

**Sharon Selectboard
SPECIAL Meeting Minutes
July 18th, 2022 DRAFT**

This meeting was held in compliance with the January 2022 VT Open Meeting law amendments regarding fully-remote electronic meetings.

Participants attending via Zoom: Mary Gavin, Vice Chair; Kevin Gish, Chair; Sarah Pfeiffer, Clerk; Lucy Miller, Finance Assistant; Nicola Shipman, Selectboard Assistant; Deb Jones, Finance Manager; Margaret Raymond, Treasurer; Dustin Potter, South Royalton Rescue; Corinne Ingraham, Chair of the South Royalton Rescue Advisory Board; Thomas Lober, South Royalton Rescue; Galen Mudgett, Lister; Ken Wright, Collector of Delinquent Taxes; Patricia Beavers, P2Environmental

Participating by Phone: Frank Rogers, Road Foreman

Call to Order:

Kevin Gish called the meeting to order at 6:33PM.

1. **Review/Approve Agenda**

Sarah Pfeiffer made a motion to approve the agenda with item 15 removed. Mary Gavin seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

2. **Public Comments**

No public comments.

3. **Minutes**

Kevin Gish made a motion to approve the June 21st minutes as presented. Sarah Pfeiffer seconded. Motion approved 2-0-1 with Mary Gavin abstaining.

Sarah Pfeiffer made a motion to approve the June 27th minutes as presented. Kevin Gish seconded. Motion approved 2-0-1 with Mary Gavin abstaining.

4. **Selectboard Member Reports:**

Sarah Pfeiffer was approached by a *Seven Days* reporter who is writing an article on housing in the area. Mary Gavin suggested that Sarah Pfeiffer reach out to the reporter and suggest he post to the listserv to find interviewees.

Kevin Gish communicated that Ashley Community Forest Board is moving forward with the management plan. They will be meeting on Thursday, July 21st. There will be a public hearing scheduled to review the plan.

5. Finance Manager Reports: Deb Jones/Lucy Miller

Deb Jones and Lucy Miller presented the FY22 End of Year reporting. According to Deb Jones, the town is not receiving many delinquent tax payments this year. Deb considered reasons and wonders with interest rates are going up and property sales stagnant, if this may be affecting refinancing and/or home sales. Also, residents do not seem to be inquiring about the VHAB program.

The fund balance is healthy. While the General Fund was overbudget, the Highway Fund came in under budget. Some line items were surprisingly low. Except for the delinquent tax debt write-off, the revenue and expenses ended up on track.

Kevin Gish asked if there was anything that could have been predicted. Deb Jones said the unanticipated expenses such as wages and fuel costs were unpredictable. Additionally, these are trends that many businesses and municipalities have been facing.

Lucy Miller prepared a Budget-to-Actual for the Recreation Fund. As noted, the revenue from soccer and basketball programming exceeded expenses, but expenses exceeded revenue for baseball, which is a continuing trend. It seems that there could be room to review programming fees to ensure the Recreation Fund remains healthy. The Selectboard would need to initiate a conversation with the Recreation Committee before the next budget season.

Kevin Gish asked the members about the Recreation Fund with regards to the CCC Pond appropriations in FY2021 of \$880.00. Mary Gavin said this used to be an in-kind contribution. The Town had provided the Town truck, labor, and a tractor to help haul weeds out of the CCC pond. Downer Camp would provide the operator for the weed harvester. At the time that the pandemic hit, the camp was talking about buying their own harvester. The Camp asked if the Town would have indoor storage over the winter to store a harvester, but the Town does not have storage available. The community use of the CCC Pond is also minimal.

Kevin Gish suggested that there should be a conversation with the Camp for next year for how the Town might support the pond clean up during next year's budget discussion.

The \$880.00 in the FY21 in the budget represents a portion of the cost for a weed harvester machine rental.

Mary Gavin believes there is a written agreement between the Town and the Camp regarding the expense sharing. Nicola Shipman will look to see what might be on file.

Mary Gavin referred to the Recreation Fund in general and mentioned that the fund is under \$5000.00. Deb Jones agreed and said the Recreation Fund balance is \$3,844.00.

6. **Highway Business/Road Foreman Reports: Frank Rogers**

Frank Rogers received two estimates for tree removal related to the Grants-in-Aids work on Fay Brook Road. Quotes came in from Fox Tree and Landscape Services based in Enfield, NH for \$2,750.00 and from Chippers for \$3,525.00. Since this program is going to be 80% funded through Grants-in-Aid, Deb Jones suggested it would be worth seeing if there is a procurement policy requirement. Nicola Shipman will double check to see if there is a procurement requirement for the Grants-in-Aid funding.

Frank Rogers also mentioned that the grader is now fixed.

