

**SHARON SELECTBOARD
REGULAR MEETING
April 19, 2021
MINUTES (Final)**

*This meeting was held in compliance with the Vermont
Open Meeting Law with Electronic and Telephonic Participation*

Participating via Zoom: Selectboard members Joe Ronan, Mary Gavin, Kevin Gish; Frank Rogers (Road Foreman), Margy Becker (SB Assistant), Deb Jones (Finance Manager), Andrew Lane, TSA, Donna Foster, Shelley Kendall (residents), Alex Bird (Inn at Idlewood), Will Davis (Horizons Engineering), Michael Sacca, Ashley Forest Committee.

1. Call to Order:

The Chair convened the meeting at 6:35PM.

2. Review/Approve Agenda:

Kevin Gish made the motion to approve the agenda. Mary Gavin seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

3. Approval of Minutes:

Motion by Mary Gavin to approve the minutes of April 5, 2021 as submitted. Kevin Gish seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Approval of Warrants:

Mary Gavin made the motion to approve AP Warrant #1148 in the amount of \$12,995.88 for payment of invoices from BCBS of VT for \$5861.37, Capital One (formerly BlueTarp) for Northern Tool for \$419.97 for an impact wrench and adapter, Evans Motor Fuels for \$2682.47 for 3weeks of diesel, Foley Services for \$169.44 for 3 weeks of uniforms, for GUVSWD for \$1485.00 for dump coupons, HP Fairfield for \$131.49 for a mesh tarp for 2018 Freightliner, Jerry Swasey dba Swasey & Sons for \$140.07 for replacing the anode rod in the hot water tank at the Town Office bldg, and Pike Industries for \$2,106.07 for 247.77 tons of crushed stone. **Kevin Gish seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.**

Joe Ronan made the motion to approve AP Warrant #1149 in the amount of \$13,146.48 for payment of invoices from Royal Auto Parts for \$70.11, Sabil & Sons for \$26.12, South Royalton Rescue for \$6,823.92, Suburban Propane for \$296.53, Tarrant, Gillies & Richardson for \$745.60, USPS for \$825 for election ballot postage (outgoing ballot @ .75 each), Valley News for \$299.20, and Windsor County Sheriff for \$,4060.00. **Kevin Gish seconded the motion, and it carried 3-0-0 unanimously.**

Mary Gavin made the motion to approve AP Warrant #1150 Recreation in the amount of \$504 for payment of \$204 to reimburse Deb Jones for 8 volunteer background checks for baseball coaches, and Upper Valley Portables for \$300 for 2 porta-potty rentals and weekly cleanings for 1 month for baseball. **Kevin Gish seconded the motion and it carried 3-0-0 in favor.**

Kevin Gish made the motion to accept AP Warrant HRA ACH withdrawals for the period Feb 10 – March 31, 2021 in the amount of \$731.58. Mary Gavin seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Mary Gavin to approve AP Warrant #1151 for \$669.42 for payment of an invoice from Northeast Delta Dental for \$446.18 for May's dental coverage and an invoice from The Lincoln National Life Ins Co for \$223.24 for May's insurance premium. **Kevin Gish seconded and the motion carried unanimously.**

5. Finance Manager Reports:

Budget Year-End Projections: Deb Jones presented her first projections for the General Fund year-end. Projections show the budget will come in close to budget and hopefully a bit under. Her projections show an adjustment for delinquent taxes of \$23,000 (as a negative revenue) based on being able to collect only 50% of what is outstanding by August 31st. This is a required annual modified accrual adjustment. If the projections are close to accurate, the General Fund would utilize \$18,553 of the fund balance rather than the budgeted \$21,037 of the fund balance for FY21.

The Highway Fund projections are very positive. Revenues show unexpected grant monies for Covid Relief and highway work. There have been reduced expenses in the areas of overtime, fuel, salt, and grant expense. Rather than using \$15,378 of the Highway fund balance, this projection shows revenue exceeding expenses by \$62,000.

Due to the favorable status of the highway budget, it was agreed the Town will proceed to haul additional winter (brown) sand in order to post the expense to this year's operating budget. Hauling will be provided by the Town's hauling subcontractor per the July 2020 bid award. The highway actuals indicate a \$58,400 current expense with projected \$65,000 year-end total. The Sharon road crew is currently hauling gravel.

Joe Ronan inquired as to the status of tax collections. Deb Jones reported those taxpayers who are chronically delinquent remain so, a sign that those folks who are hurting are hurting more as a result of the pandemic. There are many refinances underway.

