

## SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES

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Wednesday, October 2, 2024, 5:30 p.m, Old Schoolhouse Common and Zoom

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Present: Selectboard members Justin Campbell, Michele Gonzales and Christopher Whalen; Town Clerk Bobbi Brimblecombe; Assistant Town Clerk Brittany Chouinard; Tyler Billingsley (East Engineering); Nick Seifert (Energy Committee); Eli Toohey (Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission); Nancy Everhart (Stranahan Stewardship Committee); Albert Petrella, Jay Copping, Paul Guare, Sandy Conti, and Thomas Parker (East Montpelier Fire Department)

At 5:35 p.m. the meeting was called to order by Justin Campbell

**Changes or additions to the agenda:** Zoning Administrator's request for Town Attorney opinion; Fire Department use of building; Budget Committee resignation and process, Staff discussion

**Review and approval of minutes:** The Board approved the minutes of the September 17 and September 24 meetings.

**Bridges:** Tyler Billingsley updated the Board on the bridge projects. Initial topography surveys are done for all five bridges. UVM Consulting Archaeology Program is on board for the five bridges. Land surveyors are going to be starting soon. All five sites will require either temporary or permanent easements. Geotechnical drilling is done for all but Onion River – that will be done in the next few weeks. Work is proceeding well so far.

Regarding Onion River Bridge, the temporary bridge had to be placed on top of the old structure, and there is not other outlet on Onion River Rd. It is difficult to build a new bridge on top of the old bridge. He noted that during the flooding, people were driving across the school property to get out. If that is an option, it would make the project simpler and less expensive. If that is not an option, we would have to have a second temporary bridge installed somewhere else to allow for access during the construction of the permanent bridge. He suggested that the Town should contact the school and the campground owner to see if we could create a temporary road and then return the property to its existing condition after the bridge is done.

Justin asked what the expected timeframe would be. Tyler suggested that we could try to schedule it when the school is not in session. He thinks three or four months is a reasonable timeframe. He suggested that we could include in the contract that the work would start the day after school ends, and the bridge would need to be open the day before school starts in the fall.

Justin suggested that Tyler should look at the area along the river, to avoid pressure on the school. He will look at that when he is at the site next. He will prepare a map for the Board to bring to the school.

Another, more difficult option would be to relocate the permanent bridge. He will check the site distance to see if there is a possibility of relocating Onion River Road.

Bobbi noted that Tyler helped her with the next step in the Hazard Mitigation Grant process for Creamery St Bridge.

**Ambulance:** Albert Petrella addressed the Board regarding the ambulance contract. They would like to eventually get to a per-capita funding model. Marshfield is currently paying far less than the a per-capita rate. That means Calais and East Montpelier are paying more than their share.

They are asking for increases; the prices for the next three years would be \$57,314.40, \$67,728.48, and \$82,571.33. The current rate is \$47,762. Bobbi noted that the increases would amount to 75% over the next three years. Sandy noted if we were paying the per-capita rate of \$77.12 per capita, we would have been paying around \$125,000. Their budget went up 9% but our contract held our increase at 3%. Now they have more paid staff. Bobbi noted that the town had a \$1.4 million dollar deficit last year, when we only raise \$1,000,000 in taxes. They are aware of the flood damage in town and that is part of the reason they are not asking for the full per-capita rate all at once.

Bobbi noted the original contract was written when the ambulance was staffed by volunteers. Albert stated that they are no longer able to sustain the service with volunteers. The number of calls in Marshfield has doubled since 2018. Sandy Conti noted that the service does not charge unless there is a transport to the hospital. In that case, insurance is billed. They will send more financial information that can be shared with the budget committee.

The Board thanked them for their service to our Town.

**Energy Committee:** Nick is trying to help Community Supper and the Library with the choice of a new stove. There are differences of opinion about what type of stove to buy – electric induction vs. propane. Sometimes the burner gets left on. The air quality in the room is not good because there is always a pilot running, and the room often smells like propane. The Board agreed that an electric stove would be safer. Chris moved to require the new stove to be electric. Justin seconded – all in favor. Nick will explore options for the new stove, to be paid for with a library grant.