Mary Gavin noticed there was a sign down on the railroad side of River Road. Frank said he would investigate it.

7. **Approve Warrants:**

Sarah Pfeiffer made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1345 in the amount of \$13,859.76 with payments to Casella Waste Systems \$82.09, Evans Motor Fuels \$645.49, EyeMed Vision Care \$70.42, Community Bank NA \$12,987.75, Royal Auto Parts \$74.01. Mary Gavin seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

Mary Gavin made a motion to approve Payroll Warrant dating 7/3/2022 – 7/16/2022 for a cash draw of \$16,831.51. Sarah Pfeiffer seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

8. **South Royalton Rescue Presentation: Corinne Ingraham**

Corinne Ingraham, Chair for the South Royalton Rescue Advisory Board, presented a request for financial support from the Town of Sharon for a new South Royalton Rescue Squad Building.

According to Corinne, the organization is financially sound, and the call volume is increasing. Due to organizational growth, the SRRS anticipates the need for a new building soon. There is an available building site right next to the South Royalton Town Clerk's Office. Dustin Potter and Tom Lober, also representing the SRRS, believe building a facility would be the next step for the organization to be able to grow, better serve the community and to help retain employees. The SRRS currently rents two buildings. The Squad Building for Staff and storage space for the ambulance at the South Royalton Firehouse.

The proposed building includes 1300 sq feet of staff space, a 108 sq feet connector, and a 2000 sq feet of garage. The connector between the staff space and the garage was included in the design to help the organization meet fire codes and save in construction costs.

Upland Construction has submitted a bid for about \$815,000. The group also expects Lavalley's to submit a bid, but the SRRS Advisory Board has not received it to date. The SRRS Board also met with Senator Lahey's office and Senator Sanders' office, and they

received guidance for how to apply for USDA grant funding and low-interest loan opportunities for the Rescue Squad Building.

At this point, the South Royalton Rescue Squad is asking Sharon, Royalton, and Turnbridge to each contribute \$25,000.00 of the ARPA/SLFRF funding to assist with the planning phase of the building project.

Mary Gavin added that the Squad building is currently at the corner of Safford and S Windsor. It is an older building and the squad is outgrowing the capacity. Also, the staff building is a few minutes from the firehouse (where the ambulance is stored). This delays response times.

The USDA have grants and low-cost loans, so that is something the Advisory Board is looking into. The USDA interest rates are tied to the 10-year Treasury note and are likely to stay under 4%. To go through the process with the USDA there is a significant amount of paperwork to generate the grant application.

The SRRS Advisory Board does have a sketch from a contractor/designer, but the Board would need an architect to draw up plans in order to qualify for USDA for funding.

Kevin Gish asked when the South Royalton Rescue Advisory Board would need a commitment from the towns. He also asked why the request was a lump sum of \$25,000 from each town rather than based on population given the differences in the sizes of the towns.

Deb Jones asked when the organization would like to hear back from the Town. Corinne Ingraham responded that sooner rather than later would be best, but she understands how important these questions are.

Nicola Shipman will add this to the agenda for the August 1st meeting so there can be a continued discussion.

9. **Consider Bids Submitted for Bridge #10 Wing Wall Replacement**

Mary Gavin made a motion to accept the Lewco LLC bid in the amount of not more than \$29,750.00 and a bid alternative of not more than \$38,500.00 for a total of up to \$68,250.00 for the Design/Build Wing Wall Replacement on Bridge # 10 located on Quimby Mountain Road. Sarah Pfeiffer seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

Deb Jones asked for clarification with regards to payment for the work, and which fund the payment should come from. Also, Deb asked that, if the Footing needs to be replaced, the Members will direct her as to which fund will be used to pay for the footing replacement.

10. Update from P2Environmental regarding Water System: Patricia Beavers

Patricia Beavers reminded the Selectboard that the Old School House water system was tied into the Sharon Elementary School water system after a well failure many years ago. The plan used to connect the Old School House to the Elementary School water system included the installation of a 200-gallon polyethylene holding tank in the Old School House. It was not clear what the functionality was, but, due to iron fouling, the tank was removed in August of 2019 as it was considered a public health hazard.

In the spring of 2022, the State conducted regularly scheduled inspections and noted that there had been no construction permit in place when the tank was removed. The State is now requiring remediation.

Patricia presented two options to the Town for resolution. 1) replace the tank following the original specifications or 2) submit documentation that the tank is not needed.

After discussion, the consensus led the Members to pursue replacing the tank in keeping with the original design specifications.

Kevin Gish asked if the money to pay for this would come from the Old School House fund. Deb confirmed.

