

# MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STRAFFORD SELECTBOARD

May 27, 2015

Members of the public body present: John Freitag, Steve Marx, Toni Pippy, Brent Cadwell, Brian Johnson

Other active participants: Lisa Kendall, Town Clerk, Jennifer Brown, Herald of Randolph Reporter, Chris Gex, Steve Gex, Dori Wolfe, Recycling Committee and Wolfe Energy, Martha Walke, Jeanne McMahan, Marie Ricketts, Lee Vormelker, Richard Josler

Dartmouth College Policy Research Shop, David Garcia, Tyler Stoff, Mariel Wallace and Ronald Shaiko,

Meeting called to order in the Morrill Education Building at 6 p.m.

- 1.) Citizen Concerns: There were no citizen concerns.
- 2.) Correspondence: John noted an email of appreciation and thanks from Alan Wylie regarding clean-up work done by the road crew.
- 3.) Minutes: Brent moved and Brian seconded a motion to adopt the minutes of May 13th. Minutes were adopted unanimously.
- 4.) General:

**Presentation by Dartmouth students from the Class of 1964 Policy Research Shop (PRS) at the Nelson A. Rockefeller Center on their Pay and Compensation study done for the Town of Strafford.** David Garcia, Tyler Stoff and Mariel Wallace presented of a study on administrative and road crew salaries in 48 towns in Vermont similar to Strafford. Salary information and property tax revenue data was collected from online town reports as well as emails and phone calls to town clerks. Road, population and town office hour data was collected from state data bases. It was not possible for the students to track additional forms of compensation, such as health benefits across a statistically significant number of towns due to extreme variations in reporting methods so the study focused only on wages.

The report will be used by the Sub-Committee on Pay, Classification, and Compensation that has been established to review and provide recommendations to the Board on current town practices. The students and their Professor Ron Shaiko were thanked for their report. Copies of their report are available at the Town Clerks Office or on line at [http://rockefeller.dartmouth.edu/shop/prs\\_strafford\\_final\\_052715.pdf](http://rockefeller.dartmouth.edu/shop/prs_strafford_final_052715.pdf). Chris Gex was thanked for her work in helping to have this project be one selected by the PRS. There was no cost to the Town for the report. The Policy Research Shop is fully endowed by the Dartmouth Class of 1964 and is staffed by students who are mentored by faculty that provides non-partisan research in Vermont and New Hampshire.

**Fence at Evergreen Cemetery** - Dick Josler from the Cemetery Commission came in to inform the Board that due to the very high costs involved, potentially over forty thousand dollars, the Commissioners have decided not to refurbish or replace the fence at the Cemetery. The fence posts will be removed and bushes/shrubs will be planted along the fence line instead. The ornamental gates and archway will be kept. While the Cemetery Commission is an independent body, the Board appreciated Dick coming in. The Board all agreed that given the costs, this was a reasonable approach.

**Update on Wolfe Energy Solar Project at the Elizabeth Mine Superfund Site** - Dori Wolfe gave the Board the background on her five year effort to put a solar farm on the top of the tailing pile at the Elizabeth Mine Site. It has been an extremely complex undertaking but she said that her company Wolfe Energy in team with Brightfields Development are now ready to begin the permitting process to establish a 4.9 MW AC solar plant on the site. She said this is roughly twice the size of the solar plant that can be seen from the Interstate 89 in Sharon. This project will include power line upgrades (paid for by the developers) from South Strafford to

the mine site and in Sharon to the substation to allow for the transmission of power generated by the project. Dori said that the project in order to qualify for certain tax benefits will need to be completed by the end of 2016. Renewable energy projects like this do not go through the regular town planning process. However there will be an opportunity for the Town and its citizens to have input on the project. Dori provided a handout for the Board. Copies of which are available at the Town office.

**Solid Waste Option discussion in preparation for Special Selectboard Meeting at Barrett Hall on June 1 at 7 p.m.** - Over the last six months the Board has been investigating the history of how solid waste has been handled in Strafford and our current options in light of provisions of Solid Waste Law 148 which goes into effect on July 1, a collapsing market for recyclables and increased hauling costs. Dori Wolfe, Chair of the Recycling Committee reviewed information on Recycling options. The new law requires mandatory recycling of paper, cardboard, metal, some plastic, bottles and cans. She noted that without any action, the cost of running the recycling center is estimated to increase from around \$6,000 to \$16,000. The Recycling Committee's preferred option to deal with changes requires capital investment. There is no money currently in the budget to cover these costs. Dori and the Recycling Committee will give a presentation on options at the Special Meeting on Solid Waste.

