

# MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STRAFFORD SELECTBOARD

July 8th, 2015

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

Other active participants: Lisa Kendall, Town Clerk, Jennifer Brown, Herald of Randolph Reporter, Jon MacKinnon, Road Foreman, Rocky Fuller, Chair of the Town House Advisory Group (THAG), Ken Alton of the Strafford Energy Committee, Roz Finn, James Garnett, Chris Gex, Steve Gex and Suzanna Liepmann,

Meeting called to order in the Town Office at 6:00 p.m.

1.) **Citizen Concerns:** There were no citizens' concerns.

2.) **Correspondence:**

Anne Peyton sent a letter in which her daughter, Carter Scott, offered her services as an energy consultant to the town, pro bono. Carter, who lives in Maine, has a great deal of experience in the field. Steve Marx will work with the Energy Committee to coordinate a meeting with Carter.

Chris Gex sent a letter to the Board with concerns from the June 24th meeting over a road sign that had been repeatedly taken down, the process for putting in guard rails on the Old City Falls Bridge and a personnel issue. The sign will be replaced and every effort made to make it more difficult to steal in the future. Lisa reported that after talking with a 9-1-1 coordinator, the town is responsible for posting private road signs and it was up to the municipality on who would pay for them. She suggested that we adopt a policy concerning this. The guard rails were a non-issue after clarifying the Town of Strafford Purchasing Policy. The personnel issue had no merit.

3.) **Minutes:**

Steve moved and Brent seconded a motion to adopt the minutes of June 24<sup>th</sup>. The minutes were changed to the correct Lindsey to Lindsay and James Biota to James Garnett. Minutes were adopted unanimously with these changes.

4.) **General**

**Town House Advisory Group Report** – Rocky Fuller updated the Board on recent developments. Highlights of his report included that a \$10,000 grant for a composting toilet has been received from Mary Louise Pierson and her siblings. With this funding they are hoping the project will be completed by the end of summer. Heavy rains have caused repeated problems from washouts resulting in a slippery surface of pebbles going up the hill. Jon Mackinnon and the road crew will work with Rocky on redirecting water flow to eliminate the problem. The beer tasting fundraiser was a big success and raised over \$1,000. Rocky and the members of THAG were thanked for all their work on the Town House.

**Decision on request for letter of support for the solar project at the Elizabeth Mine Site** – Steve moved and Toni seconded adopting a qualified letter of support which was revised by Toni since the last meeting. Brent moved to amend the letter to strike the words, “While we reserve the right to change our opinion once we see the completed project submission.” from the text. He felt this had already been implied in the letter. John said he felt it was important to include. The amendment to strike the line was passed with Toni, Steve, and Brent voting in favor and John and Brian voting against. Before the final vote on the letter of support, Suzanna Liepmann and James Garnett urged the Board not to take action at this time but to wait until the formal project submission was given to the Board. The vote on the letter was Toni, Steve, Brent, and John in favor and Brian opposed. A copy of the letter adopted is attached to these minutes.

Ken informed the Board that there are a series of regional public forums about Vermont's energy future being held July 9<sup>th</sup> at Billings Farm and Museum, July 16<sup>th</sup> in Middlebury, July 20<sup>th</sup> in Manchester and July 23<sup>rd</sup> in St.

Albans which are co-hosted by the Public Service Department. There will be a revision of the state's long-range Comprehensive Energy Plan and public comment is encouraged.

**Solar project information on our website** – The Elizabeth Mine Solar Project information will come under the Energy Committee section of the Town's Website. The purpose of this endeavor is to provide a place to hold all the information pertaining to this project including, when available, the formal Act 248 Submission by the Elizabeth Mine Solar 1 LLC. Toni and Lisa are working on this project and hope to have it available by the end of July.

**Dog Kennel Update** – Is being worked on. Brent has offered an insulated dog house he built for the kennel.

**Body Camera Update** - John shared information he had received from Fred Satink, Supervisor, Loss Control of the Vermont League of Cities and Towns. Fred wrote, "Given the scope of duties that you've outlined in previous emails, I see little benefit (from a risk management perspective) for your constable wearing a body camera. I do see some potential added costs, such as the retention of the records and the possible need to provide citizens (perhaps a disgruntled pet owner) with a copy of the record. This will generate costs. We have also learned that the storage requirements for these types of records are significant and can generate significant costs down the road. In summary, while it may be permissible from a statutory perspective to use body cameras, there is little reason to do so in the situation you describe - notwithstanding the concerns of your constable. Additionally, I see potential for the town to incur additional costs if the use of the camera is permitted. Failure to properly retain records, provide public records requests, etc. could have adverse consequences as well. Therefore, I recommend against it in your case." He also recommended that if it was used, the Town have a policy in place prior to its use. There was discussion as to the value of having our Dog Officer and Constable having a camera given the limits of those offices. Brent made a motion and Brian seconded to not use a body camera. Brent voted in favor, Brian, John, Toni and Steve were opposed. John made a motion and Brian seconded to investigate whether a policy could be made that would fit Strafford's situation and require little costs. Toni, John, Brian and Steve voted in favor and Brent opposed. John shared with the Board that he had received an anonymous offer to raise the \$280 dollars needed for the body camera as an appreciation for a constable who was willing to take the imitative to be as open about the way he conducts himself as possible. John will follow up to see if a lawyer would be willing to work pro bono on a policy and in the meantime direct Ed not to use the camera.

