

Strafford Selectboard Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, December 14, 2022, 6:00 pm

Town Office, 227 Justin Morrill Hwy, Strafford, 05072

Members participating: Toni Pippy, Jeff Solsaa, Brian Johnson, Mary Linehan, David Paganelli

Other participants in person: Wayne, Keith and Kathy Fifield, Sherry St. Germain, Lisa Bragg, John Echeverria, Keith, Greg Colling, Seth Berger, David Grant

Via zoom: John Freitag, Chris Behr, Kathy Menard, Patti Morgan, Michael Hantichak, Rodney Sloat, Cynthia Odell, Rocky Fuller

Meeting called to order at 6:00 pm

1. Public Concerns. None
2. Highway.
 - a. Roads and equipment
 - b. Vacant position. Jeff Solsaa reported on a recent candidate for the position, who declined. Another interview is planned for tomorrow.
 - c. Trees in River - see letter from Conservation Commission. Eli Mintz has agreed to remove the tree in the coming week. The Conservation Commission has advised that the tree could be left there, but the location close to the bridge seems to make removal an urgent issue.
 - d. Efforts to slow traffic coming around the bend of RTE 132 by Coburns Store. A high visibility pedestrian sign has been placed before the corner. Jeff contacted a vendor regarding radar feedback speed sign options for the upper village and recommended a solar-powered model that warns of the speed, at a cost of \$3,348. Motion by Toni to purchase the radar feedback sign, Jeff seconded. Toni, Jeff, Mary, David voted yes; Brian voted no. Jeff found a vendor for two solar powered crosswalk signs for the gymnasium crossing, for a total of \$3,500. These funds are already in the 2022 budget, Lisa will order them right away.
 - e. Town owned Stanley property cleanup. Jeff went to look at the enormous amount of waste currently on the Stanley property, and found > 1000 tires, a boat, building structures, including a trailer, and various other materials. Spoke with John Schmeltzer and learned that obtaining funds from the State are unlikely. A case has been opened by the State against the property owner for a landfill, which increases the urgency of a clean-up. John estimated a cost of \$100,000 to clean up the site. Kasey Kathan is taking over John Schmeltzer's position; Jeff will continue to work with her to find ways to deal with the problem.
 - f. Reclassification of Roads. Jeff presented the intent of a previous selectboard (8 years ago) to reclassify selected class 3 roads that lead to a single house/single owner properties, and serve as a driveway. This stage of the discussion is a continuation of a formal state-defined process; any changes would take place in July. There will be no changes this winter. Reclassification to class 4 road would require the town to continue to maintain culverts and bridges. Cathy Fifield noted that Race Road has 2 houses on it and asked if her taxes would be reduced. Noted also that a smaller plowing truck would not remove as much snow, causing water flow during thaw, and it would be expensive for her family. Wayne thanked the Selectboard for keeping taxes down and asked how much of a savings would be found if these roads are reclassified. Patti Morgan asked why Preston Road was included. Jeff

explained that the small driveway on Preston is very difficult to plow and has been an issue for a long time. Seth Berger noted that he does not live on any of these roads, but values taking care of his neighbors. John Freitag asked that the criteria used to select roads be applied consistently and fairly applied. Sherry St. Germain does not understand why the name of the road has changed to Angiers Rd. but requested that a dead-end sign be placed on the road if it is reclassified as class 4, and requested clarification of the name of road. Discussion re how the roads were selected and how the process will take place in the coming months. Selectboard has not had time to discuss this issue due to other competing demands.

- g. Municipal Roads Grants in Aid Project Letter of Intent. Chair signed the routine annual Notice of Intent for Storm Water Discharges from Municipal Roads General Permit.
3. Approve the minutes of the 11/30/22 regular meeting. Motion unanimously passed to approve the minutes of the 11/30/22 regular meeting with typos corrected.
4. Toni resignation effective 3/7/2023 – creating a one-year term vacancy at town meeting. The vacancy needs to be posted so that it can be included on the Town Meeting ballot.
5. 2023 Budget requests update and pay increases. Discussion re pay increases and possible bonus for Road Crew and Town Clerk. Chair made motion to provide a 4% increase for Town employees and a \$1000 end of year bonus for Road Crew and Town Clerk and Assistant pro-rated. Mary seconded. Unanimously passed. Mary will draft a letter thanking town staff. Chair clarified how annual budget process will be conducted. A draft budget will be available by December 28th. Lisa Bragg proposes that the Town Clerk's hours be consolidated into a single line item to streamline the budget, instead of the current allocation to multiple line items. A charitable donation was made to the town for \$500, Brian will prepare a thank you letter.
6. Town Office Committee update. Curt reported that a cost estimate should be available next week. David asked if Tom Bachman provided information on the dimensions of the addition; Curt responded that the plan includes those dimensions. The preliminary survey map has been prepared, but the amount of additional land required has not been identified, which will be necessary for the next steps. Discussion re what language might be put on the Annual Town Meeting warning. Lisa has investigated terms and process for obtaining a bond. Discussion re existing resources allocated for the Town Office maintenance and renovation.
7. Transportation Alternatives Grant Application. Bridge 30 Group proposes that the Selectboard apply for a VTrans grant for \$300,000 with a \$70,000 match from the Town. If additional funding (\$950,000) is not obtained these funds will be returned. Chair clarified that the overall project has not been approved, because all the funding necessary has not been obtained. Brian Johnson made the motion to submit an application for VTrans Fall 2022 Transportation Alternatives Grant for the Strafford Bridge 30 Historic Rehabilitation. Jeff seconded. Discussion re impact of this grant on other funds and grants, whether funds can be used for bridge repair than the proposed truss bridge. Brian, David, Jeff voted yes. Toni, Mary voted no. John Echeverria confirmed that the Bridge 30 Group is committed to continuing to work on ensure funding for the bridge.
8. Orange County Sheriff contract renewal. Brian reported there has been a request for the Sheriff to spend time on Miller Pond due to recent disturbances. Motion passed unanimously to maintain the annual contract for \$15,000 for services from the Orange County Sheriff.

9. Acknowledgement of Correspondence.
 - a. Toni Pippy, Chair, RE: Time to make a change, resignation effective 3/7/2023
 - b. Gus Speth, RE: Community Revitalization Fund
 - c. Updated Memorandum of Understanding from Northeast Resource Recovery Association effective 11/1/22
 - d. Strafford Conservation Committee, RE: Trees in the River, Dated 11/22/22
 - e. Rebecca Holcombe, RE: Pending ARPA Grant Opportunities

10. Liaison Updates.
 - Ned Coffin award went to PTA and Recreation Board
 - Report was sent to Game Warden re: Claffey dog complaint.
 - Rec Board has been notified that they need to store the skateboard materials need to be placed behind the storage container. Snow is anticipated on Friday and the materials need to be stored before then.
 - Jeff reported that the Stanley property is being used, including the trailer. Raccoons have eaten through the floor, and there is a large amount of feces and needles. Discussion re knocking down the structures to reduce liability risk. Jeff will talk to Eric Thorp and other contractors to get a cost estimate. Chair made a motion to crush the structures on the Stanley property for a cost up to \$3000. Seconded by Jeff. Unanimously approved.
 - Steve Marx's term as Health Officer is up at the end of this year. Brian will contact to see if he would like to continue in the role.

11. Town Office is closed next week Wed-Friday. Road Crew will also be taking time off around the holidays.

Meeting adjourned at 8:28 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Linehan
Recording Secretary