Trash Collection and handling are subject to new rules as a result of the new law as well. Trash haulers will be required as of July 1 to take recyclables at no extra cost. They can however raise their overall prices. The Board will offer Doug and Debbie Clark of Durkee Rubbish Removal the option of moving from the South Strafford Fire Station to the Recycling Center on Saturday's for drop-offs which would provide recycling services. The pickup service for the separated recyclables requirement would be arranged between the hauler and customer.

The Board has discussed various options for helping to cover the increased costs associated with our volunteer run and Lions Club supported Recycling Center. Some towns have paid permits to use their recycling facilities and others have put a per bag surcharge on trash to help cover the costs. Strafford is unique in the area in that the Town in order to secure the services of Durkee Rubbish Removal many years ago agreed to pay the District Waste Management fees that are now \$23/ton. It was felt that given the complexities of setting up and running a permit system, ticket system, or collection of a per bag trash fee it was felt it would be much simpler as of July 1 to eliminate paying the waste management fee for Durkee Rubbish Removal and have them raise their per bag price. This is a \$2,000 savings that would offset the deficit we are expecting from running the Recycling Center. When polled as to how they felt Board members John, Toni, Brent, and Brain were in favor of proceeding this way, Steve said he was unsure.

John reported that he had been in contact with Casella who has dumpster service in Strafford including at the Town Garage and they have not yet decided how they will implement the new law. It is possible they will need to provide zero sort containers for recyclables as well as dumpsters for trash. Brent reported that the hauler he uses from Thetford has not yet decided how he will comply with the law. Steve expressed his frustration with laws made in Montpelier whose consequences for local communities have not been well thought out. Our Representatives have said they will attend the meeting on June 1<sup>st</sup> and Steve and others will have the opportunity to share this concern.

In response to a question from Steve Gex at the last meeting, John reported that the cost of town generated trash in 2012 when Durkee Rubbish Removal was the contractor was \$616. The cost last year for the Cassela dumpster at the Town Garage was \$1,279. The cost for the Cassela dumpster is a set per month fee. Road foreman Jon Mackinnon was not at the meeting due to tree clean-up work from that evenings storm to explain why the shift to the more expensive service. The Board will follow-up on this at the next meeting.

John has been sharing emails on behalf of the Board with Tom Kennedy of the Greater Upper Valley Solid Waste District regarding the possibility of selling the 40 acre landfill site of the Districts 170 acre property in North Hartland. The Town is currently paying \$12,675 annually in bond payments for this landfill for which

there are now no plans to put into operation. While information has been given regarding revenue generating options for other parts of the property, Tom has not yet gotten back with the details on investigations as to if there are parties interested in purchasing the landfill site and if so at what price.

**Vtel pole on Turnpike Road** – Jeanne McMahan expressed her concern over a 50' pole that was placed above her property. The Board had given approval to the cell phone antennas pole based on their understanding from Road Foreman MacKinnon that it would be a mile or so up the road and not near any residences. There was some misunderstandings however and the pole was placed about 350' up from the intersection with Mine Road. John has gone out with Jeanne and they placed a stake about another 300 feet up the road that would be less visible from nearby residences. Vtel is willing to move the pole at no cost to the Town as long as it still is in range for what they need. The Board appreciated Vtel's willingness to make this accommodation. John will continue to do follow-up. This “micro” unit should provide cell service in a radius of around 8 miles when unobstructed by hills and should be operational in around 30 days of final installation.

**Budget Review**– Lisa has provided the Board with figures through April. Toni commented that things seem on target. She felt it would be helpful to have the prior year expenditures over the same time period included in the report and will contact Lisa to see if that can be done.

**New England Municipal Clerks Institute and Academy** – At Lisa's request and Board email approval to a time sensitive issue, John wrote a letter of denial from the Selectboard noting that there were insufficient funds in the budget for her to attend a conference costing \$850 and thereby making her eligible for a scholarship.

#### 5.) Town Highways

**Highway and Equipment update** - Brent gave an update on current road and equipment conditions.

Farley Bridge - The pole has been moved and next step is moving the wires then the project can resume.

#### 6.) Other- none

Toni made a motion to adjourn and Steve seconded. All approved and the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

#### **Next Meetings:**

Special Selectboard Meeting on Solid Waste at Barrett Hall on June 1, 2015 @ 7 p.m.

Regular Board Meeting June 10, 2015 at 6 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Toni M. Pippy

Future Agenda items.

Casella dumpster at town garage.