

Strafford Selectboard Regular Meeting Minutes
Wednesday June 14, 2023 6 pm
Town Office 227 Justin Morrill Hwy, Strafford Vermont 05072

Member participants in person: Rod Sloat, David Paganelli, John Freitag, Brian Johnson, Jeff Solsaa
Other participants in person: John Echeverria, Javon Amanante, Donald Graham, Bonnie Bergeron
Other participants by zoom: Jeff Solsaa till 7pm, Lisa Bragg, Greg Collins, Rocky Fuller, Kyle Katz

Meeting called to order at 6pm. Reading of Guidelines for Selectboard Conduct

Public Concerns – Javon Amanante had concerns regarding impact to his property from the bridge project now happening on the Justin Morrill Highway to Tunbridge. The Board will do all it can to make sure things are made as right as possible after project is completed. Selectboard Highway Dept. liaison Solsaa will meet on site with Amanante.

Reviewed and those who had been at the meetings all approved minutes as written from the Special Meetings on May 8 and June 2, as well the Regular Meeting on May 24, 2023

Highways

Rte. 132 from South Strafford to the Thetford town line is now being paved. One lane started and completed today. Road crew will do whatever ditching is needed using backhoe with wheels so as to not damage the new pavement.

Board reviewed and approved extension of contract for chloride tank system at Town Garage.

Tax Anticipation Note

Board members all approved and signed a tax anticipation note to allow Town Treasurer to access funds needed to pay bills before revenue comes in from property taxes. Town which is on a calendar year budget that starts on January 1, does not have tax bills begin to be due till September 1. Town Treasurer Lisa Bragg manages to use town funds in such a way as to not have to borrow funds till late Spring Solsaa expressed his displeasure with having to borrow money and pay interest He will investigate finding a better way.

Sale of Town Properties

The Board received a legal opinion from our attorney Brooke Trottier regarding needed way to handle the sale of Town properties which includes public warnings. She will draw up what is legally needed and the Town Clerk will handle posting in town and newspaper. This will apply to both the Blanchard Road property and the Rte.132 property.

Bonnie Bergeron, the Real Estate Broker working on the sales of the Town properties, presented the Board with an offer of \$72,000 for the Rte. 132 property at the top of Sharon hill which Town listed for \$80,000. A motion was made and seconded to accept the offer and proceed with the sale. Johnson, Solsaa and Freitag yea, Paganelli and Sloat no. Sale will proceed.

The Board discussed concerns raised by Delinquent Tax Collector Jeanne Castro over how much a Town could keep beyond costs from the sale of a property acquired through a tax sale. An opinion was shared from the Vermont League of Cities and Towns indicating that this was in their opinion unsettled law and they felt in this instance a past case did not apply. VLCT suggested having a Town attorney review and the Board all agree to have Brooke Trottier do just that.

United By-Laws

The Selectboard has received from the Planning Commission proposed Unified By-Laws which, if approved, will replace current zoning and sub-division regulations. Donald Graham, Chair of the Planning Commission, outlined significant changes. Kyle Katz from the Regional Planning Commission outlined the steps the Board will need to take now which includes a public hearing and then Town vote by Australian Ballot.

Graham spoke to the issue of the Town Office's need for a sliver of land for a proposed addition. He pointed out that there is currently, and will be in the new regulations, the ability to apply for a sub-division that allows for a nonconforming lot. Previous attempts in the village areas have tried to use lot line adjustments to make changes and not the sub-division process. Graham felt there was no need to change the zoning regulations in this regard. Paganelli will work to have a subdivision proposal for the land needed for the Town Office go before the DRB at their July meeting.

Bridge 30 Update

John Echeverria updated the Board that a \$300,000 Northern Borders Grant has been submitted for the project. The State Agency of Transportation has approved a \$200,000 structures grant for Bridge 30 as well. It is possible the Transportation Grant already received of \$300,000 will be upgraded to \$600,000.

Town Office

The Board discussed ECFiber moving their Hub out of the interior of the Town Office and to an exterior site at the Library. They prefer having an exterior site and with construction needing to take place at the Town Office over the next year or so, this is a good time to make the move to ensure continued service. It will mean the loss of rent revenue which was provided in terms of ECFiber services. Solsaa will be in contact with ECFiber to see what arrangements and credits to the Town will still remain after the move.

Unlicensed Dogs

The Board received from the Town Clerk per statute a list of dogs not licensed or inoculated as required by law. Solsaa made a motion, that was seconded and all approved that if the owners are not compliant by the next Board meeting of June 28 the Selectboard will need to take further action which their responsibilities for their dogs, which may include impoundment. Freitag will call owners before the meeting.

Grants

Grant Manager Stephanie Slayton has prepared a Safety Grant application for fog line markings at the edge of the Justin Morrill Highway. A motion was made, seconded and all approved applying for the grant.

Emergency Management Director Jason Shumacher forwarded information on flood mitigation grant funds. Sloat will stay in touch with Slayton to see if this is worth pursuing.

Correspondence

Arthur Hanchett sent an email regarding the program known as Muncibid and suggested the town look into it. Solsaa, the Board's highway liaison said they are already using this service.

Letter from Chris Behr and John Sakalowski regarding flagging on their property. Freitag will follow-up.

Other

The Board approved signing the contract for Jeff Grout, our shared with other towns, energy consultant.

The Board noted that an old over budget bill December of 2022 from the Orange County Sheriff's Office was a mistake and this has already been previously rejected. Johnson will follow up with the Town Clerk to let them know.

Jeff will contact Town Clerk about notifying our IT person on problems with video on our zoom.

The Board all voted to go into Executive Session at 8:30 to discuss a legal issue.

The Board came out of Executive Session at 8:43pm

A motion was made second and approved by all to approve our attorney sending a letter to the residences and Nationwide Servicing Center regarding a property line dispute on Mine Road.

Motion made, seconded and all approved to adjourn at 8:45pm

Respectfully submitted,
John Freitag