**Solid Waste follow-up - trash/recycling /GUVSD / town generated trash** - Recycling containers are now beside all trash containers in town recreation areas and at Old City Falls Nature Preserve. The Town has switched from Casella to Durkee Rubbish Removal. Communication with the Greater Upper Valley Solid Waste District on the value of the permitted landfill site on land owned by the District continues with no estimates at this time.

**Rte. 132 cell service and VTEL wireless broadband update** – Steve and John continue to follow -up on this . No updates on when service will start on either project.

**Town Office Renovations** -- Plans made by Architect Tim Utt for renovation of the outside walkway and stairs have been received. Tim generously provided these and the plans for the Preschool entryway pro bono. His contributions are appreciated. Brian offered to take a look at the plans and the Board will look at how we can address this in the next year's budget.

**Letter of support for new utility line to South Strafford to Agency of Natural Resources (ANR)** - John learned from talking with surveyors from Green Mountain Power that there is a hold up on new lines coming from Sharon due to concerns from ANR where poles will be placed. The Board voted unanimously to send a letter to the ANR making them aware of the need for more reliable power to our community (copy of letter attached to these minutes).

**Request for clarification on Wolfe Energy Solar project on Maclay property** – John mentioned that a number of people have been asking questions regarding this project that is now under construction. He drafted a letter explaining the project. Brian raised questions as to the benefit of the project to the town noting that his recollection was that the power would be 10% less than GMP rates. The paperwork on the project was reviewed and language added that reflected the legal agreement signed. The Board approved putting a clarification of the project on the Strafford lists and the Town website.

**5.) Town Highways**

**Highway and Equipment update** – Jon gave an update on current road and equipment conditions.

Farley Bridge - Work continues on this project. It has been slowed down a bit due to the high water levels this summer.

**6.) Other:**

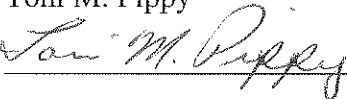
Brent made a motion to adjourn and Brian seconded. All approved and the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

**Next Meetings:**

Regular Board Meeting at Town Office on July 22, 2015 at 6 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Toni M. Pippy



Approved Letter of Support

July 8, 2015

To Whom It May Concern,

The Strafford Selectboard has been asked by Dori Wolfe of Wolfe Energy for a letter of support regarding a proposed large scale solar project at the Elizabeth Mine Site. This project is being developed by Elizabeth Mine Solar 1 LLC which is a joint venture between Wolfe Energy LLC and Brightfields Development LLC. The Selectboard has heard numerous comments regarding the project and has held a Special Meeting attended by over 70 citizens at which more information was provided and citizens given the chance to voice their questions, concerns, and/or support. Making presentations at that meeting besides the developers, were representatives from Green Mountain Power, and our State Representatives. (Attached are the minutes from that meeting).

It is clear there are still unanswered questions as well as concerns, especially by those in the area most affected by the project and with regard to the tax revenue this will generate for the Town. The Strafford Selectboard, based on what we know at this time, supports the concepts in the plan of Elizabeth Mine Solar 1 LLC for creating a solar farm at this site.

We look forward to more information and our chance to participate fully in the Act 248 process. We especially are interested in mitigating the impact of the project on those living closest to the site, the long and short term effects on the Town's infrastructure and safety concerns. We also feel strongly that given the level of interest, the Act 248 public hearing on the project, that is required to be held in the county of the project, needs to be held in Strafford.

Sincerely,

John Freitag, Chair, Strafford Selectboard

Approved letter to ANR

July 8, 2015

Dear ANR,

People in the Town of Strafford have over the last few years had a greater number of power outages than most communities in Vermont. This has resulted in difficult situations for both our residents and businesses. Some, like Coburns General Store have lost thousands of dollars of goods due to extended power outages. Recognizing that the problem is poles and lines put in many years ago in what were then fields but are now woods, Green Mountain Power has made upgrading the lines from Sharon to South Strafford a priority.

We understand that the topography is extremely challenging. We urge you to look for whatever ways you can to find a practicable solution and allows the installation of the new much needed lines as soon as possible. Thank you.

Sincerely,

John Freitag, Chair

Strafford Selectboard