

## **Minutes for the Select Board**

September 13, 2017 at Barrett Hall

Members of the board present: Toni Pippy (chair), John Freitag, Brian Johnson, Stephen Marx, Kate Siepmann

Also present: Lisa Bragg (Town Clerk), Jennifer Brown (Herald reporter), Roz Finn.

Toni called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

### **1. Citizen Concerns**

Roz Finn appeared to underscore the importance of her email to the Selectboard dated August 28 in which she urged the Board not to sign off on the Bridge 29 Project until the telephone pole was removed from her front lawn and until the erosion problem by the new guard rail on her side of the road was determined to be either the State's problem, or the Town's: not hers. Lisa will ask Jon McKinnon and Rod Maclay to investigate the erosion.

### **2. Town Highways**

The final inspection and approval of the work on Bridge #29 will be postponed pending resolution of several issues.

Road flood repairs: Lisa and Jon spoke on a conference call with two representatives of FEMA and two from the State this morning. There will be a FEMA meeting in the Town Office at 9:00 a.m. on September 25.

The storm damage bids have been accepted and awarded to the lowest bidders.

The issue of a 3-4-inch gap between the road and a driveway on Sawnee Bean Road has been resolved.

A highway access request has been submitted by VELCO for a 30' x 18" driveway culvert on the Crocker/Bilsky property on Wetmore Road. Jon had expressed no reservation about the situation, thereby John moved, Toni seconded a motion to approve the permit. Motion carried, John, Toni, Kate in favor, Brian and Stephen opposed.

### **3. Approve Minutes**

John moved, Brian seconded a motion to approve the minutes of August 23.

All approved.

Stephen moved, Toni seconded a motion to approve the minutes of September 6, with one correction. All approved.

### **4. Correspondence**

Notice was given of a VLCT workshop in Fairlee at Lake Morey Resort on October 17 for Town Health Officers. Health Officer Stephen Marx will attend.

The Green Mountain Care Board advised that the health insurance for Town employees will go up around 9% on January 1, 2018.

A letter was received from Stephen Wilbanks, President of the Historical Society and member of the Planning Commission, urging the Board not to change the language in the Town Plan (Chapter IX, Section F, Task #4) relating to Strafford becoming a part of the Certified Local Government (CLG) Community Program, a resource to further historical preservation. The Board had not changed any wording in that passage of the Plan, and tends to look favorably at the idea of the CLG.

### **5. Town Plan**

The question: if boundaries are moved in the Village Centers, will the Village lands be assessed differently from Rural Residential I? The answer is yes, but not until, or unless the changes are voted on in future Zoning Ordinances.

The Town Plan, submitted to the Board on May 17, will be adopted on September 27, by statutory timetable. The changes made by the Selectboard have been available for review in the Town Office, online, and the Library for the past several weeks. Following the third public hearing later this evening, no further changes will be made to the Plan until after approval. Thereafter changes may be made by formal amendment.

## **6. General**

### **a. Liaison Updates**

John reported that the Rec Board is organizing a work day for a clean-out and consolidation of the contents of the Red Barn.

John is at work on a \$20,000 grant proposal from the Vermont Division of Historic Preservation for the Town House. Kate will assist.

Kate has communicated with the Preservation Trust of Vermont in hopes of getting an assessment of the work involved in restoring the Town Office to its proper place in the firmament of Strafford's historic treasures.

Brian reported on his ongoing work with Highway Department and Steve reported on his with the Volunteer Fire Department.

### **b. Speed calming sign**

The Town's investment in a "speed calming" sign to be installed at the south entrance to the Village on Rte. 132 has so far come to naught. Delayed delivery, logistical problems and technical snafus have pushed its usefulness temporarily aside. There is hope for a remedy in the near future.

### **c. Elizabeth Mine Solar Project**

There was a discussion about what the Board's remarks at the upcoming "ribbon cutting" ceremony might be. Toni will compose her remarks with a draft by John in hand.

### **d. Performance Evaluations**

There have been no performance evaluations of Town employees since 2015. The Board agreed that these should be completed before Town Meeting.

### **e. Playground Repair**

Willis Phelps and Shawn Harlow volunteered their time to fix the most necessary elements of the preschool playground, with more work to follow. The Board expressed its thanks the Willis and Shawn for their efforts.

### **f. Junkyard Ordinance**

The Board reviewed the Junkyard Ordinance, adopted in 2009, and discussed ongoing issues of concern with at least two local properties. These questions essentially fall under the purview of the Town Health Officer, Stephen Marx. Stephen has been in extended communication with all parties and the Board thanked him for his efforts thus far and expressed full confidence in his ability to handle the situations with sensitivity and firmness until they are resolved.

## **7. Other**

- The Board is required to review the tax exempt status of Barrett Hall and the Strafford Volunteer Fire Department every 5 years. To that end, Lisa will warn a Special Town Meeting on Wednesday, September 27, 2017 at 5:30 p.m. in the Town Office. The only two articles on the agenda will be to see if the Town will extend the tax-exempt status of those two entities for another 5 years.
- The Town Office will be closed September 18 and 19 while Lisa and Regina attend a conference.
- Toni, citing personal reasons and the difficulty of managing a full-time job and the many demands placed on the Chair of the Selectboard—combined with the fact that the budget process is about to

begin, in which Toni is by far the heavy lifter for the Board— asked that she be allowed a temporary leave from her responsibilities as Chair. Toni's contribution to the inner workings of the Board as well as her complete attention to all elements involved in our work has been extraordinary. John volunteered to take on the load of Interim Board Chair until February 1, 2018. Steve moved, Brian seconded, a motion to do just that. All approved. This is a very cohesive and collegial Board. We are all grateful to John for stepping in to fill Toni's shoes, a tight fit, while she can catch her breath and give most of her attention to the budget. And some to her job, as well. We'll hope that this measure will give her, maybe, half a day on weekends for her own life. Viva, Toni.

Brian moved, Stephen seconded a motion to adjourn at 7:15. All approved.

### **Public Hearing on the proposed changes to the Town Plan**

Toni called the meeting to order at 7:16. The purpose of the hearing was to entertain questions and comments on the draft Town Plan and the changes made by the Selectboard. There being none, Brian moved, Stephen seconded that the meeting be adjourned. All were in favor, the meeting was adjourned at 7:20.

Faithfully Submitted

Kate Siepmann  
Recording Secretary