

**Sharon Selectboard
REGULAR Meeting Minutes
November 15, 2021 (Final)**

This meeting was held in compliance with the VT Open Meeting law for electronic meetings with remote and in-person attendance.

Attending In-Person from Sharon Town Offices: Kevin Gish, Selectmen; Margy Becker, Selectboard Assistant; Attending remotely via Zoom: Selectmen Joe Ronan and Mary Gavin; Finance Manager Deb Jones; Road Foreman Frank Rogers; Bonnie Dow (Mudgett Jennett & Krogh-Wisner, PC), Eric Lafayette (Energy Efficient Investments ‘EEI’), Chris Pelletier (White River Partnership)

Joe Ronan convened the meeting at 6:30PM;

1. Approval of Agenda:

Motion by Mary Gavin to approve the agenda as submitted. Kevin Gish seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Public Comments:

Chris Pelletier of the White River Partnership (“WRP”) explained the WRP is collaborating with the River Conservancy on a grant application to finance improvements to the town-owned Sharon Broad Brook river access (former Rikert Property) consistent with the Management Plan. A letter of support is needed from the property owner. No local match is required. A defined parking area, signage, and trail improvements are part of a 2-year plan for enhanced public access. Chris indicated the WRP is available to further discuss the layout of these plans once funding is obtained.

Motion by Mary Gavin to approve the letter of support as presented by the WRP and to authorize Kevin Gish to sign. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.

3. Approval of Minutes:

Approval of the October 25, 2021 minutes was deferred in order for Kevin Gish to provide edits needed to reflect consistency with Strafford SB minutes.

Motion by Kevin Gish to approve the minutes of November 1, 2021 without changes. The motion was seconded by Mary Gavin and carried unanimously.

Motion by Mary Gavin to approve the minutes of November 8, 2021 without changes. Kevin Gish seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

4. Approval of Warrants:

Motion by Joe Ronan to approve AP Warrant #1233 in the amount of \$8,825.48 including payments to ATG Westminster \$64.09, BCBS of VT \$6,593.13, Compucount \$174.74, DeLage Landen Financial \$94.53, EC Fiber \$158 (2 mos), Evans Motor Fuel \$1,118.28, EyeMed \$64.41, Fast Track Sign & Graphics \$558.30. Mary Gavin seconded the motion and it carried.

Motion by Mary Gavin to approve AP Warrant #1234 in the amount of \$3,015.65 including payments to Fastenal \$25.42, Foley Services \$114.96, HP Fairfield \$420, Key Communications \$350.14, Sabil & Sons \$33.84, Tasco Security \$492, Twin State Sand & Gravel \$1,579.29. Kevin Gish seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Motion by Kevin Gish to approve AP Warrant #1235 in the amount of \$2,153.55 including payments to Uline \$326.61, VLCT \$320, Welch's True Value \$200.94, Worksafe \$1,306.00. Mary Gavin seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Motion by Mary Gavin to approve the October 2021 HRA Reimbursement warrant in the amount of \$825.00. Kevin Gish seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

5. **FY21 Independent Audit Report**

Mudgett Jennett & Krogh-Wisner PC representative Bonnie Dow met with Selectmen to review the results of the FY21 independent financial audit. She reported on the few adjustments that were made. The audit was conducted mostly through remote means, with some field work last summer. The general and highway fund balances are healthy, and both budgets ended FY21 in the black. MJ&KW has issued a 'clean opinion' which indicates there no material weaknesses regarding financial reporting and internal controls. Bonnie noted this has been the case for several years, and that Deb Jones is to be commended for her vigilance and oversight of internal controls and financial reporting. Selectmen expressed their appreciation for Deb's work and followed up with questions regarding MJ&KW's recommendations regarding cross-training among staff on payroll, banking, and AP procedures in light of COVID19.

Motion by Mary Gavin to accept the FY21 audit report of November 15, 2021 and to authorize the Chair to sign the audit acceptance letter. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.

6. **Finance Manager Reports/Budget timeline:**

Selectmen discussed and agreed to schedule a November 30, 2021 special budget-only meeting to begin at 6:30PM.

