

Minutes of the Strafford Select Board  
December 27, 2017

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

Members of the public: Janet Cavanaugh, David Lutz, Judy Englander, John Enternach, Tii McLane, Stephen Campbell, Scott Traudt, Chris Farina, Rocky Fuller, Barbara Smith, Doc Bagley, Sean Harlow

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

*1. Citizens' Concerns*

John Enternach introduced the wording for a resolution that the State: 1. Halt any new fossil fuel infrastructure; 2. Commit to developing renewable energy for all Vermonters; and 3. Ensure that the transition to renewable energy be fair and equitable for all residents, with no harm to come to low-income residents, people of color, or rural communities. His question before the Board was how best to get the resolution on the Warning for Town Meeting: by fiat from the Board or through gathering signatures? The sense of the Board was that the best method would be to collect signatures.

To accommodate various other citizens with concerns, the agenda was reshuffled as follows.

*Delinquent Taxes:* It was noted that an alarmingly high rate of delinquent taxes—over \$200,000—may pose problems for the Town and complicate the budgeting process. Scott Traudt and Chris Farina expressed concern over what they interpreted to be a precipitous policy on foreclosure and questioned how to pay taxes if the Town Office is closed for the week. Toni suggested paying electronically, by transfer, or by mailing checks that are postmarked in December. Scott reported that it is difficult to communicate with the Delinquent Tax Collector through private email. The Board promised to provide her Town email address: [jcastro@straffordvt.org](mailto:jcastro@straffordvt.org) and stressed that communication is essential.

*THAG Report:* Rocky Fuller reviewed the minutes of the Town House Advisory Group's last meeting. He reported on several successful grant applications. He recommended level funding (\$13,000) for next year's budget for general care, maintenance, utilities, et cetera. He does expect to add an article to the Warning for Town Meeting to raise funds necessary to assure that the Spire Project is completed in 2018.

*Energy Committee:* Doc Bagley reported that the Energy Committee would like to accept help from Two Rivers-Ottaquechee Regional Commission in enhancing and implementing the Energy section of the Town Plan. Stephen Campbell suggested that once the Energy Committee is organized, with members appointed, that we set up active 4-way liaisons to coordinate the work of the Energy Committee, the Planning Commission, the Conservation Commission, and the Select Board. A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved That the Town of Strafford accept the offer of Two Rivers-Ottaquechee Regional Commission to assist in the development of an Energy Enhancement Plan. Thank you, Stephen Campbell.

*Fire Truck Replacement:* Sean Harlow reported on the Fire Department's (SVFD) ongoing research into the purchase of a new fire truck. Lisa will work with the Department on the details of putting it out to bid and financing. Toni said there would be no problem putting the new truck in the Town budget, since the SVFD provides an essential service to the Town. Sean will find out what the Department wants to do.

*2. Correspondence*

The Board received correspondence from the Department of Taxes asserting that our Common Level of Appraisal is 99.74% (meaning that we do not need a reappraisal).

A letter from Blythe Davis addressed property owners' concerns about trails, rights of way, and sign posting on the way to Whitcomb Hill from Furnace Flats Road. The Board felt that we cannot decide on any suggestions without more information and that we will revisit the issue at a meeting with, at the very least, the landowners, the Conservation Committee, and members of the Planning Commission.

We heard from Two Rivers-Ottaquechee Regional Commission that the deadline for the complete inventory of damage from the July 1 weather event, and the documentation thereof, will be extended to the spring of the year.

3. *The Minutes* of the December 13 meeting were approved with the following changes:

Under *Town Highways*, the item will read

“All work on the July 1 recovery has been completed to AOT standards and the contractors have been paid. AOT and FEMA standards must be upheld in order for the Town to be reimbursed. A motion was made and seconded to state that the Town not be required to accept the low bid on all contracts out for bid. After a discussion of established precedent, the motion was withdrawn without a vote.

The highway department has experienced problems with two of its trucks. One is still being repaired.

Toni asked for more information on our 2014 10-wheeler which, while one of the newer trucks in the fleet, has had considerable problems with its computer governing systems.

John Freitag reported on the conference he attended on the use of road salt.

John Thorp has been cleared to return to work from a medical leave. He reported to work today “

4. *Solar Project/ Tax Implications*

It was moved, seconded and approved to formalize the agreement with Thetford with regard to splitting the assessed tax value of the Elizabeth Mine Solar Project 50/50 between the Towns and to ask our attorney to write an official contract for approval by both towns.

7. *Other*

A motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved to adjourn the regular meeting of the Select Board at 9:05 p.m.

Faithfully submitted, Kate Siepmann, Recording Clerk