

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STRAFFORD SELECTBOARD

January 13, 2016

Members of the public body present: John Freitag, Brian Johnson, Steve Marx, Toni Pippy, Brent Cadwell (arrived at 6:20 p.m.)

Other active participants: Lisa Kendall, Town Clerk, Jon Mackinnon , Road Foreman and Supervisor of Public Works, Jennifer Brown, Herald of Randolph Reporter, James Garnet, Karl Johnston, Jim Evans, Lindsey Evans, Ellen Langtree, May Ellen Matson, Carlton Phelps, Dori Wolf, Art Hanchett

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

1.) Citizen Concerns: James Garnet talked about a dead tree on Kibbling Hill Road that he feels is a danger. He has also written an email to the Board in this regard. Jon has looked at the tree and feels it would be dangerous to try to cut from the ground or to have tree climbers try to take it down. Jon was asked by the Board to get a price on having a lift come in to remove the tree.

Ellen asked about the driveway being 20 feet from her property line. Brian said that the guidelines in this regards the word "shall" according to an opinion from the Vermont League of Cities and Towns does not mean must. Stephen said he felt that for him to vote in favor of approving the highway access permit when it is completed it would need to be 20 feet from the property line. In the course of the discussion May Ellen mention to Jim and Lindsey that she felt they were doing a good job on their house. John said that whatever differences may have occurred in the past, it might be worth considering to see if things could be worked out neighbor to neighbor so that the needs of each party, might, as much as possible be met.

2.) Correspondence:

On December 31, Ned Coffin sent an email expressing concern over the project on Carpenter Hill Road.

On January 6, Bob Bauer, a past Town Moderator, sent an email to the Board informing them that he will be a candidate for that position at Town Meeting. He has talked with the current Moderator Kerry Claffey about whether or not he would be attending the annual training workshops put on by the Vermont League of Cities and Towns since Bob felt Kerry should have the first opportunity to attend. Kerry has said that he will not be attending and Bob has requested that the Board pay the \$60 fee for the daylong program. Steve made a motion and John seconded, to have the Town pay the cost of the workshop for Bob Bauer. While recognizing that the training is valuable, Toni said she felt uncomfortable providing town funds to someone who was not currently an elected or appointed official. She felt that if Bob wanted to attend he should pay for himself. The question was moved. Stephen and John voted in favor, Toni and Brian opposed. There not being a majority the motion failed. John will inform Bob of the decision.

On January 6 and January 13 James Garnett sent emails to the Board regarding his ongoing concerns over the Elizabeth Mine Solar 1 project. The Board has gained intervening status and submitted evidence in support of the project conditional on safety and infrastructure concerns being met and an agreement with GMP and the developers on how the renewable energy from this project will starting in year 7 and by year 10 having 100% going to meet Vermont's renewable energy needs. John asked if any Board members wished to revisit this issue at this time and no motion was made to do so.

On January 6 Steve Willbanks has submitted a request to Town Clerk Lisa Kendall for “ all letters memoranda, reports, email, google group discussions, or other writings and correspondence issued or received by the Selectboard of the Town of Strafford, you , your staff, or Town Highway employees regarding compensation, benefits, and job descriptions (i.e. pay, classification and compensation) for the months of October, November, December for the year 2015 and January 2016”.

On January 10, Alan Wylie sent an email to the Board with concerns over ice and snow build up in front of the Town Office he was worried about safety and wondering who was responsible for taking care of this. Brent followed up explaining that Jon clears the walkway after each storm. Unfortunately in the last storm the snow from the small roof over the entry dumped and froze in the night. It has since been taken care of.

On January 12 , Chuck Sherman emailed the Board regarding the Vtel repeater broadband service. He asked that since Strafford is a member of the East Central Vermont Telecommunications Union District and co--owns the network that the Town website carry a link to the ECFiber website. The Board agreed and this will be added. Chuck also offered to research and write up all broadband options for the listserv.

On January 13 Chris Gex emailed, asking for clarification of the Personnel Policy for the Town of Strafford. She has over the last year received copies that differed in regards to the insurance benefit portion and suggested the Board confirm what the current approved policy states. Toni expressed her deep concern. Brent volunteered to work with Lisa to figure out the differences and report back to the Board.

3.) Minutes: Steve moved and Brent seconded to adopt the minutes of the regular Selectboard Meeting of December 30. Two minor grammatical corrections were made and under correspondence a change was changed made from “An email from Danielle Sweet regarding Town Office and the hours the office was closed during the holidays will be forwarded to Lisa Kendall” to “An email from Danielle Sweet regarding Town Office hours and the hours the office was closed during the holidays was answered by John”. All approved of the changes and the minutes were accepted without dissent. Steve moved and Brian seconded to approve the minutes of January 6. all approved of the minutes as presented.

4.) Town Highways and Equipment – Jon reported that all equipment was in good order and roads being plowed and sanded as needed.

