

Joint Sharon-Strafford  
Selectboard Meeting  
**DRAFT MINUTES**  
Morrill Education Center  
Strafford, VT  
October 25, 2021

Attending via Zoom from Morrill Education Center in Strafford: Strafford Selectmen Mary Linehan, Toni Pippy, Pat Kelly (Ashley Forest Committee member) , Rett Emerson; Sharon Selectman Kevin Gish; Strafford Town Clerk Lisa Bragg; Nicole Antal (Sharon Recording Secretary), AVC President Michael Sacca, AVC Director and Strafford Conservation Commission member Micki Colbeck, Sharon Conservation Commission Ashley Forest Committee member Richard Ruben, Vice President for Conservation at VLT Tracy Zschau, Regional Stewardship Manager at VLT Donna Foster, Strafford Conservation Commission and Ashley Forest Committee member JT Horn, Strafford Planning Commission Steve Willbanks; Attending remotely: Sharon Selectmen Joe Ronan and Mary Gavin; 4-Towns Coalition Coordinator at Green Mountain Economic Development Corporation Meagan Asbury, Orange County Forester David Pagineilli, AVC Director Warren Johnston, Strafford resident and former member of AVC Gus Speth, Mark Black, AVC Director Suzanne Long

**1. Convene special meetings of Strafford and Sharon Selectboards**

**Toni Pippy called the meeting at 6:34 pm.**

**2. Final Consideration of Ashley Community Forest Formation Documents**

***• Forest Conservation Easement***

Kevin Gish briefly presented the Forest Conservation Easement. A committee of 4 worked on the documents that are presented tonight.

JT Horn, one of the committee members, explained how the document came about, and things that the community showed interest in were included in the easement (forestry, recreation, school programs, special events, all are included and permissible by this document).

Selectboard members discussed and asked questions about the elements of the conservation easement and terms, limitations on use and access, the amount of the grant from Vermont Housing & Conservation Board to Alliance for Vermont Community (AVC), the role of selectboards in the management plan and resource management, the role of Vermont Land Trust and Vermont Housing & Conservation Board in oversight, the balance of conservation versus recreation, the towns' responsibilities for management of the land, options for exiting ownership by the towns, and possible language that will provide greater flexibility for the towns.

***• Towns of Sharon-Strafford Inter-Local Contract***

Pat Kelly made a presentation of the intent of the Interlocal Contract document. Selectboard members discussed how the Ashley Forest Board will function, how funds will be handled, clarification that the board will operate just as all boards and committees of the towns, serving at the pleasure of the selectboard, including replacing members, compliance with Open Meeting Law, clarification of the role

of selectboards for oversight. Additional clarification and amendment to the document were requested for:

- Request to add a quarterly financial reporting to both selectboards(possibly under 6(b)(6) or 8(f) )
- Clarification on the management of funds to be managed by the treasurer in Strafford OR Sharon
- An annual budget to be presented to the selectboards, and to be approved by the selectboards
- Information on insurance liability in the event of accident or lawsuit
- A specified timeframe for review of the Interlocal Contract in addition to an option to review and modify as needed (3 years initially)
- specify the reservation of rights for each town: add clarification about the Towns not being required to expend funds, each town can take whatever steps it needs to transfer the property within the terms of the Conservation Easement.
- Add language to explain that expenditures beyond the approved annual budget need approval by both selectboards
- clarification of the VT law that governs termination of Interlocal Contracts
- Adding language about the new board that will have to comply with towns' policies (purchasing, conflict of interest, etc.).

• *Schedule for the acquisition of community forest acreage*

Committee members were thanked by Selectboard members for their hard work developing the document presented at the meeting. The committee will try to make changes to the Conservation Easement document and the Interlocal Contract with the amendment and changes outlined in the discussion. They will present to the Selectboard for approval at separate selectboard meetings. An interim forest management plan must be drafted before closing, Michael Sacca said that one was already in place and will be shared for consideration. No tentative schedule was shared about the acquisition of community forest acreage; documents need to be amended and reviewed before proceeding.

**3. Adjourn:**

**Mary Linehan made the motion to adjourn at 8:56 PM. Toni Pippy seconded; motion unanimously approved. Meeting adjourned at 8:56 pm.**

*Submitted by Nicole Antal*