

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF
THE STRAFFORD BOARD OF SELECTMEN
August 13, 2014

Pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 312 (b)(1) Selectboard meeting minutes include

- (A) All members of the public body present;
- (B) All other active participants in the meeting;
- (C) All motions, proposals and resolutions made, offered and considered, and what disposition is made of same; and
- (D) The results of any votes, with a record of the individual vote of each member if a roll call is taken.

Although meeting minutes have complied with 1 V.S.A. § 312 (b)(1), any additional information is included as a courtesy.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Members of the public body present:

Rod Maclay, Chair, Brian Johnson, Steve Marx, Brent Cadwell, and John Freitag, Members

Other active participants:

Lisa Kendall, Town Clerk, Jon MacKinnon, Road Foreman, Jane Prescott, Recording Secretary
Jennifer Brown, Reporter Herald of Randolph, Jim Kenyon, Reporter for Valley News

Citizens present: Nancy Gerlach, Roz Finn, Steve Wetmore, Martha Walke, Eric Thorp, Carlton Phelps, Janet Hardy, Melvin Coburn, Sue Coburn, Kate Siepmann

Meeting called to order at 7:00 p.m.

CITIZENS CONCERNS

Janet Hardy asked questions about the hiring of a new person on the highway department. She asked why only one person was interviewed. Jon MacKinnon recommended only 1 applicant for the position based on his 14 years of municipal experience. All other candidates did not have experience plowing snow on roads. Jon did a reference check. Brent, Rod & Jon conducted the second interview. Janet asked about the dates of the interviews and the date the other candidates were sent a letter stating they did not get the job. It was not known at the meeting. Lisa Kendall will look them up. Janet concerned that committee made decision to hire candidate before full board approved. Brent stated that the committee interviewed the primary candidate and the committee had told the full Board at the July 10 meeting that he was the primary candidate. A decision was made by the committee to hire the primary candidate with the understanding that the full Board had given their consent at the July 10 meeting. Kate Siepmann asked on what basis qualification was assessed. Brent stated that the candidate had 14 years of municipal highway experience, which was ascertained via a job application and resume. Brent stated that the other applicants had some qualifications; however, they were not as qualified as the primary candidate. The Board stated that if they hired someone who didn't have the experience, then training would

have occurred. John Freitag stated that the Board made some mistakes in the hiring process. Hiring was contingent on approval of whole board, which didn't happen. Then at the July 23 Board meeting, the Board came together and made a decision to hire the person. It was a difficult meeting because they were in a difficult position based on the misunderstanding of the process. John Freitag stated "We need to do better, and, we will continue to do better." Carlton asked if it was common practice to vote twice. Steve stated that information came out after the first vote and Steve asked for the second vote, because he felt that some members were uncomfortable with the first vote. Steve felt that as a group, we need to be honest and fair with each other. Kate Siepmann said that the road crew in this town is exceptional. It's her perception that due to friction between road crew & select board they lost a member of road crew.

Carlton Phelps asked what they are doing to solve problems with select board. The Board went over budget on crack sealing. Rod stated that they took money from other accounts. Rod stated that if the road didn't get crack sealed this year, the company wouldn't return next year to do it. Lisa Kendall stated that the town has \$40,000 in bond funds to use for any highway construction that they want and that the money can come from the bond.

Jane Prescott stated that she is glad an individual Board member made the decision to crack seal Miller Pond road and she stated that crack sealing the road will prolong it's life and it will not need to be paved as soon, which is a tax savings.

Melvin Coburn asked about the space in front of Coburn's Store and the Hug residence and the space that is not wide enough and people can get tickets if they park their. Melvin stated that he would like the town to widen the road a bit. The space that is needed is in Town Right of Way.

Steve Wetmore suggested changing classification of people's driveways who are maintained by the town from Class 3 to class 4, therefore the responsibility for the driveways would go back to the land owner and the town could save money by not being obligated to take care of those individuals' driveways. He asked what the Board's position is on this. No decisions have been made by the Board.

Sue Coburn stated that she voted for the whole Board because she thought everyone would do well. She hears a lot about dissent among board members. She wishes everyone would work together to do what is best for the town. Rod stated that there are 3 new board members and they are trying to figure things out and they are trying to stay within the budget.

MINUTES: Approve 7-23 & 7-28 minutes. John F. moved to approve the July 23, 2014 and the July 28, 2014 minutes as written. Brian seconded. All in favor. Minutes are approved.

GENERAL:

Dog Officer Vacancy – The vacancy will be posted. Janet Hardy stated she would like to have the outdoor kennel removed. And she will drop off an indoor kennel at town clerk's office.

Clarification of Legal Counsel Hold Up (Joe Delfino) on the Watson Bridge. The town's lawyer was holding up the process, not Joe Delfino. The project should be completed this year. Footings will be done by mid-October.

