

Strafford Selectboard Regular Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday April 26, 2023 6 pm  
Town Office 227 Justin Morrill Hwy, Strafford Vermont 05072

Members participants in person: David Paganelli, John Freitag, Brian Johnson at 7pm.

Members participants by zoom: Rod Sloat, Jeff Solsaa

Other participants in person: David Grant, Phoebe Mix, Bonnie Bergeron

Other participants by zoom: Stephen Willbanks, Ed Hathaway, John Schmeltzer, Rocky Fuller, Curt Albee

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

Public Concerns – no public concerns

Reviewed and all, with the exception of Solsaa who was not at that meeting, approved minutes of April 6 meeting

#### Highways

Solsaa gave update, crew still working on mud spots, things coming along.

The Annual Financial Plan for the highways, a state required document listing the miles of roads and amounts expected to be expended was reviewed, approved by all and signed.

Solsaa made a motion and it was seconded to increase the pay of road crew member Ryan Kennedy from \$21 per hour to \$23 per hour retroactive to April 1, 2023. Solsaa explained that Ryan has worked out very well since starting over a year ago on the crew and this increase had been anticipated and talked about by the previous Board but never instituted. All voted in favor.

Solsaa then explained that our efforts to hire a fourth member of the crew has been unsuccessful for well over a year. The position was advertised at \$19 per hour. Given the many towns looking to find road crew members, Solsaa made a motion which was seconded to raise the starting wage to between \$21 - \$23 per hour depending on qualifications. He noted as we are now a quarter of the way through the budget year with being one budgeted person short, there was room in the budget for this adjustment. All approved.

#### EPA – Stanley property

EPA Elizabeth Mine Project Manager Ed Hathaway and Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation official John Schmeltzer talked about ground water restrictions they would like to place on the Stanley property which is next to Elizabeth Mine Site. The Town acquired the property due to non-payment of taxes in 2022. The property is problematic as the State estimates it needs a \$35,000 clean up of debris left at the site by previous owners as well as the need to dispose of at least 100 tires. Selectboard members felt it was in the interest of all parties to get the parcel cleaned up and have restrictions placed upon its use. The Selectboard asked the State and EPA for help in cleaning up the site, who said it was unlikely there were any funds they had that could be used. Selectboard member David Paganelli was chosen to continue the discussion with the EPA and State on details of their proposal.

#### Sale of Town Properties

The previous Board had decided to look into selling three town owned properties and after comparing proposals picked real estate agent Bonnie Bergeron to handle the sales.

Selectboard member David Paganelli who is interested in one of the properties recused himself from the discussion and left to sit in the citizens section of the room. Bergeron presented an agreement to offer for sale a roughly 3 acre parcel at 442 Vermont Route 132 at the top of Sharon Hill which has been perk tested by Otterman Surveying and Septic which found it suitable for a 3 bedroom home for \$80,000. A motion was made, seconded, and all agreed to sign an agreement putting this property on the market. Bergeron presented the paperwork to put a second parcel, a roughly one acre lot at the end of Blanchard Road up for sale. She shared with the Board an assessment by Tom Otterman which found the development of this lot to be highly unlikely. A motion was made, seconded and all members participating voted in favor of signing an agreement to put the property on the market at \$15,000. Bergeron then explained that a small wedge shaped parcel near the corner of Miller Pond Road and Sawney Bean Road was problematic and needed some more work done before a sales agreement could be prepared. The Board decided to hold off on this parcel for now till more research was done.

#### Green Up Day

Becky Bailey is doing publicity, Jeff and John will be at Town Trucks in park and ride on Saturday morning May 6 from 9am to noon to accept bags of trash collected along the highways. No tires or large trash.

#### Grant update

A motion was made, seconded and all agreed to sign an invitation to participate in Vtrans Municipal Roads -Grant-in-aid program

Sloat reported that there have been multiple applicants for the grant position approved at Town Meeting. He and Town Clerk Bragg will continue with a few more interviews and he will bring before the Board the top two candidates for the Boards consideration. Final interviews and hiring should take place at a Special Meeting during the week of May 8.

Freitag reported that a scope of work for grant investigation and writing provided by a mini grant from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board has been submitted and work should soon start.

#### Town Office/Lister Office

Lister Office moved and just waiting for final insurance hurdle to be cleared before they can move in. Work almost all done on downstairs of Town Office. Emergency Management stuff still to be moved from upstairs. Freitag will work on this.

#### Town Office Committee Update

Committee is still waiting on word to see if adjusted land swap to add additional land needed will take place. Paganelli will continue to work on this. Town Office Committee scheduled a meeting for Thursday May 4 at 1:30 pm

Rocky Fuller was given permission by the Board to investigate an option of temporary space for the Town Office that will be needed during construction.

The Board approved giving its support to a Friends of the Morrill Homestead program in August marking the 140 anniversary of the gift of the Town Office Building by Justin Morrill as the town's first library.

#### Preservation Trust of Vermont Meet-Up Day on June 6 at the Town House

Freitag updated the Board on this event which focuses on revitalizing Vermont's smaller villages. Besides Rocky Fuller's participation around the restoration and maintenance of the Town House, three current Strafford projects in the works will be featured in a panel discussion on the opportunities and challenges they face. Laura Ogden will speak on the Strafford Historical Society building, David Grant on the bridge 30 project, and David Paganelli on the Town Office project.

#### Bridge 30 update

Due to Solsaa being in Texas, a meeting with State officials has been postponed till the week of May 1. The Board spoke with David Grant of the Bridge 30 group about the need to have a public meeting regarding the project. Grant said he would be glad to lead a presentation on the proposed project. A public information meeting will be scheduled for some time in the middle to late May

#### Town Common update

Trees are down and stumps ground up. Three trees along the Brook Road side will be planted soon.

#### Correspondence:

Lisa Durstin -Brook Rd. - Freitag will respond

Jacqueline Chase – Kibling Hill Rd, - Solsaa will respond

Byron Breese – retaining wall - Solsaa will respond

David Harris – park and ride wall – David offered to fix broken part of fence at the park and ride provided Town pay for materials. Motion made, seconded and all approved

#### Liaison Updates-

Paganelli reported that 14 people showed up to pull invasive plants at the Ashley Forest this past weekend.

#### Local Emergency Management Plan Annual Update -

The Board reviewed, motion made, seconded and all approved signing the annual update with changes in Selectboard contact. Freitag will make sure it gets in

Maple Hill Contract – In accordance with updated contract standards, Town Clerk Bragg prepared for the Board a contract with Matt Barker of Maple Hill Excavating for work with the town. A motion was made, seconded and approved to sign the contract The Board also approved of a small job for Barker on Maple Hill road.

Motion made, seconded and all approved to adjourn at 8:37 pm

Respectfully submitted,  
John Freitag