Independent Audit Bids: Selectmen reviewed and discussed three (3) bids for independent audits for fiscal years 2021 through 2023. RHR Smith is the apparent low bidder with a bid for 3 years at \$12,000/year. Mudgett, Jennett & Krogh-Wisner, the incumbent firm, is \$1,000 higher the first year, \$1,200 higher the second year, and \$1,400 higher the 3rd year. Sullivan, Powers & Co is \$13,000 higher the first year, \$12,500 higher the 2nd, and \$14,200 higher the 3rd year. It was noted that RHR Smith performs audits for Royalton Fire District,

Two Rivers ORC, and White River Valley School District. MJ&KW also audits the Towns of Hartford and Woodstock, while Sullivan Power has audited the Towns of Hartford and Thetford in the recent past.

Deb Jones reported on her reference checks, which were favorable for both the low bidders. Selectmen noted the importance of changing the 'reviewer' within a firm. Mary Gavin expressed some doubt as to whether Mudgett Jennett & Krogh-Wisner was a large enough firm to allow for such rotation. She expressed openness to award the bid to RHR Smith.

Deb Jones reported she has worked with three different auditors within Mudgett Jennett & Krogh-Wisner over the past several years. She further indicated MJ&KW challenges her, which they should. Joe Ronan acknowledged MJ&KW has done excellent work. Kevin Gish pointed out RHR Smith's total bid for 3 years is \$36,000 and MJ&KW is \$39,600, and that he considered the low bid a significant savings. Mary Gavin indicated MJ&KW had made some recommendations for fairly drastic changes to the Town's financial procedures back in 2012, which the Selectboard implemented. She acknowledged the Town is much better off now.

Motion by Mary Gavin to award the bid for FY21 – FY23 independent financial auditing services to Mudgett Jennett & Krogh-Wisner based on work quality, history with the Town, and for continuity of operations. Kevin Gish seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Annual Pay Table Review: Selectmen postponed action on a proposed FY21 - FY22 pay table.

6. Highway Business/Road Foreman Reports:

Frank Rogers, Foreman, provided brief reports. The roads are in good shape. He reported on the status of employee COVID vaccinations. The Selectboard has not mandated that employees be vaccinated.

Baxter library drainage proposal: Will Davis, Horizons Engineering, provided a quick review of the purpose of the site plans he had prepared back in 2019. The site plans include construction of new drainage features on town property and partially on school property to prevent flooding of the library building. He has offered to develop specifications for the work so the Town can bid the project. He reported the successful contractor would capture elevation information order to achieve the desired final grades.

Seven Stars Arts Center is also planning on drainage improvements to their portion of the driveway, and the Directors have requested permission to tie into the Town's drainage system and then into the VTRANS drainage inlet. The Town would have to amend its permit from VTRANS to allow this connection. It was further noted that the storm water runoff from the Sharon Elementary School parcel needs to be contained on school property, and therefore the School District should be a party in discussions regarding how the project is to move ahead. Selectmen further expressed their desire to execute an agreement among the

three parties regarding construction of new drainage features, apportionment of those costs, and allocation of future maintenance responsibilities for the new infrastructure.

Status of grants for FY21: no paving grant application for 2021; Class 3 paved highways are ineligible for grants. That means the shim and overlays for the TSA High school driveway and access to Town offices and SES must be paid for out of the operating budget.

Adoption of 2019 road and bridge standards: Kevin Gish made the motion, which Mary Gavin seconded, to adopt the 2019 road and bridge standards. The motion carried unanimously.

7. **Foster Gardens' Request for Temporary Access to Town Green:**

Donna Foster reported she has acquired permission for Foster Gardens to utilize the Sharon Trading Post back lot. Therefore she no longer requests use of the Town Green during May-June.

8. **Town Meeting Preparations:**

Town Report Status: Margy Becker reported the town reports are being printed. They should be mailed this week.

Australian Ballot Informational Meeting: Selectmen discussed plans for the order of business for the virtual 6:30PM May 3, 2021 public information meeting.

9. **Old School House Maintenance:**

SB members reviewed the 2018 capital improvement plan for the Old School House building. Exterior painting and clapboard repairs was recommended within 3-5 years. Andrew Lane indicated TSA also recommends painting as a priority, and that the bell tower should be inspected and some flashing repaired. Margy Becker noted the CIP for the OSH building includes removal of the underground storage tank to an above-ground location and new oil lines. The CIP also recommends repair of sagging pavement.

