

Minutes of the Strafford Select Board
October 27, 2017

Members present: John Freitag, Acting Chair, Toni Pippy, Brian Johnson, Stephen Marx, and Kate Siepmann.

Also in attendance for part of the meeting: Jon McKinnon, Road Foreman; Martha Walke and Michael Scanlan, from the Planning Commission; and Bob Johnston, from the Historical Society.

John called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

1. Citizens' Concerns

There were no citizens' concerns voiced.

2. Correspondence

The Board received correspondence from Gus Speth and Bob McAllister with concerns about their roads. Jon McKinnon took note.

A letter from ECFiber requested information on whether it needed documentation to lay underground cabling in locations where power lines are buried. Documentation is required and the matter was referred to Jon.

Jon has not yet attended to the culvert drainage problem at the Claffey property, but will.

3. The minutes of the October 11 meeting were approved unanimously.

4. Town Highways

Jon reported that all the equipment is in good working order with the exception of Truck #3, which continues to suffer from computer related break downs. John Thorpe will be welcomed back to work pending clearance by his physicians next Monday.

July 1 storm repairs—Jon updated the Board on progress contractors are making. Chris Bump from AOT was in town last week to do an inspection of the work to date. At this point Jon feels that all the contractors are aware of the AOT specs. Final payment for the remaining work is contingent on Jon's confirmation that all the jobs meet those standards needed for FEMA and state reimbursement.

There was a discussion of two collapsed culverts on the Mine Road. Jon explained that, despite the freakishly warm weather, he cannot count on the warmth holding at this time of year. Replacing culverts and paving needs to be done in warm weather, and he has scheduled this work for spring.

Mine Road/solar project—Brian, Jon, and John F. met with Stephen Campbell, a principal of Greenwood Energy about damage to the road as a result of the heavy truck traffic. They agreed to accept \$10,000 from Greenwood to cover the cost of repairs.

Furnace Flat Class 4 section—Landowners were notified that Constable Ed Eastman had removed a gate blocking vehicular access to Whitcomb Hill.

Vermont League of Cities and Towns Loss Report—Personnel on the Road Crew are required to wear steel toed boots. A motion was made, seconded and passed "To get the crew to buy proper footwear and pay for it out of their clothing allowance." Attention will need to be paid to the protection against hazardous wastes in the Town Garage.

5. General

Budget and 2018 Budget Process—A letter from the Town to town organizations asking for their budget requests has been drafted and will be sent forthwith.

Toni detected a mathematical error in the amount of \$5,215 under the 2017 Budgeted Benefit Credit amounts. She has corrected the error.

Employee Review Process—All performance reviews will be performed before December 1. It was agreed that all employees should complete a self-evaluation before their formal review. Jon MacKinnon and Brian J. will review the Road Crew. Lisa will review Regina. The Board will review Lisa and Jon. Insurance process—Unsurprisingly, insurance rates are going up in FY 2018. Employees may pick their own plans. How much the Town pays on those plans will be balanced with pay increases to compute the total benefit package each employee receives.

Health Officer Training update—Town Health Officer Stephen Marx attended a workshop for Health Officers across the State. He reported that it was useful as well as informative. He learned that the most frequent calls for Health Officers in other towns involved landlord/tenant rifts. After hearing from his colleagues, he reported that Strafford is a very lucky and amiable community. Factoid for the day: smell is not a health hazard. If you don't like the smell of your neighbors' pigs, don't call the HO.

A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved to appoint Stephen Marx as Town Health Officer for another year.

The Board discussed the UVA draft budget forwarded by Town Representative John Whelihan. There is a 2 cent per capital operating increase and a 4 cent per capita equipment increase. Board members expressed concerns and their desire to have more information. John F. will write Clay Odell, director of UVA to see if he could come to a Selectboard meeting and explain the drivers behind the cost increases and options for dealing with them. A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved to appoint Stephen Marx as the Alternate representative to the Upper Valley Ambulance Board of Directors, in the absence of John Whelihan.

Governance Committee follow-up—It was agreed that the Board should put together a Town-wide educational and training session for all volunteer organizations in the Town, based on the many helpful recommendations in the Governance Committee's report. The Board also very much wants to sponsor an informal thank-you picnic to express our gratitude to all of the many, many people who contribute so much to the workings and quality of life on Strafford.

Procedure when the Town Clerk is absent—Lisa is not only Town Clerk and Treasurer, but also serves a crucial role as Assistant to the Select Board. The Assistant Town Clerk covers for Lisa in her absence. A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved to have the members of the Board abide by the following protocol at times when Lisa is absent: members will call for an appointment; members will wait in line to be served; members will only request the services of the Assistant Town Clerk in matters deemed urgent.

Certified Local Government—Bob Johnston made a helpful presentation on the subject of Certified Local Government (CLG), which is a relatively new entity that attempts to keep all governments—from the Federal, State, and local—on the “same page” where matters of historic preservation are concerned. Towns must fulfill certain requirements to be recognized as a CLG. Once accepted, the Town will have access to many institutional resources and some accessibility to grants. The leader of the organization in Vermont, Devon Coleman, will attend the November 8 meeting to present the idea to the Board. We thank Bob Johnston for his clear introduction to the notion of CLGs.

It was moved and seconded to go into executive session to discuss a personnel issue. All agreed. The Board exited executive session after 15 minutes. No action was taken.

A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved to adjourn at 9:15.

Faithfully submitted,

Kate Siepman, Recording Clerk