeting was adjourned at 8:39 p.m.

Next Meetings: April 15, 2015 6pm; Selectboard Committee Meeting on Pay and Classification System/Compensation Plan

Regular Board Meeting April 22 at 6 p.m. @ the Town Office

Future Agenda items:

Equipment Fund

Solid Waste Hearing

Respectfully Submitted,

Toni M. Pippy