Andrew listed other maintenance items TSA would like the Town to address, inclusive of lighting upgrades, upgraded flooring for two small rooms and relocation of light switches, eventual bathroom upgrades, and handicapped access. It was agreed the Town would proceed to bid painting both the Old School House and Town Offices, and that the specifications will entail painting over a 3-4 year period.

Margy Becker raised concerns about problems noted with the water softener at the OSH building during March. She stressed the need for a better definition of maintenance responsibilities for the new treatment equipment in the OSH basement. She suggested a Maintenance Agreement be adopted. The potential parties to such an agreement could be the School District (which contracts for overall water system operations), TSA, and the Town. SB members agreed to begin addressing this matter at its second meeting in May.

10. Investment Policy Review:

Discussions with the Treasurer were postponed until the next meeting.

11. Re-adoption of Local Emergency Management Plan For 2021:

Margy Becker presented a revised local emergency operations and call list for consideration. The State requires annual renewal of this plans. The 2021 revisions include updated phone numbers and email addresses, updated references to health officers, school contacts, and other miscellaneous updates. She confirmed Pomerville Day Care continues to operate and should also be listed as a vulnerable population in close proximity to the Village.

Motion by Mary Gavin to re-adopt the Local Emergency Management Plan as revised for 2021 and to authorize Kevin Gish to sign the Adoption Form. Kevin Gish seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

12. 2021 Liquor License Renewals – Inn at Idlewood:

Mary Gavin made the motion to approve Chateau Industries' (dba Inn at Idlewood) application for renewal of its outdoor consumption license for 2021. Kevin Gish seconded the motion. The motion carried 3-0-0 in favor.

Mary Gavin made the motion to approve Chateau Industries' application for renewal of its First Class Liquor License. Kevin Gish seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Kevin Gish made the motion to approve Chateau Industries' application for renewal of its Third Class Liquor License. Mary Gavin seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Alex Bird, owner of Inn at Idlewood, thanked the SB for its actions and briefly shared news of the pandemic's impact on the business and his hopes for renewed operations.

13. Ashley Forest Discussions:

Kevin Gish reported the negotiating committee is focusing on identifying options for management of funds associated with the Ashley Forest. Deb Jones indicated she would make an inquiry with the town auditors. Joe Ronan suggested the towns form an LLC. Michael Sacca reported on the Ashley Forest Committee's virtual information session scheduled for 7PM April 21st. The link to the meeting is posted to the Ashley Forest website.

14. Selectboard Assistant Reports:

Selectmen agreed to a special meeting for Tuesday, May 4 at 6:30PM. SB members noted the upcoming Hazard Mitigation Planning meetings scheduled for 6:00PM on April 22nd and May 13th.

15. Public Comments:

Shelley Kendall was noted to still be in attendance at the meeting and was asked if she had public comments. Ms. Kendall expressed concern at having waited so long to be acknowledged, for which SB members apologized. She then expressed several concerns regarding the Town's approach to bidding the box culvert project on Quimby Mountain Road. She stated the requirement for bid bond and performance bond would increase the cost of the project and that those costs will have to be passed on to the townspeople. She indicated the Town should finish permitting prior to bidding the project, and she recommended the Town suspend the bid process. Margy Becker explained the Town's approach to bidding the project as a 'design-build' project and expectations that the successful bidder will assist Town staff to obtain final Stream Alteration and Army Corps Category 2 permits. The Army Corps 'Cat 2' permit is required due to tree removal. Ms. Kendall further alluded to actions at the pre-bid meeting which run contrary to state regulations for bat habitat. SB members thanked Ms. Kendall for her comments.

16. Coronavirus Planning:

SB members agreed to further consider State COVID guidelines in June.

17. Harlow Road:

No significant developments were reported. SB members noted there have been additional arrests made recently.

18. Executive Session:

Motion by Kevin Gish to enter executive session at 8:58PM to discuss a personnel matter with the Finance Manager in attendance. Mary Gavin seconded. The motion carried unanimously. The SB exited from executive session at 9:20PM.

Motion by Kevin Gish to increase the wage of the Assistant Town Clerk to \$17/hour effective April 11, 2021. The motion was seconded by Mary Gavin and the motion passed unanimously.

19. Adjourn:

Kevin Gish made the motion to adjourn at 9:22PM. Mary Gavin seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Submitted by,
Margy Becker