5.) General -

2016 Town House policy - The Board reviewed and discussed the 2016 Town House fee schedule and use policy developed by the Town House Advisory Group. Stephen expressed his concern over whether the cleaning deposit was needed for local organizations. Brent moved and Toni seconded to approve the proposed policy. Brian, Toni, John, and Brent voted in favor, Stephen voted no and the motion passed.

Elizabeth Mine Solar 1 tax split proposal. Dori Wolfe, speaking for the developers of the project proposed to split the tax revenue 50/50 between the two towns. The solar project straddles the town line between Strafford and Thetford and while most of the physical structures will be in Thetford, most of the impact on roads and residents will be in Strafford. Brent moved and Toni seconded to approve the 50/50 split. Stephen, Toni, John and Brent voted in favor, and Brian opposed and the motion passed.

Upper Valley Ambulance Representative - Karen Didricksen has sent a letter of resignation. The Board accepted her resignation with regret and John will send a thank you note for her service. John will post an opening of the position.

2015 extra pay for salaried employees – due to the bank being closed on January 1 checks were issued on December 31 to salaried employees giving them an extra week worth of pay this past year. Toni reported that she has talked to town auditor Nellie Pennington and this will be reconciled between the years. John expressed concern feeling that it was much clearer to have employees just get paid their salary in the budgeted year itself. As a result of the outside audit done for 2014 the Board agreed as a corrective measure moving forward to “seek outside professional help to review our practices”. He proposed that we contact - the Vermont League of Cities and Towns financial consultant to review this procedure and if need be cover the expense involved. Toni felt that if this was necessary then Nellie should contact VLCT everyone agreed. Brent felt that this wasn’t an issue and that once reconciled, the numbers would work out as they should. John moved Steve seconded the motion to have Nellie contact VLCT, John, Steve, Brian, Toni voted in favor, Brent opposed. Motion passed.

Opening bids for bridge, mowing and truck - There were number of bids for the bridge project. Low bid was L&M at \$185,000. Jon and Brent will review the bids and report back to the board with a recommendation. There were a number of bids for spring and fall clean- up and mowing of the Town House Hill, Town Common , South Strafford Recreation area, verge and Varney Ballfield and Recycling area grassy area. Low bid was Higgins Landscaping at \$6600. Brent moved and Brian seconded approving this bid. All voted in favor.

There was one truck bid for the replacement of the Town ton- truck. It was from H.P. Fairfield / Gateway Ford and came in at \$96,000. We will use this figure in our budget calculations. No determination has been made yet on whether it will be accepted. In the meantime, Lisa was asked to explore financing options and costs.

Mileage Certification - The Board has received mileage certification paperwork from the State. There is no change in the mileage this year and all board members signed the forms.

Two Rivers Ottauquechee Planning Grant -- The Board has received and reviewed paperwork for a grant to help with Town Planning. The Board accepted the grant and authorized John to sign.

Town Report - The Selectboard needs to prepare its report for the Town Reports. John offered to write a draft for Board review.

FEMA completion certification – Lisa presented the FEMA certification paperwork that she needs to do in order for the Board to be aware of the amount of work she will be giving to this project. The Board expressed its appreciation for her efforts to do the needed wrap up with the many repairs undertaken as a result of Hurricane Irene.

Rutland Resolution / contacting our legislators on the Public Service Board process - Stephen reported that he had talked with our legislators regarding the fact that the Selectboard and Planning Commission are not automatic parties to commercial renewable energy projects and have to pay a lawyer to gain status and give evidence in the process. Stephen will also be going to Montpelier to testify in January. The Board also considered “the Rutland Town Resolution” which speaks to this issue and has been adopted by many

Vermont towns. Steve moved and Toni seconded to have Strafford be a signature to this resolution. All approved.

Municipal Building Repairs update -- Brian has reviewed the insurance inspectors report and all that is required is the repair of the landing and scraping and repainting that side of the building and walkway. Given the cost of total replacement which he estimates would exceed \$25,000, Brian proposed that he, as a volunteer, rebuild the landing and we limit what we do this year to repainting. The Board agreed and this will be put out to bid. Lisa would like a permanent fix to the problem of the sewer line periodically freezing. Brent has spoken with a septic designer who has suggested a small pump station would likely solve the issue. Brent will look into what this will cost.

2016 budget – Toni suggested that we wait with discussion until we have more figures for our Special Meeting on January 20. She said Lisa, Nellie, and herself are working hard on reconciling the 2015 budget and preparing figures for the 2016 budget. She asked that someone else take over the minutes. Brent volunteered. John said that he would forward Brent the notes he takes if that would be a help. John also offered to take over for this month, the posting of agendas, minutes and notices to help lessen the load on Lisa. Lisa agreed.

Other -- Stephen, our school liaison has met with Greg Bagnato and they have developed a plan for brighter street lights and a few more lights around the school and gym. Stephen will research the cost. The School Board is planning to have Pre--Town Meeting on February 25. The Selectboard agreed to have our Pre--Town meeting at the same time.

Brent made a motion to adjourn and Brian seconded. All approved and the meeting was adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brent Cadwell