

**SELECTBOARD
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES
September 20, 2021 (Final)**

Attending via Zoom from Town Offices: Margy Becker, Selectboard Assistant; Attending remotely: Selectmen Joe Ronan, Kevin Gish, Mary Gavin; Finance Manager Deb Jones, Treasurer Margaret Raymond; Road Foreman Frank Rogers; Ryan Haac, Energy Committee: Guests: Geoff Martin, Inter-Regional Energy Coordinator (TRORC), Andrew Lane (TSA Middle School).

The Chair convened the meeting at 6:35PM.

1. **Review/approve agenda:**

Kevin Gish made the motion to approve the agenda as published. Mary Gavin seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

2. **Public Comments:**

There were no public comments apart from those received on agenda items. Kevin Gish reported on a successful Sprouty. He also provided an update on the upcoming Pilgrimage event to be held in Royalton. The event will draw people from around the country. All vehicles have to be registered. People will camp in Royalton and drive Class 4 roads across the State. The Town of Reading has said it is sorry to lose the event due to concerns from neighbors. The event was a boost to their local economy. Mary Gavin reported South Royalton Rescue and Sharon Fire Department are aware of the event.

3. **Review/Approve Minutes:**

A motion was made by Mary Gavin to approve the minutes of September 7, 2021 with changes. Kevin Gish seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

4. **Finance Manager Reports & Warrants:**

Selectmen briefly reviewed the balance sheets and inflow/outflow financials for FY21 and FY22 year to date. Deb reported the FY21 general fund and highway fund budgets ended the year in-the-black. Of the \$1,974,473 due in taxes for the first half, all but approximately \$66,000 has been collected. Audit field work for FY21 begins next week.

Kevin Gish made the motion to ratify approval of the Payroll Warrant for the period ending September 11, 2021 (cash draw of \$15,508.38) which was signed in DocuSign 9/13/21. Mary Gavin seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Mary Gavin made the motion to approve AP Warrant #1209 in the amount of \$12,612.47 including payments to Aumentum (\$1,991 - Lister's license for software); BCBS (\$6,593.13); Casella Waste (\$42.86); D & D Excavating (\$1,319.50 - sand); Evan's Motor Fuels (\$2,226.14); Fastenal (\$26.38); Foley Services (\$115.46); Granite State Glass (\$285 -

replacement window for grader); Have Trash Will Travel (\$13). **The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.**

Joe Ronan made the motion to approve AP Warrant #1210 in the amount of \$15,315.47 including payments to Madison National Life (\$207.16); Magee Office Products (\$201.53); Pike Industries (\$13,986.51) for ¾” crushed stone hauled by road crew; Radio North Group (\$850.50 for radio in new truck); Royal Auto (\$69.77). **The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.**

Mary Gavin made the motion to approve AP Warrant #1211 in the amount of \$1,159,481.47 for the first payment of school taxes due to the Sharon School District. **The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.**

Kevin Gish made the motion to approve AP Warrant #1212 in the amount of \$17,907.92 including payments to South Royalton Rescue (\$6,824.50); Suburban Propane (\$167.72); Town of Strafford (\$1,887.54 per culvert replacement agreement on Turnpike Rd); Twin State Sand & Gravel (\$2,805.36); Valley News (\$329.80); VMCTA (\$35); Windsor County Sheriff's (\$5,858.00). **The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.**

Mary Gavin made the motion to approve AP Warrant #1213 REC in the amount of \$183 for payment to Stateline Sports. **The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.**

Mary Gavin made the motion to approve HRA Reimbursement Reconciliation for August 2021 in the amount of \$606.38. **The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.**

5. **ARPA Funding:**

Deb Jones explained where the general fund balance sheet denotes the receipt of ARPA funds to-date. Mary Gavin suggested the Board move forward with scheduling Zoom public hearings on ARPA funding. Discussions followed regarding the timing and focus of the meetings. Mary advocated the initial meetings could be geared towards general education. Kevin Gish expressed support for an appointed committee that would be charged with learning the ARPA project eligibility criteria and assisting the SB with prioritization of local investments. Joe Ronan expressed support for both approaches. Deb Jones announced she is focusing on learning about the component of ARPA funds which are considered ‘revenue replacement funds’ and offer the most choices for expenditure.

Registrations for the upcoming VLCT Town Fair seminar regarding ARPA funding were discussed. SB discussions on ARPA funding will resume October 4, when the Board will consider a meeting date and agenda for its first public meeting.

6. **Highways:**

Frank Rogers indicates the crew is continuing with roadside mowing. He is awaiting delivery of culverts which have been on order since early July. Many towns are in a similar quandary regarding culvert supplies. Mary Gavin inquired how the beaver deceiver was working on Downer Road. Frank reports the beavers have left. Mary Gavin inquired as to the lead time the crew will need when planning for the upcoming winter season. Frank

reported on the status of supplies of plows, plow edges, chains, and tires. Chains are to be purchased from a Colorado-based supplier, and no supply issues are anticipated. Frank is not anticipating issues with delivery of road salt.

7. Emerald Ash Borer:

Dick Ruben, member of the Conservation Commission, reports the SCC is interested in preparing an Emerald Ash Borer mitigation plan. He noted there are serious dollars that could be saved with a proactive plan. To-date he has not heard of infestations within 10 miles of Sharon. The SCC suggests the Town work with the County Forester to inventory ash trees within the Town rights-of-ways for the purpose of developing a plan for cutting those trees. This approach prevents trees from becoming weakened by disease and protects the safety of the traveling public.

