

DRAFT

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STRAFFORD SELECTBOARD

August 12, 2015

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

Other active participants: Lisa Kendall, Town Clerk, Jennifer Brown, Herald of Randolph Reporter, Suzanna Leipmann, Doc Bagley, James Garnett, Dori Wolfe

Meeting called to order in the Town Office at 6:00 p.m.

1.) Citizen Concerns: There were no citizens' concerns

2.) Correspondence:

The Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) sent a draft of their updated plan and there is a copy at the Town Office and one was sent to the Chair of the Planning Commission. There is a 30 day comment period and a public hearing will be held on August 27th at the Bethel Town House.

An email with comments on the proposed the Elizabeth Mine Solar Project was received from Carter Scott, an energy consultant who grew up in Strafford and has volunteered her expertise was received.

A letter of support for the Elizabeth Mine Solar Project from the Mohlere and Emmerick families (76-78 Mine Road).

3.) Minutes:

Brent moved and Steve seconded a motion to adopt the minutes of July 22nd and of July 29th. A change was made to the July 22nd minutes to reflect the correct date of July 8th for approval of minutes. The minutes were approved unanimously.

4.) General

Selectboard comment on Elizabeth Mine project formal proposal - The Selectboard received on July 22nd the formal Proposed Elizabeth Mine Solar Project – Mine Road, Strafford and Thetford, Vermont 45-Notice of Petition to be filed at the Vermont Public Service Board soon after the 45 day comment period. John drafted two letters with concerns for the Board to consider. The first, RE: Concerns Over Safety and Effect on Strafford Infrastructure which has to do with traffic safety and effect on the Town's infrastructure. A copy of that letter is attached. The letter was approved with some minor changes. A section of the proposal called "Act 250 Municipal Impact Questionnaire" was completed by the Selectboard and addresses some of these issues. The Board agreed to wording suggested by Dori regarding Fire Protection, Rescue Service, and Solid Waste Disposal. It was noted that there is limited immediate police protection and was suggested that the Thetford Police Department be considered as a first responder as much of the facility will be built across the town line in Thetford. The Board incorporated its concerns on safety and infrastructure noted in its letter into this section as well.

Next, the Board discussed the issue of whether the renewable energy credits would be used to offset the new State requirements that 55% of residential energy needs in Vermont come from renewable sources. A recent published commentary by Professor Kevin B. Jones, head of the Energy Clinic at Vermont Law School, noted that most large renewable energy projects in our State sell their renewable energy credits to other states.

While meeting Vermont's renewable energy needs was cited by the developers as one of the benefits of the project. During a phone call John had with Dorothy Schnure, Corporate Spokesperson for Green Mountain Power, when asked said that initially only 10 to 20% of the renewable energy credits from this project are

anticipated to go to meeting Vermont's renewable energy needs and 80 to 90% will be sold to other states. John made a motion to approve the second letter RE: Selectboard Comments on Renewable Energy Credits and Letter of Support, and Toni seconded to send to the Public Service Board. There was considerable discussion among Board members and the public regarding the issue. Toni made a motion to amend the letter and Brent seconded to instead of the Board withdrawing support from the project to making the Board's support of the project contingent on 100% of the renewable energy credits going to the State of Vermont by 2017. All approved. There was further discussion with regard to the last two paragraphs, so Toni made a motion and Steve seconded to amend the letter. All approved and the letter will be sent to the Public Service Board. A copy of the approved letter is attached to these minutes.

Dead trees on Evergreen Cemetery and update on elm on Town Common – Town Tree Warden Bob Wilson provided the Board with an estimate from Old City Fall Tree Service for grinding the stump of the elm (which was taken down by former tree warden Matt Perry as a volunteer) and for removal of the two large dead maples in the town right of way in front of the Evergreen Cemetery in South Strafford. There is no money in the budget specifically earmarked for tree removal and the Board discussed options including seeing if this was something practical for the Road Crew to do and if there was a place they could dispose of the brush. Brent will ask Jon MacKinnon to look over the possibilities and make a recommendation. John will check with the Trustees of Public Funds to see if this might be something that money from the Newton Fund might be applied to.

Dog Kennel Update – There is nothing new to report due to being unable to coordinate various summer schedules with the volunteers who will be building the kennel.

Park and Ride Policy – John reported the that the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) has no model policies regarding Park and Rides and problems with cars being left for extended periods of time. To date the public has been very cooperative when there has been a problem. Lisa said she will check with other Town Clerks to see if they have policies in their towns.