Flow of Information – Brent questioned how some of the information that was discussed during executive session was getting out into the public and what the purpose of it is. Brent reiterated Steve's comment that what is discussed in executive session should remain confidential, as it raises issues and causes conflict. Rod brought Robert's Rules to read at the meeting. A member can be punished under disciplinary procedure if he violates the procedure of the executive session. Rod stated he hopes it does not happen again. John Freitag stated for the record that he hasn't said anything about what went on in executive session.

Personal Policy waiting period of Health Insurance – Sperry Wilson read the minutes and told Lisa that due to state and federal law, it is not legal to have a 3 month waiting period for Health Insurance. The longest period you can make an employee wait is 90 days. Lisa stated that due to the law, there needs to be a change in wording to read "the month following 60 days of employment" an employee is eligible for health insurance. Lisa stated she will distribute the personnel policy after this change is made. Brent spoke with other towns and stated they have a 90 day probationary period as well. In other towns, usually when benefits become available, probationary period is over. All health insurance enrollments occur the first of the month. Rod made a motion to approve revised language, Brent seconded the motion. All approved.

Remaining Bond Funds Lisa stated that there is a \$40,000 bond fund that is left over from FEMA and the highway reconstruction project that can be used for any and all highway construction. Lisa wants to get some decisions made on remaining bond funds and current expenses. The following expenses were not in the budget; survey for Watson Bridge (\$3800), legal fees for Watson Bridge (\$337.50) and crack sealing (\$6744.00). If the Bond Funds are used to pay for the aforementioned expenses, the remaining balance of the bond fund will be \$28,891.50. Lisa stated there is still an unknown bill for Van Dyke Road on the bank work. Lisa would like to get the cash flow in. The 3 above mentioned items were not in the budget and Lisa feels this money could be reimbursed from the bond fund. Steve moved to approve using the bond fund to pay the fees. Brent seconded. All approved.

Weekly Meetings – John stated that traditionally the selectboard in Strafford has met weekly. He would like weekly 7:30 a.m. meeting for updates to avoid breakdowns in communication and to keep main agenda items for evening meetings. John Freitag proposed a weekly meeting on non-Board meeting weeks for updates and highway updates. Brent and Brian stated 7:30 a.m. meetings wouldn't work. Rod said that every other week has worked for several years now and he doesn't feel a weekly meeting is necessary. John prefers meeting weekly at 7:00 p.m. Lisa suggested if they move to weekly meetings, that there is still a need for a recording clerk. Steve suggested waiting until September. Rod stated that during budget time, the Board will be meeting weekly. Steve made a motion to have weekly Board meetings. John seconded. Steve & John voted in favor. Brian, Brent & Rod voted against. The motion did not pass.

Cell phone Tower update – Steve Marx now has another phone number he can call.

Maple Hill Bridge Update – Brent stated *The CT River Watershed Council (Ron Rhodes -River Steward)* signed a contract with Malone & McBroom. They will *conduct the Engineering design in September/October* to collect field data and do any drilling. They will submit a design to the conservation committee by October or November. The plan is to start work on the *culvert* in the summer of 2015 if they get enough funds to do it. *The CT River Watershed Council is applying for an MEF grant to secure funds for the construction of the new culvert*

TOWN HIGHWAYS:

Town Garage Heating System –In 2008 VLCT sent an engineering firm to review the system. VLCT agreed to provide funds for material damaged from water but they would not provide funds for any upgrades. The report recommended outside air for the furnaces. Outside air was never vented into furnace. John stated furnaces are deteriorating and we need to replace before fall. John asked if we should go with Roger Carpenter or put out to bid. Brian suggested putting out to bid. Brent suggested asking for a proposal for fixing the system. Brian will ask AHT technologies to look at system and submit a proposal for changes to the heating system.

Town Garage Insulation – holding off on, until we get the heat updated. Need something other than fiberglass insulation.

Bridge Updates – White Bridge bypass has been set in place. Van Dyke is done. Bean Bridge will be done within 2 weeks.

Rod would like the Board to think about the bridge by Farley's. We have 1 more year to replace the bridge under state grant. State grant is \$175,000 and we have to match \$35,000. There is also \$34,000 in FEMA money for the repairs. Rod would like to put the bridge out to bid contingent on approval of budget. First the Board needs to get an engineer to design the new bridge. Lisa stated that you can get the bid out and that work can start for the first of the year. The town can put the design out to bid, contingent upon budget approval. Then we will put contract work out to bid contingent on budget approval.

Road Crew – In 2013, the town hired a temporary worker for 3 months. There are no plans to hire a temporary road crew worker this year.

Brent motioned to adjourn. Brian seconded. All approved. Meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Next Scheduled Meeting: Wednesday, August 27, 2014 7 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane Prescott, Recording Secretary