

Minutes of the Strafford Select Board  
November 8, 2017

Members present: John Freitag, Acting Chair, Toni Pippy, Brian Johnson, Stephen Marx, and Kate Siepmann; Lisa Bragg, Town Clerk and Assistant to the Select Board.

Also in attendance for part of the meeting: Jon McKinnon, Road Foreman; Devon Coleman, State Architectural Historian for the Vermont Division of Historical Preservation; Marianne Wakerlin and Bob Johnston from the Strafford Historical Society; Mike Hebb from the Strafford Conservation Commission; Clay Odell, Executive Director of Upper Valley Ambulance

John called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

A motion was made, seconded, and passed to enter Executive Session at 5:31. The session ended at 5:48. A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously passed to accept the counsel of the Town's insurance attorney to send Jay Thorp a letter defining the terms for his return to work following an off-duty accident. The Board agreed to continue paying the Town's portion of his health insurance premium provided Jay continues to pay his share, for a period of six weeks.

*1. Citizens' Concerns*

There were no citizens' concerns voiced.

*2. Correspondence*

The Board received correspondence from Marie Ricketts reporting on the informational "Transparency Tour", put on by the Lieutenant Governor to explain the Open Meeting laws.

*3. The Minutes* of the October 27 meeting were approved unanimously.

*4. Town Highways*

**Road, Equipment and Personnel Update**—Jon reported that all the equipment is in good working order. Jon has identified a qualified road worker to act as a temporary plow operator until such time as Jay Thorp is cleared to return to the road crew. He will be classified as a full-time temporary worker.

**July 1 storm repairs and FEMA update**—Road and bridge repair from the July 1 rainstorm damage is nearly complete. All but one of the four contractors have completed their work. The work of the fourth should be completed soon.

Lisa met with a FEMA representative, who rated Strafford's work, directed by Lisa and Jon, as a "Gold Star" among all the towns seeking reimbursement. The Board is enormously grateful for their abilities.

**Linton Bridge**—It was agreed that John would draft a letter of appreciation to the contractors on the Linton Bridge for coming in on time, on budget, and delivering a superior piece of work.

*5. General*

**Certified Local Government (CLG)**—Devin Coleman, State Architectural Historical for the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation, gave a presentation about how Strafford might benefit by becoming a designated CLG town. There are currently 14 CLG towns in Vermont. The CLG represents a coordination between the Federal and State Governments with local municipalities in establishing and protecting historic districts. First, the Town must qualify as a CLG, then establish an Historical Preservation Commission, and staff the Commissions with experience or expertise in historic preservation.

The Board was very grateful for Mr. Coleman's time and will look carefully into the idea before meeting again with him.

**Community-Building Grant**—As part of his ongoing legacy to the Town, Ned Coffin established a fund to reward individuals or entities for efforts to build and nurture community in Strafford. The first award

has been designated by the Trustees of Public Funds as the Town House Advisory Group (THAG). Congratulations for the good work they do to maintain the Townhouse as a center of activity in Strafford.

**Whitcomb Hill Use and Access**—The Strafford Conservation Commission is charged with responsibility for the rare, scenic parcel of land known as Whitcomb Hill. Representing the SCC and the Nye Family, who donated the parcel, Mike Hebb—the most attentive steward of the property—told the Board of the two-fold mission for its maintenance: 1. To protect the land; 2. To promote its use as a public resource. The Nyes expressly wished that Whitcomb Hill be open to the public and not remain the private preserve of a single land owner. To that end, the SCC has kept the land clear and maintained paths and rights-of-way to the summit and its panoramic views.

In order to keep an adequate balance between the rights of public access and the rights of landowners' whose land surrounds the access, Mike recommended more signage to clarify the lines between public and private property, to widen the turnaround at the end of the town road, and to inform the landowners of the proper ways to post their property. The Board agreed to pay for signage and Mike agreed to come back with recommended wording and placements.

**Upper Valley Ambulance Service (UVAS)**—Clay Odell, Executive Director of UVAS, came before the Board to explain the 16% increase in their budget requests to the 9 towns and 12,000 people they serve. A combination of expensive maintenance of high tech vehicles, underpayment by Medicare, Medicaid, and third-party providers, increasing medical costs, and many other factors has been a challenge to careful managements.

**Employee Compensation and Insurance**—The perennial delicate balance between wages and benefits and cost increases requires careful thought and splitting hairs. The Town has 6 paid employees with an annual payroll of \$286,513. The current insurance coverage offers employees their choice of plans; most opt for the Platinum Plan, with varying co-pays depending on the number of people covered. The Town's plan went up 9%. A comparable MVP plan went up 4.78%. Employees may opt for a less expensive plan by switching to MVP. Toni is the star "numbers person" on the Board. After much calculation, she proposed a raise of 4% for benefit credit increase and a 2.5% compensation increase. All agreed.

**Recycling Material Contract**—The Board agreed to have John sign the recycling contract recommended by Michael Scanlan, Chair of the Recycling Committee, for the period November 2017 through October 2018.

**Recreation Board and Planning Commission Vacancies**—The Board agreed to offer Sean Lewis a seat on the Planning Commission and to wait until the Rec Board meets for their recommendation.

#### 7. Other

For those of you who missed the Town Meeting on Tuesday, November 7, it may qualify for yet more places for Strafford in the *Guinness Book of World Records*.

World's Shortest warned Town Meeting: 4 minutes

Worlds' Fewest Warned Articles: 2 (one, to retain the tax-exempt status of Barrett Hall; the other, ditto for the Strafford Volunteer Fire Department)

The World's First Town Meeting with no discussion and all unanimous votes

The World's Scantest Attendance at a Town Meeting: 6 voters, plus a moderator and Select Board  
Quite a night's work.

A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved to adjourn the regular meeting of the Select Board at 9:35 p.m.

Faithfully submitted,

Kate Siepmann, Recording Clerk