Body Camera Update – Nothing new to report.

Cell phone and VTel update – Nothing new to report. Steve will continue to follow up on the cell phones on Rte. 132 and John will continue to follow up on the VTel wireless broadband project.

EPA Superfund update meeting on July 30 and report on next are of their work - John attended the meeting and reported that while Lords Brook now meets State water quality standards and has been taken off the list of impaired waterways, another 10 million dollars of work is being proposed for 3,700 feet of tributaries to Lords Brook. This would necessitate between 2,000 to 3,000 truckloads of material coming to the site. There is also another 2 million dollars of work to be done to put in a passive treatment system to replace the current treatment plant being operated at the base of the consolidated tailing pile. Work would be done if money is available in 2017 and would not interfere with the proposed solar project. The EPA will be asked to assess the Tyson Bridge, Tyson Road and Mine Road before and after trucking and as in the past make repairs if needed.

Budget Update - Lisa provided the Board with budget figures through July. She felt that overall we were staying well within our budget.

Audit Review - The audit of the financial statements of the Town as of December 31, 2014 by Fothergill Segale & Valley, Certified Public Accountants has been completed. Financial Highlights included that “The Town's net position (total assets less total liabilities) increased by \$13,770, or nearly 0.5% as a result of this year's operations, from a net position of \$2,756,012 to \$2,769,782” The report “noted no transactions entered into by the Town during the year for which there is a lack of authoritative guidance or consensus. All significant transactions have been recognized in financial statements in the proper period.” There were eleven proposed adjusting entries to the financial statements. Lisa brought to the Board's attention that under the section

regarding FEMA project after Hurricane Irene from previous years that the audit “noted that the revenues and expenses corresponding with the federal expenditures were not appropriately recorded until suggested in our audit. The books were not being kept on a full accrual basis.” One of the adjustments has resulted in a \$58,000 decrease in FEMA revenue, however if FEMA reimburses the Town for the unexpected expenditures of approximately \$40,000 the net effect would be \$18,000 in reduced revenue. The report will be reviewed further by the Board with the assistance of Nellie Pennington and Lisa to determine the overall effect these adjustments have on the 2014 financial statements which will affect the 2015 finances. Brent made a motion to accept the audit report by signing the management representation letter and Brian seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

Lisa recommended that the Board consider budgeting for yearly outside audits in order to catch errors. Previous to the audit for 2014, the last outside audit was in 2011 and if there had been yearly outside audits, the errors with accounting for FEMA revenues and expenses would have been caught much earlier.

Through the continuing education programs of the Vermont Municipal Clerks’ and Treasurers’ Association Lisa has received her CVC (Certified Vermont Clerk) and CVT (Certified Vermont Treasurer) certification and Regina received her Assistant Certified Vermont Clerk certification.

Office Keys - Lisa brought up a concern regarding tracking town office keys for which she has responsible. In her investigations she found that according to the VLCT “it is the Selectboard decision of who should have keys to town facilities”. They recommended that “the Selectboard should adopt a policy and that policy should insure that the other elected officials in the town have access to the town offices to carry out their duties”. We currently do not have a policy. Lisa provided the Board with a policy used by the Town of Pawlet, VT and a list of those who have keys to facilities in town. She has also been researching what other towns do since VLCT has no model policies. Brent reported that the security code for Town Garage has not been changed and will follow up with Jon when he gets back from vacation. It was decided to put a policy for access to town facilities on the agenda for the next Selectboard meeting. In the meantime Lisa and Jon will make recommendations to the Board on what they feel would be most appropriate for our town.

Town Highways and Equipment-Salt Contract - Brent reported that summer work was continuing and no major issues. Toni brought up an email the town received regarding a state bid price for road salt. Brent and Lisa reported that Jon was able to negotiate a lower price than what was being offered by the State.

6.) Other - Lisa brought to the Board's attention the vacancies in the position of auditor and fence viewer. No one has yet applied to the open auditor position. While it is required that this position be advertised as open, it is not required to have it filled and if no one comes forward it will remain vacant as well as the position of fence viewer until Town Meeting 2016.

Brent made a motion to adjourn and Steve seconded. All approved and the meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Next Meetings:

Regular Board Meeting at Town Office on August 26, 2015 at 6 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Toni M. Pippy