7. **Road Foreman Reports:**

Frank Rogers reported on the status of highway maintenance activities. Purchasing and placement of share-the-road signage was discussed and agreed to. Street signs are on order for Cowslip Hill and Stationmasters roads. Deb Jones briefed Frank and SB members on topics discussed at the recent TRORC Transportation Advisory Committee meeting. It was

agreed the town will issue its annual public announcements regarding the town's highway winter maintenance policies. The town does NOT have a 'bare roads policy' in effect. School bus routes are plowed first. Crew members complete their plow routes in approximately 5 hours. Announcements will include a reminder that it is ILLEGAL to plow across town and state highways.

8. **Chase Site Services Contract:**

Margy Becker reviewed elements of the proposed 2-year agreement with Chase Site Services for plowing School Street and parking lots (SES, OSH, and Town Office), Sharhart Road, and for clearing sidewalks and building entrances – inclusive of the Historical Society ADA ramp (new this year).

Motion by Kevin Gish to accept the Agreement with Chase Site Services for \$790 per occurrence (including \$45/occurrence for 'post-storm clearing' of the Historical Society ADA ramp). Mary Gavin seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

Margy Becker noted the WRVSU has pledged to send the Town a proposed MOU regarding reimbursement for plowing the SES parking lot.

9. **Opioid Settlement Funding: status reports:**

Discussions postponed pending more information from Joe Ronan.

10. **Ashley Community Forest:**

Selectboard members are in receipt of final proposed versions of a Conservation Easement and Interlocal Contract, which Kevin Gish had forwarded to them on November 13th.

The VT Housing & Conservation Board and VT Land Trust have responded to suggested changes to the Conservation Easement from Joe Ronan and the October 25th joint selectboard meeting. Joe Ronan indicated he is generally satisfied with their responses. Mary Gavin indicated she is also satisfied.

Joe Ronan suggested the SB approve both documents, pending final review by the towns' counsel. Mary Gavin noted that final legal review may yield more changes, and that legal review should occur prior to adoption. Joe Ronan expressed support for either approach.

Kevin noted the Towns' counsel (Paul Gillies) would not likely comment on the final proposed Conservation Easement. Paul Gilles has already commented on the Interlocal Agreement and the likelihood of more substantive changes as a result of final review is low. Mary Gavin stated she could agree to adopt the documents as presented, if legal review could occur by November 30th.

Kevin Gish noted the Negotiating Committee did not disagree with any of the proposed changes to the Interlocal Agreement from the October 25th meeting, except for the suggestion

of required quarterly financial reporting to Selectboards. He indicated the Committee felt this was an excessive requirement. Mary Gavin restated her position that quarterly financial reporting from a newly-formed town committee such as this is warranted. Joe Ronan inquired whether Mary would be willing to support the current language on financial reporting for the first year to see how things unfold. She said yes.

Deb Jones inquired whether the Ashley Forest FY23 budget should be presented to the Towns and included in town reports. SB members concurred. Kevin Gish noted, however, it is uncertain when the property transfer will occur. The budget and report will have to note this fact. Kevin will report back on this matter.

Mary Gavin commented that the gift of the \$20,000 seed money from the AVC to the Towns is not mentioned in either of the Ashley Forest documents to-date. Joe Ronan noted this is because this transfer of funds does not “fit” under the auspices of either document. Kevin Gish agreed. Kevin reported the \$20,000 will still flow to the two towns upon gift of the property by AVC. Deb Jones indicated the gift of the \$20,000 will be deposited to the Ashley Forest account. The towns will be each credited with 50%. She will consult Bonnie Dow at Mudgett Jennett Krogh-Wisner as to how to post the \$10,000.

Motion by Joe Ronan to accept both Ashley Forest documents as revised subject to any final input from Counsel. Mary Gavin seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

11. Appointment of new Emergency Co-Coordinator:

SB members acknowledged a letter from Susan Root expressing her desire to retire from the position of emergency co-coordinator. She has recommended appointment of Keith Lyman, Jr. in her place.

Motion by Mary Gavin to accept the resignation of Susan Root as town Emergency Co-Coordinator, effective November 15, 2021. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.