SB members noted some concerns over the potential costs of tree cutting and inquired as to the percentage of ash trees within Vermont's forests. Dick reported ash trees comprise approximately 10% of forested lands across the State.

SB members inquired who might participate in the inventory. Dick indicated the SCC and other volunteers would conduct the inventory this winter. The plan is to focus on the busy Class 3 roads. Mary Gavin suggested the ash tree inventory begin in the Village and around town buildings. Dick clarified that trees above a certain width ('caliper') will be considered for cutting. Trees would be left in place, after they are cut. SB members expressed support for leaving the wood on roadsides. Selectmen thanked Dick for the SCC's willingness to lead the inventory.

8. AmeriCorps Vista 4-Town Coalition Coordinator:

Meghan Asbury, who is new to the area, introduced herself and engaged SB members in a discussion of how the one-year position could benefit the Town in its efforts to move forward with recommendations from the 4-Town Coalition meetings in 2019. Meghan has spent time revisiting the priorities identified by the Coalition, and she notes volunteer committees are actively addressing food resiliency, working lands, and trails but not the topics of economic development and housing. She hopes to resurrect those discussions.

Kevin Gish expressed hope that Meghan's position could address issues related to climate change, so each town would not have to 're-invent the wheel'. Meghan was encouraged to contact the Vital Communities Climate Change Leadership Academy.

Meghan stated she hopes to identify and create a structure for the 4-Town Coalition. She inquired what the SB and Sharon residents envision. Joe Ronan suggested the Selectboards regroup. Meghan announced the upcoming October 7th Zoom meeting and will forward Sara Danly's email.

Meghan asked for the SB's view of the relationship of her position to the Selectboard. SB members indicated the relationship may change, depending on the topic and issue at hand. Meghan agreed to report to the SB on a bi-monthly basis.

9. EEI Report on Town Building Energy Assessments:

Geoff Martin (Inter-Regional Energy Coordinator), Ryan Haac (Sharon Energy Committee), and Andrew Lane (TSA) joined the meeting to further discuss EEI's Building Assessment Report to the SB on Sept. 7. The report concludes with broad recommendations and aggregate costs for energy efficiency improvements for town buildings. SB members stated, and Ryan agreed, the magnitude of costs as presented is overwhelming. Ryan Haac suggested the Selectboard consider recommendations for individual buildings. A potential priority could be the Library, where the heating system has reached the end of its useful life. SB members concurred. Joe Ronan stated another priority should be addressing purported code violations.

SB members noted the TSA and the Town are already executing a vision for energy efficiency and HVAC improvements related to educational use of the Old School House building. The funding source for these improvements and upgrades has been grants through Efficiency Vermont. EEI's recommendations provide another vision for improvements to that building.

Mary Gavin suggested the Town Garage and Town Offices be considered in the context of replacement or complete modernization. Geoff Martin noted the potential for federal and state funds earmarked for transitioning buildings to heat pump systems. It would be prudent to include the Town Offices in EEI's detailed energy audit. The Town would then be in a position to apply for these funds. Selectmen concurred.

Joe Ronan asked for clarification of procurement options going forward. Geoff Martin indicated the next step is to have EEI come back with contractors for in-depth energy audits of each building that will yield real pricing. The Town will retain the ability to issue RFP's for competitive bids, when it decides to move forward with energy audit recommendations. EEI is willing to assist the Town with a multi-year plan.

Discussions concluded with SB members agreeing to move forward with detailed energy audits and pricing for Baxter Library and the Town Offices. Geoff Martin agreed to report back to EEI to 1) request the next level of analyses for the Library and Town Offices, and 2) to request documentation of code violations.

10. Old School House - TSA 2nd Round of Energy Efficiency Grants:

Andrew Lane reports TSA has been awarded the grant to upgrade lighting to LED's and to install remote boiler controls. Another round of VT Indoor Air Quality Grants is forthcoming. The TSA proposal has been submitted, and Andrew will provide the SB a copy of the application. It addresses ERV upgrades for the basement rooms in use as classrooms. The air exchange in those rooms does not meet school ventilation standards. Mary Gavin requested confirmation of the local share % associated with these upcoming grants.

In related discussions SB members agreed the October 4th agenda should include a discussion on the process for negotiating the upcoming 5-year lease renewal for the Old School House. The current lease expires June 30, 2022.

11. Cyber Security:

Margy Becker will collaborate with Mike Tisdale concerning computer upgrades and staff cyber security training.

12. Ashley Forest Updates:

Kevin Gish reports the Town's attorney is discussing the final proposed easement with The VT Land Trust's attorney.

13. Harlow Road Updates:

There were no new reports provided other than the fact that the Selectboard liaison with Windsor County Sheriffs is now Mike Ruse and that there is a new commander of the State Police in Royalton.

14. Coronavirus:

Protocols for masking in the Town Offices were briefly reviewed. Mary Gavin will suggest the IC Team re-convene.

15. Selectboard Assistant Reports:

Margy Becker reported she will need to tend to family business during October and November which will require periodic absences from the office. She will follow-up with Joe Ronan concerning this matter.

16. Adjourn:

Kevin Gish made the motion to adjourn at 8:45PM. The motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

Submitted by Margy Becker