Kevin Gish made a motion to authorize P2Environmental to continue to follow the existing engineering plan for the Old School House and the Town Municipal building, and to replace the tank and jet pump that was removed in accordance with the original design. Sarah Pfeiffer seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

11. Set the Municipal Tax Rate for FY23: Galen Mudgett

Galen Mudgett said that, in accordance with the warning for the 2022 Town Meeting and the article that was included in the warning, the Town needs to raise \$1,320,000 from property taxes. To do this, the Listers recommend a municipal tax rate of \$0.7850. The Town also needs to raise an additional \$3,830.22 for the Veteran's Offset, which the Listers recommend at a local rate of \$0.0023

Sarah Pfeiffer made a motion to set the Municipal Tax Rate for FY23 at \$0.7850 and the Veteran's Offset rate at \$0.0023 as recommended by the Town Listers. Mary Gavin seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

Galen also notified the Selectboard that in February 2022, High Horses submitted a request for tax-exempt status. The listers sought legal counsel and the recommendation was that the tax-exempt process should be approved. The State has approved High Horses for tax-exemption. This does not require a vote of the Town, but the Listers wanted to make sure the Town was aware that this does reduce the Grand List by just over \$7,300.00.

12. Proposed Property Tax Sale: Ken Wright

Kevin Gish asked Ken Wright to provide an overview of the Tax Sale in the Town of Royalton. Ken Wright confirmed that the tax sale in Royalton was complete. Royalton had twenty-two properties up for tax sale. Twenty of those had settled to the satisfaction of the town before the tax sale. One property went up for tax sale and one property the town declined which means the Town did not cast the minimum bid, but the Town did pay the attorney's fees.

Mary Gavin asked if there are no bidders, and the town put in the minimum bid, what would be the result? Ken Wright responded that, in the case where the town is the only bidder, the town cannot do anything for 12 months and a day. After that, Ken Wright confirmed, if the owner does not resolve the delinquent taxes owed, the property deed is passed onto the town, and town becomes the owner. Mary Gavin asked questions regarding liability and other issues if the town becomes the owner. Ken Wright agreed these are potential issues, and there can be some costs associated with securing the property.

Mary Gavin asked Ken Wright about the intention for future tax sales. Ken replied that Royalton does a tax sale every year. He also said it is important to clear delinquent taxes, so property owners do not become delinquent in payment over multiple years. This becomes expensive for the town and a burden to taxpayers. Mary Gavin suggested it could be standard to bring a list of delinquent tax properties to the Selectboard every two years.

Margaret Raymond asked what possible additional expenses could be. Ken Wright responded that unanticipated expenses would be those required to secure or clean up the property once the Town takes possession.

Kevin Gish made a motion to authorize Mary Gavin to represent the Town as an agent to enter a minimum bid for a Tax Sale as per 32 V.S.A. § 5259. Sarah Pfeiffer seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

Nicola Shipman will present a revised letter of support to the Delinquent Tax Collector to the Selectboard at the August 1st meeting.

13. Nominations for the VT Council on Rural Development Leadership Conference

Sarah Pfeiffer asked what kind of candidate the Town would be looking for. Kevin said this would be available to anyone who would be willing and able to get involved, but that it would be good to send someone who may not otherwise have an opportunity to be involved. This was tabled until the August 1st meeting.

14. Entertain a motion to reappoint a Town Treasurer through August 31st, 2022

Margaret Raymond said she would be willing to continue as Town Treasurer until August 31st, 2022.

Kevin Gish made a motion to reappoint Margaret Raymond as Town Treasurer through August 31st, 2022. Sarah Pfeiffer seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

15. Tax Penalty Update: Lucy Miller/Deb Jones

Lucy Miller submitted a comparative for the Tax Penalties in surrounding towns. Lucy noticed that most towns had similar penalties of eight percent, the maximum allowed by the State, except for the Town of Thetford.

Deb Jones was more comfortable with the idea of a stepped-up penalty. She also noted that if there would be a change to the penalty, this would mean the Board would need to consider a different warned article than what the Town has submitted in the past.

After some discussion, the solution that seems to be most palatable is to impose a 2% penalty for up to 14 days after the second payment deadline. After that point, the full 8% penalty would be enforced.

16. Baxter Memorial Library Drainage Update

No update

17. Coronavirus updates as needed

We will continue to refer to CDC and Department of Health guidance and interdepartmental communication.

18. Executive Session

Mary Gavin made a motion to enter executive session per 1 V.S.A. § 313(2) “for the purpose of negotiating or securing of real estate purchase or lease options” to include Selectboard Members only at 9:07PM. Kevin Gish seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

Mary Gavin made a motion to exit executive session at 9:18PM. Sarah Pfeiffer seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

Mary Gavin will relay information for the potential Old School House sale to Andrew Lane.

19. Adjourn

Mary Gavin made a motion to adjourn at 9:19PM. Sarah Pfeiffer seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

Submitted by Nicola Shipman