

Strafford Selectboard Meeting
September 27, 2023 6pm
Town Office Building, Strafford Vermont

Selectboard members participating in the meeting: Brian Johnson, Jeff Solsaa, John Freitag, Hannah Levinger, for part of the meeting

Attending in person: Donald Graham, Martha Walke, Michael Mann
Attending via zoom: Lisa Bragg, Christa Wurm, Kate Cassidy

Call to order: Reading of Guidelines for Selectboard Conduct

Public Concerns

Christa Wurm brought up a concern over how Town Meeting would be handled in March now that we have voted to go to Australian Ballot. It was explained that there would be a public meeting for discussion of the articles on the warning on the Saturday before the first Tuesday in March. Voting on the Articles for the Warning would be done by ballot and ballots counted on that Tuesday. It is hoped that the PTA will still do a lunch and that the meetings for the Town and School on Saturday, although no voting or amendments can be made, will still be a valuable time for our community to come and discuss the decisions that will be made. Christa expressed her desire to help make this new form of Town Meeting and voting work.

Michael Mann, from the Justin Morrill Driftskippers Snowmobile Club, came in to talk about using a portion of the Town's Whitcomb Hill property to connect a part of their trail system. Last year, due to landowner changes, the Club was unable to connect their trail and they were granted use of Alger Brook Road, which they and the Selectboard did not feel was an ideal solution. Mann explained that they had managed to re-route the trail in a way that garnered landowner acceptance but they need to complete it to cross the Town's Whitcomb Hill property. Jeff made a motion to approve their proposed trail, which would skirt the top of the hill and go around the base of the town owned property. Freitag felt uncomfortable not having the Conservation Commission, who manages the area have a chance to have input. Mann said he would be willing to meet with the Conservation Commission. Jeff and Brian voted aye, John no, Hannah abstained and the motion passed. (since then it has been determined that as this was not a warned article on the agenda, it will need to be re-voted at the next regular Board meeting). At this point in the meeting Hannah who was feeling unwell left the meeting.

Highways

A motion was made and approved by all members present to sign contracts for services for FEMA work done by contractors. Three contracts were available to be signed, others will be signed as they come back from contractors to the Town Office.

Spaneas driveway permit was approved

Selectboard Highway Liaison Jeff Solsaa proposed that the Assistant Road Foreman position be filled by Ryan Kennedy. Board approved Jeff meeting with Road Foreman PD Hardy and Ryan to review and adjust job description and to come back to the next Board meeting with it and recommendation on compensation adjustment for new responsibilities.

Budget

Town Clerk/Town Treasurer Lisa Bragg went over budget to date with the Board and answered questions. Except for July storm event, we appear to be overall on track.

Unified ByLaw and Flood Hazard Ordinance

The warning has gone out for Selectboard public hearing on Saturday October 14, 2023 at 1pm at the Newton Elementary School. It will be held in Mr. Walkers room . Newton School library/media specialist Simone Pyle will handle the technology so whatever section will be able to be projected for all to see when it is discussed. Planning Commission Chair Donald Graham, who is most familiar with all the provisions will attend the meeting to help answer any questions. Graham presented the Board an updated Planning Commission Reporting Form for Municipal ByLaw Amendments which list the major changes being considered. Links to this form and the Unified Bylaw and Flood Ordinance are now on the homepage of the Strafford Town website: www.straffordvt.org All Selectboard members affirmed their appreciation for the work done by the Planning Commission and support of the updated Unified ByLaw and Flood Hazard Ordinance which will be voted on by the Town by Australian Ballot on November 16, 2023.

Town Office

Selectboard Chair John Freitag updated the Board that Morgan Smith has completed and mailed in the subdivision application needed to proceed with his gift of land to allow an addition be built to the Town Office. Freitag said according to Development Review Board Secretary Bonnie Bergeron once the subdivision application is recorded and the Mylar filed the approval is complete.

In regards to the land transfer, the attorney the Town uses, Brooke Trottier, has contacted the wastewater division in regards to the need for a permit. A boundary line adjustment form needs to be filled out and letter sent asking for approval. Tom Otterman, who did the survey has been asked to take care of this.

Freitag then relayed to the Board his discussion with Peder Rude and Issac Wagner, grant writers provided by the State for this project. Peder has followed up since the last meeting with Steve Kerdell, the point person from gbA architects who did the conceptual drawings for the current Town Office project. There was a good exchange of information. Currently a Congressional Directed Spending (CDS) authorization for \$325,000 for restoration of the Town Office Building is part of the Senate passed budget. The budget has not been passed by the House and it looks like it will be at least another month or more before that happens and we will know if we have been awarded the funds. Detailed drawings will be needed at that time to go forward with that grant as well as to apply for other grants including a \$150,000 handicapped accessibility grant and a \$100,000 Outstanding Historic Building grant.

It the discussion that followed Board members decided to wait until we see if the CDS grant comes through before spending more funds and taking action. In the meantime gbA is willing to do a rough estimate of the cost of design part of the project. It was felt by Board members that while there is money in a Town Office reserve fund, there would be a need to get Town approval before any significant expenditures were made.

Representative to the South Royalton Area Senior Center

The Board re-appointed Susan Coburn to a three year term.

Infrastructure Meeting

There will be a public information meeting on Town Infrastructure on Saturday October 21 at Barrett Hall to update the public on the significant needs and possible adjustments that will need to be made for our system of highways and bridges.

Dog issue

A problem with dogs is taking place and there is a disagreement between neighbors. As this is occurring on private property what the Town and Selectboard can do is limited to the requirements of dog owners to adhere to the Town Dog Ordinance to which all parties have been directed.

Errors and Omissions

The Board approved and signed an errors and omissions adjustment presented by the Listers.

Liaison Updates

Freitag presented a letter of support for a grant the Strafford Historical Society is seeking. Board approved sending

Correspondence

The Board received a letter from the Vermont Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Association notifying know that Lisa Bragg and Regina Josler completed the requirements for Certified Vermont Clerk, Cum Laude. This advanced certification reflects their continued education in their profession. The Board appreciates the work they do to continually improve the skills they need to serve our community.

An email was received from Olivia and Trey Piepmier concerning the condition of the Brook Road and plans for repair. Freitag will answer.

Stanley Property – Freitag updated the Board on progress surveyor Tom Otterman is making regarding a boundary dispute between this land owned by the Town with a neighboring property.

A motion was made to adjourn at 7:52 pm All approved.

Respectfully submitted,
John Freitag