

**Strafford Selectboard Regular Meeting Minutes**  
Wednesday, July 12, 2023, 6:00 pm  
Town Office, 227 Justin Morrill Hwy, Strafford, 05072

Members participating: John Freitag, Jeff Solsaa, David Paganelli.

Other participants in person: Robert Childs, Ed Eastman.

Via zoom: Bob Bushnell, Trey and Olivia Piepmeier, Rocky Fuller, Lisa Bragg.

1. Meeting called to order at 6:00 p.m.. John Freitag the Guidelines for Selectboard Conduct aloud.
2. Public Concerns. None.
3. Minutes of the June 28, 2023 meeting were approved with minor amendment to include approval of driveway access permit.

Reviewed the draft minutes of the 7/11/23 Emergency Selectboard meeting and agreed to consider them at our next meeting.

4. Highway.
  - a. Jeff reported on flood damage and road repairs. The day following the storm, a the road crew, selectboard and volunteers surveyed and documented flood damage to all the roads in town. Thank you to all of those that helped. Once the assessment was complete, Paul Hardy mustered multiple six contractors to do initial road repairs and arranged for 6-8 dump trucks to bring a steady flow of road materials to the contractors. As a result, by the end of the day today (2 days after the storm) all Strafford roads are passable except for Freeman Road where a bridge was washed out. Jeff is working with the State of Vermont to see if a temporary bridge can be installed there as soon as possible.
  - b. The Selectboard expressed appreciation to Lisa Bragg for effectively coordinating the emergency response, and to the town road crew for their rapid repair response to ensure safe travel on all Strafford roads. We also thank all the other town officials and volunteers that worked together to document the damage and communicate with the public. Very impressive.
  - c. John Freitag made a motion to approve a \$500 bonus to all town employees, and to Jeff Solsaa as the Selectboard liaison to the Highway Department, in appreciation for the extraordinary effort extended during the storm response. Regina's bonus to be prorated. The motion was approved.
  - d. Initial estimates of total damage to our road infrastructure are between two and three million dollars. It is expected that FEMA will ultimately pay 75% of repair costs, with the State of Vermont contributing an additional 12-13%. Remaining cost will be the responsibility of the town. Repair work is expected to take several weeks.

- e. Repairs to Route 132 from Tyson Road to the Thetford town line will take several weeks and will require a detour on Mine Road to Gove Hill Road. It is expected that the cost to repair Route 132 will be paid through a federal grant and that 100% of costs will be covered by the grant. Jeff will notify the Selectboards in Sharon and Thetford of the temporary closure of Route 132 so that they can make their citizens aware.
  - f. The Selectboard authorized Stephanie to assist Lisa with administrative duties. Lisa stated that Stephanie's time would likely be covered by FEMA.
  - g. The Selectboard decided to hold a Special Selectboard meeting at 6:00 p.m. on July 19<sup>th</sup> to update everyone on storm recovery efforts and all other highway-related matters.
5. Selectboard and Conservation Commission Vacancies. The board has received notice from Rodney Sloat that he has resigned from the Selectboard due to a family medical emergency. The Selectboard thanks Rodney for his service and wishes him and his family well. The Selectboard will notify the public that a vacancy on the Selectboard now exists and that interested citizens are invited to submit a letter of interest to the Town Clerk by July 24<sup>th</sup>, to be considered by the Selectboard at the July 26<sup>th</sup> meeting.

The Strafford Conservation Commission asked for clarification of the process of appointing new members. The Selectboard agreed that the Conservation Commission should recommend a suitable person to fill any vacancy and the Selectboard will consider that recommendation.

6. Robert Childs, a Tunbridge resident, and former military policeman presented an idea he has for improving policing in the area. He suggested that the Orange County Sherriff may not be providing adequate policing services to local towns. He further suggested that several towns might share policing time that could be provided by the Windsor County Sherriff. He recommended that a committee be formed to discuss policing options and Jeff Solsaa volunteered to participate as a representative from Strafford.

John Freitag explained to Mr. Childs that we have a current agreement with the Orange County Sherriff for policework, and that we are bound to see that contract through to completion before we could enter into any other agreement. John will ask the Orange County Sherriff to limit Strafford patrols to the two villages and focus on speed violators. John also credited constable Ed Eastman with having a significant positive impact on public safety in Strafford.

7. Town Office Update. David explained that we have an application in with the DRB requesting a variance to the minimum lot size for Morgan Smith, so that he may give 0.05 acres to the town for the town office project. David, plans to attend the DRB hearing on July 19<sup>th</sup> to advocate for the variance. Donald Graham, chair of the planning commission will attend. Rocky Fuller suggested that the Town Office Committee and the full Selectboard should attend the hearing to demonstrate the full support of the town for the variance and to help communicate the importance of the variance to our ability to advance with the modernization and expansion of the Town Office. Jeff Solsaa and John Freitag both expressed their intent to attend.
8. Unlicensed Dogs. John informed the Selectboard that letters have gone out to the remaining dog owners (approximately six) that have so far declined to license their dogs. The letters explain that the town is authorized to impound unlicensed dogs and may reluctantly proceed

with that option if warning letters are ignored. For the safety of all our residents and our dogs, all dogs need to be licensed and vaccinated against rabies.

9. Unified By-laws. John told the Board that the Planning Commission plans to hold a meeting on July 18<sup>th</sup> to solicit public input on both the Unified By-Laws and a proposed Flood Ordinance. It was agreed that when the town vote is set for the Unified By-Laws, the vote for the Flood Ordinance should be considered at the same time.
10. Grant Updates. Stephanie has been exploring energy efficiency grants that might be used to weatherize the Town Garage.
11. Federal Infrastructure Funds. John asked for and received Selectboard approval to suggest to VLCT that Federal Infrastructure Funds be shared with all towns, rather than be allocated to some, but not others. He noted that ALL towns have infrastructure needs, so why not just distribute the funds to all communities, large and small.
12. Correspondence from the Coburn family clarifying their intent in allowing parking on lands they own across from the Town Office. The family wants that parking area to be used solely for the Town Office during business hours, and then by the general public as needed after hours.  
  
Lisa Bragg asked why her specific comments at the June 28<sup>th</sup> Selectboard meeting were not included in the minutes. David explained that the minutes are a summary of what happens at a meeting rather than a transcript of all comments, and some editing is necessary to keep the minutes to a reasonable length. Jeff suggested that all persons that offer comment at public meetings should be acknowledged in the minutes.
13. Strafford Parking Map. Jeff suggested that Winter parking should be prohibited along the Brook Road edge of the Common to allow for snow removal. John explained that such a prohibition would require a public process and he will inquire with VLCT to better understand what would be needed to establish or modify a parking ordinance.
14. Liaison Update. John shared that the concerns about drainage at the gym had been addressed.
15. Executive Session: A motion was made and approved to discuss legal issues related to the Stanley parcel. No action taken.
16. Executive Session: A motion was made and all approved to personnel issues related to the Highway Department. No action taken.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m..

Respectfully submitted,

David Paganelli