

Special Strafford Selectboard Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 6, 2021, 6:00 pm via Zoom

Selectboard members participating: Toni Pippy, Pat Kelly, Rett Emerson, Mary Linehan, Brent Cadwell

Others participating: Lisa Bragg, Katrina DeCoff-Webster, John Freitag, Chuck Sherman, Ellen Langtree, Dorian Yates, Doc Bagley, Geoff Martin, Mark Moran, Brett Tofel, Hilary Linehan

Selectboard meeting called to order at 6:01 pm

Public Concerns - none

Town Highways and Equipment Update

Jon MacKinnon not present. New town truck has arrived

Highway Correspondence

- Paul Gillies, RE: Town of Strafford Roads. In response to a Selectboard request regarding land ownership and access rights (specifically related to road ditching and removal of trees to mitigate the Emerald Ash Borer), Gillies clarified that the town does not "own" the underlying fee of the land over which the highways pass. These belong to the successors of the landowners whose land was first burdened by the highway. But the town has complete control over that land. The trees on the land belong to the landowners, but the town can have them cut, if the correct procedures are followed. And then the wood should be offered to the landowner.

General Correspondence

- Steve Willbanks, RE: Quit Claim Deed. Selectboard liaison is investigating the issue, but no additional information is available at this time
- Ed Hathaway, RE: Elizabeth Mine Update for December 2020. Highlight of the report: deer and moose are now present on the site
- Charles Denton, RE: Dog Nuisance Complaint – Dec 27, 2020. Mark Moran requested clarification of the complaint made against him. Moran wanted the Selectboard to know that he is not interested in continuing the conflict and is doing his best to address the concern. Reported that a citation was presented to him by Sgt Bariteau, and Moran denied the claim. Denton and Moran participated in a zoom hearing on December 2, 2020, Complaint #90891M. The judge found that the Moran dogs do bark, which Moran does not deny. The judge did not find that the Moran dogs disturb the peace of the neighborhood, as restricted in the Town Dog Ordinance. Moran is attempting to take reasonable actions, including collars which restrict the activities of his dogs, noting that where he lives there are bear, coyotes and other animals which his dogs may respond to.
- Julie Benjamin, RE: Letter. Liaison reported that a response to the letter was provided to the Benjamins clarifying the process used to identify junkyards and advising how to respond if they want to question the finding.
- Geoff Martin, RE: Intermunicipal Regional Energy Coordinator December Progress Report. Doc Bagley clarified that he is serving as acting chair of SEC due to the resignation of Kevin Grady. A vacancy for the SEC should be posted to attract a new member, Doc will work with

Town Clerk to post the position. Doc has also taken on the role as liaison with the Intermunicipal Regional Energy Coordinator, Geoff Martin. Geoff Martin was present to answer questions about the December IREC report. Martin clarified how the solar credits work: the Town receives a 10% discount on the GMP power bill from the solar array, which is credited to the Town's account. Continued support from the IREC for 2021 could include: assist Town to meet its commitments under the Climate Emergency Resolution, Energy services company for efficiency improvements; identify potential fuel savings for vehicle fleet (currently spending \$40,000 annually). Martin noted that Strafford is a bit unique in that it does not have the same opportunities as some other towns in the intermunicipal agreement for energy savings in municipal buildings.

Motion passed to approve minutes to the December 16 regular and December 28th Special meeting.

Recreation Board Items

Hilary Linehan presented three issues the Rec Board would like to prioritize. The ice skating rink is the most urgent issue due to seasonality.

- Ice skating—Manpower for flooding a rink is not available this year. However, a private landowner has offered to let the Town use their pond as a skating rink for limited days and hours. Chair noted the need to confirm with PACIF that the Town's insurance will cover it and before the Selectboard can approve use of the pond. Landowner should also consult their insurance agent. Liaison will work with Jason Loomis to follow up on the skating rink and insurance issues.
- Tennis court use in the past year has resulted in gouges in the court, likely due to bicycle pedals, scooters or other hard items. Bicycles are now restricted to riding outside the tennis court lines to avoid further damage. Rec Board notes that bicyclers and skateboarders need space, and tennis players need space. Rec board requests possible use of the Park and Ride lot for temporary skateboard park during the summer, or part of the Red Barn parking area, to provide separate space for skateboarders.
- Steps to river. Rec board would like to put in place a designated and safer entry point to the river near the Pocket Park, using volunteer labor for stone placement and preparing the path. Chair noted that an on-going concern has been the likelihood that the steps will be washed out, and safety may be compromised. John Freitag suggested that we engage the Town's insurance agent to advise; noted that the Town Clerk and Liaison are already working on investigating appropriate measures.

Town Meeting

- Article – to allow sales of cannabis products in Strafford. Requests have been made to the Selectboard to consider including an article to allow sales of cannabis products in Strafford, opting into the new State authorization plan. A Cannabis Control Board will be established by the State in October 2021, which will be the authority to grant licenses beginning in 2022. Discussion re: what kind of retail outlets might be approved, which depends on decisions to be made by the Cannabis Control Board still to be established. Selectboard agreed that the Development Review Board will need to have adequate oversight and approval of any proposed outlets.

Motion approved to include the following article on the Australian Ballot for 2021 Town Meeting:

Shall the town authorize cannabis retailers and integrated licensees in town pursuant to 7 V.S.A. § 863?

- Update of voting process. Plans for the Australian Ballot process have been initiated: a meeting was held with Sarah Root, representing the School Board, to clarify how we can best work together; the Town Clerk has prepared a detailed schedule and list of tasks to meet requirements and deadlines; a BCA meeting is planned for Jan 11 to vote to use the vote tabulator for the Town Meeting Australian Ballot and to set the location and time for in-person voting; and a communication plan has been drafted to ensure that voters understand the process and the timeline. The following timeline has been established to meet Australian Ballot requirements:

Date/Deadline	Event
Thursday Jan 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deadline for petitions for articles to be included on the ballot
Monday Jan 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Candidates for elected office must submit a consent form to the Town office. Forms are available at the Town Office and Coburns store
Wednesday Feb 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ballot must be finalized to be sent to voters• Warning posted for the informational hearing
Saturday Feb 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Informational Hearing for voters to discuss the Articles and ask questions of Selectboard and School Board• School meeting 10:00-12:00; Town meeting 1:00-3:00
Tuesday March 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Town Meeting Day—Polling Place open for in-person submission of ballot

2021 Budget draft

Chair presented first draft of budget line items for 2021 and clarified that an important underlying principle is to avoid raising taxes this year given the economic challenges and uncertainty for so many people in town. Final numbers are pending additional information from 2020 expenditures. Extensive discussion re: revenue opportunities, anticipated highway expenditures grants available, how to further improve oversight to ensure efficient use of funds, and next steps. Developing the budget will be a priority activity for the coming weeks and Selectboard members are encouraged to review each draft and provide feedback and input regularly.

Motion passed to adjourn meeting at 8:33 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Linehan
Reporting Clerk