Motion by Mary Gavin to appoint Keith Lyman, Jr. as town Emergency Co-Coordinator. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.

12. Energy Efficient Investments (“EEI”): Recommendation for Baxter Library Replacement Heating System:

Energy Committee Chair, Ryan Haac, and EEI representative Eric Lafayette joined the meeting. EEI has been contracted by several towns within the region to develop and implement local energy savings plans. EEI is in the business of energy services performance contracting.

Eric Lafayette has conducted an energy audit of Baxter Library and the Town Offices at the Selectboard’s directive. Eric proceeded to review components of EEI’s proposal for a replacement heating system at the Library to be comprised of a 2.5 ton Mitsubishi low

ambient heat pump and ERV. The objective of this proposal is to be free of reliance on fossil fuels. He discussed the proposal in detail and answered many questions fielded by Ryan Haac and SB members. ‘Sticker shock’ for this gold-standard heat pump system and associated ductwork was acknowledged by Ryan Haac and SB members. Eric Lafayette provided additional comments about the nature of energy services performance companies and ‘ESCO’ standards. EEI is audited to assure its profit margin aligns with federal limits. The involved discussions concluded with an agreement that EEI would a) provide cut sheets for the equipment, b) provide a more detailed cost proposal, c) be available to meet on-site with SB members.

13. Baxter Library Drainage Project:

Margy Becker reported on an email received from Will Davis regarding the School Board’s most recent consideration of this project. The School Board has asked the WRVSU to request proposals from a few civil engineers, so that the School Board can consider sharing the cost of the engineering and bid document preparation with the Town. Once the proposals have been received, the School Board will participate in future discussions with the Town about cost sharing to enable the project to proceed.

14. Selectboard Assistant Reports & Unfinished SB business:

FHWA Rte. 132 Culvert Replacement: Margy Becker reviewed guidance received from the VTRANS Municipal Assistance Bureau regarding the time-saving advantages of procuring an At-the-Ready Municipal Project Manager vs. having to undertake the conventional process. Regional Planning Commission staff have been afforded the opportunity, in this instance, to qualify to serve as an at-the-ready MPM if approved by the VTRANS.

Qualifications for a MPM were reviewed. SB members agreed, generally, that Rita Seto’s responses to a VTRANS questionnaire and her CV indicate she is qualified to serve as MPM. Rita’s cost proposal and proposed scope of work for MPM services totals \$35,561.09. Margy Becker indicated the action requested of the SB is confirmation of Rita Seto as Municipal Project Manager and submittal of a signed letter of confirmation to the Municipal Assistance Bureau.

Mary Gavin made the motion to confirm Rita Seto as Municipal Project Manager on the FHWA ER VT17-1 Rte. 132 Box culvert upgrade for an amount not-to-exceed \$35,561.09 and to authorize Kevin Gish to sign the letter of confirmation. Joe Ronan seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Margy Becker further reports her work on unfinished Selectboard business includes preparation for bidding grounds maintenance and exterior painting of town buildings, requisitioning hydraulic studies pertinent to upcoming highway grant applications, requesting an extension of the VTRANS Sec. 111 permit for the library drainage project, advertising for animal control officer, researching the feasibility of sharing an administrative officer for subdivision and flood hazard bylaw administration, preparation of the town meeting and town report publication timeline, collaborating with Mike Tisdale cyber-security matters and

computer upgrades, and renewed efforts on web-site content buildout. Nicole Antal is proceeding with town report preparation. Margy Becker also noted the Town Clerk's interest in making land records available via the website, and SB members discussed the work that might be entailed behind-the-scenes to make this happen. This project may be eligible for ARPA funding.

15. Coronavirus:

Kevin Gish agreed to meet with Cathy Sartor to discuss public access to the Town Offices.

16. Harlow Road:

No new reports.

17. Next Meeting /Town Office coverage:

Kevin Gish will attend the November 30th special budget meeting in-person from the Town Offices. The public has the right to attend the meeting from this location, where video and teleconference capabilities via Zoom will be provided.

18. Adjourn:

Kevin Gish made the motion to adjourn at 8:48PM. Mary Gavin seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Submitted by Margy Becker