

**Strafford Selectboard Regular Meeting Minutes**  
Wednesday, June 28, 2023, 6:00 pm  
Town Office, 227 Justin Morrill Hwy, Strafford, 05072

Members participating: John Freitag, Jeff Solsaa, David Paganelli, Brian Johnson, Rodney Sloat.

Other participants in person: Jessica Tidman, Calvin Benjamin, Phoebe Mix, Jason Loomis, Sandy Preston, Lisa Bragg, Bonnie Bergeron, Martha Walke.

Via zoom: None.

Meeting called to order at 6:00 p.m.. John Freitag read aloud the Guidelines for Selectboard Conduct.

1. Public Concerns. Jason Loomis spoke about an incident this last week where smoke from a permitted brush burning, in combination with smoke from Canadian forest fires, impacted the soccer camp he was leading at the recreation field. He went to the site of the fire and instructed that the permitted brush fire be immediately extinguished. The landowner declined to do so. Calvin Benjamin, the Strafford Fire Warden and the contractor burning the brush, explained that they had been waiting for safe conditions to burn and when they had a window of opportunity, they started the fire. At that time, they did not know about the soccer camp or that smoke from the fire might impact the participants. Once the fire was fully engaged, it was decided to complete the burn, rather than extinguish it and try to restart it at a later date.

The Selectboard understands that there was a communication issue here that resulted in stress to both parties, and resolved to place this matter on the agenda of a future meeting with the intention of developing a communication protocol for special events. Such a protocol would likely include recommendations for active communication with the Fire Warden, prior to planned events, so that the Fire Warden could incorporate that information into permitting decisions.

Jeff Solsaa raised a concern about speeding in the two villages. He mentioned that the Windsor County Sherriff's Office might be willing to do some contract policing for the town.

2. Minutes of the June 4, 2023 meeting were approved with minor corrections.
3. Highway.
  - a. Jeff reported on the paving project on Route 132 from South Strafford village to the Thetford town line. The work is complete and appears to be well done. The paving, emulsion costs were slightly higher than estimated and additional money was needed to complete the project. A motion was made to pay the extra cost to complete the project, with the additional money to come from the highway budget. Unanimously approved.
  - b. Vacant position. Jeff recommends aggressively advertising our vacancy in area newspapers. The Selectboard agreed that this was necessary and authorized Jeff to do so.
  - c. Our new town truck is expected to be delivered at the end of July.
  - d. Rod reported that our Grant Manager, Stephanie Slayton, has completed and submitted a fog line painting grant for the Justin Morrill Highway between the two villages.

- e. Jeff relays that Paul (PD) Hardy, believes we will run short of gravel by Spring. We have approximately \$28,000 remaining in the Highway budget for gravel and the Selectboard approved purchase now of that much gravel, with re-evaluation of the situation in July when updated budget information is available.
4. Bonnie Bergeron explained that current DRB fees do not cover review and processing costs of applications and suggested a range of increased fees. A motion was made to approve the increase in DRB fees as recommended, and the Selectboard approved the motion with the understanding that costs will continue to be monitored and future fees will be adjusted as necessary to cover actual costs.
5. The DRB, represented by Bonnie Bergeron and Martha Walke asked for confirmation that the Selectboard considered the parking plan developed in 2012 to be the current parking plan for Strafford village. The reason for the inquiry is to be assured that the Selectboard believes there is adequate parking for the proposed Café at the Brick Store. The Selectboard confirmed that this parking map, though imperfect, had been developed with public input, had been approved, appears to be reasonable and until it is replaced by another parking plan, remains in effect.
6. Town Office Modernization/Expansion project update from David Paganelli and Jeff Solsaa. David explained that based upon a discussion with Donald Graham, Planning Commission Chair, it appears that the DRB has authority to grant a variance to the minimum lot size of Morgan Smith, that would allow him to give 0.05 acres to the town for the town office project. David, Morgan Smith and Lisa Bragg worked together to submit an application for zoning variance to the DRB for a hearing at the July 19<sup>th</sup> meeting. Jeff updated the Selectboard on discussions with EC Fiber regarding maintenance of a hub at the town office. Apparently, EC Fiber has considered relocating the hub from the town office to another location, but is willing to discuss leaving the hub in place. This would result in ongoing service savings to the town, in exchange for hosting the hub.
7. John gave an update on attempts to contact owners of unlicensed dogs to encourage them to pay the license fees and vaccinate their pets for rabies. There has been some positive response, but many dog owners have not licensed their dogs or properly vaccinated them. The Selectboard agreed to send letters to violators warning of the possibility of impounding of unlicensed and/or unvaccinated dogs.
8. Unified Bylaws. Martha Walke implored the Selectboard to carefully read and study the Strafford Vermont Unified Bylaw. She explained that this document is the product of many years of effort by many volunteers and members of the public and it deserves careful and thoughtful consideration. John Freitag proposed a schedule for Selectboard review and comment, followed by public hearing and a town vote. Martha expressed the opinion that the proposed schedule might not allow enough time for review and comment and the Selectboard agreed to extend the schedule.
9. Rod updated us on various transportation and housing grants that are being investigated.
10. Jeff proposed that the town develop a 10-year infrastructure plan for bridge repair/replacement, paving and other road projects. Such a plan, in combination with an equipment replacement plan (already in place) and a building construction and maintenance plan, would allow better

financial planning. John Freitag suggested that the Vermont Agency of Transportation might help with such a plan and that we should also look at our current town roads to determine if there are any that should be discontinued or reclassified. Jeff will meet with staff from the Agency of Transportation in the coming week to examine several bridges in town to prioritize those of greatest need of repair. The Selectboard is very supportive of the concept of a 10-year infrastructure plan and John and Jeff will work together to begin the process.

11. Liaison Update. John told the Selectboard that the Superintendent of Schools has shared concerns about drainage issues at the gym. John will meet with him to gain a better understanding of his concerns.
12. Executive Session: A motion was made and approved to direct our attorney to re-mail a letter to Nationwide Servicing Center, Inc., the owner of the property adjoining the Stanley parcel, in which there is a property line dispute.
13. Executive Session: A motion was made and all approved to give Jeff authority to negotiate new offers for Highway Department personnel.

Meeting adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

David Paganelli