Mike Xenakis worked with CVRPC to put in a grant application for the Municipal Energy Resiliency Program. We are not likely to get anything because the program is prioritizing weatherization and efficiency, and towns with larger electric loads.

**Emergency Watershed Protection Program:** Eli from CVRPC stated that the Town received one bid from J. Merrill Construction LLC. in the amount of \$543,680. The engineer has evaluated the bid and found it to be complete. He recommends accepting the bid. Eli explained that we need to make a decision, and the contract could be signed at the next Selectboard meeting. Chris moved to award the bid to J. Merrill Construction LLC. Justin seconded – all in favor.

**Thompson Road:** Nancy explained that we received one bid from Hogan Excavating for \$49,000 for the repairs reimbursable by FEMA and \$25,000 for the improvements to be paid for with a grant from the Northern Forest Service. He can start November 1 and will finish by the end of

November. The Friends of Stranahan will raise the Town's share of the repairs. Nancy clarified that they are not asking for any funds from the Town. Justin noted that there are resources available on the property that could be used if needed. Justin moved to accept both bids. Chris seconded – all in favor.

**School St Bridge:** Winterset sent an emailed proposal in the amount of \$215,000. VTrans is of the opinion the damage was caused by the 2024 flood. Justin contacted other contractors but they were not available. This is an exigent circumstance; delaying the work could cause further damage to the bridge. Justin moved to accept Winterset's proposal, subject to Bobbi confirming that it meets our procurement requirements. Chris seconded – all in favor.

**Martin Covered Bridge Park:** The Board received two bids for the work at the covered bridge park. Hallstrom Excavating bid \$17,317.75. Hogan Excavating bid \$10,000. Chris moved to accept the Hogan bid for the Martin Covered Bridge work. Justin seconded – all in favor.

**Laird Pond and Pigeon Pond culverts:** Justin asked for ballpark estimate for what it would cost to install the culvert that were specified by the state H&H study, for Pigeon Pond Rd. He received an estimate of \$400,000. The contractor who did the temporary repair thinks it will last through the winter but the concern is that we might lose some material through the top of it, and erosion could occur around it. Bobbi will discuss this with the state's disaster recovery person on Friday.

**Emergency Planning:** The Board discussed that we don't have a plan for individual assistance in the case of emergencies. Chris suggested that we have a tabletop exercise to discuss a few different scenarios and see where we stand. Chris and Justin discussed the tabletop exercise that GMP held yesterday. It would make a good model. The Board will schedule something before March.

**Buyouts:** The Board reviewed and approved the Request For Proposals for demolition. The Board approved of allowing the Fire Department to use the properties for training before the demolition happens.

**Code of Conduct:** The Board reviewed a recent incident in the Library and will consider a policy for the Old Schoolhouse grounds.

**Harris Zoning Violation:** Bobbi explained that Henry has indicated that he is not going to pay the fines of \$1,600. He is going to appeal the decision. The case has cost the Town over \$20,000 so far. The Board discussed the need to make changes to the zoning regulations to step up the enforcement.

Justin moved to give permission for the Zoning Administrator to contact an attorney about zoning issues. Chris seconded – all in favor.

**Budget Committee:** The Board regretfully accepted Tom Maclay's resignation from the Budget Committee. They authorized Bobbi to advertise the position.

**Meeting Change:** The Board changed their regular meeting schedule from November 5 to October 29. The Board will begin working on the budget at that meeting.

**Personnel:** The Board moved to increase the wages for the Assistant Town Clerk by \$1 per hour, as her 6-month probationary period is ending.

**Expenses, Permits & Payroll:** Selectboard members read and approved reports for General Expenses and Payroll.

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Bobbi Brimblecombe, Town Clerk

The foregoing is a true copy of the Minutes of the October 2, 2024 Selectboard Meeting.  
A True Record. Attest, \_\_\_\_\_, Town Clerk

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