

**Sharon Selectboard
Meeting Minutes
November 20th, 2023 FINAL**

Attending In Person: Kevin Gish, Selectboard Chair; Scott Henkels, Selectboard Vice Chair; Nicola Shipman, Selectboard Assistant; Nic Antal, The White River Valley Herald

Attending via Zoom: Dana Colson, Planning Commission Candidate; Cathy Sartor, Town Clerk; Lucy Pierpont, Finance Manager

Attending via Phone: Frank Rogers, Road Foreman

Not Present: Sarah Pfeiffer, Selectboard Clerk

Call to Order:

Kevin Gish called the meeting to order at 6:32PM.

1. **Review/Approve Agenda**

Kevin Gish made a motion to approve the agenda with an added Item 13a for an executive session to discuss the hiring of a highway crew member. Scott Henkels seconded. Motion approved 2-0-0. Sarah Pfeiffer was not present.

2. **Public Comments**

No public comments

3. **Selectboard Member Reports**

Kevin Gish provided an update from the Ashley Community Forest Board meeting, including a description of the efforts of the ACF Board to 1) limit the disturbance of the historic stone foundation, 2) create designated “school” areas for activities for elementary students and 3) explore an access point from the Sharon side of the ACF to allow for local access.

4. **Road Foreman Reports**

Due to some technical difficulties, the Board moved on to the Road Foreman reports. Frank Rogers said there are only two employees available on the Road Crew this week since the crew is currently understaffed, and the third crew member is out for a scheduled vacation. Due to the limited staff on call, Frank asked if it would be possible to hire Chase Site Services, a contractor who already provides limited snow clearing services to the Town, to help with the municipal highways if weather conditions end up being more challenging than currently forecasted. The Selectboard members agreed that if Frank needs to bring in additional support, it makes good sense and agreed that Frank should be able to hire Chase Site Services to provide highway support.

Kevin Gish made a motion to authorize the Road Foreman to hire Chase Site Services to assist with municipal highway winter maintenance on an as-needed basis due to low staff levels. Scott Henkels seconded. Motion approved 2-0-0.

Frank confirmed that the FEMA and FHWA emergency repairs are complete for this year except for the outstanding Fay Brook Road bank stabilization. That project will be on hold until at least next Spring as we have not been able to secure a quote for the project.

Frank did say that the hard pack is fully stockpiled, and there is perhaps a day or two of grading left to complete in preparation for winter. If the weather holds off, there may be some additional ditching and culvert work that could be wrapped up.

Otherwise, the Road Crew is prepping for winter.

5. Finance Manager Reports

Lucy Pierpont provided multiple reports for the members to review including the Budget to Actuals for FY23 and FY24. FY23 is now closed, and the audit is complete.

Lucy noted that the Town is on track for FY24 with spending at around 30% of the budget spent and we are about 33% of the way through the fiscal year at this point.

Lucy also mentioned that she received guidance that Towns should allocate their ARPA sooner rather than later. One solution is to establish a new reserve fund and transfer surplus funds as a mechanism for allocation. The creation of a new reserve fund would need to be a warned article voted on at Town meeting in accordance with statute.

Lucy explained that for ARPA funding to be considered “allocated”, the Town would need to have contracts in place with specific amounts and specific projects assigned to each dollar in funding by December 31, 2024. Alternatively, if the funding were to be allocated to the general fund, there would be no obligation to allocate to specific projects nor would the expenditure timelines be as restrictive.

If the fund were to be set up, the Town would be required to report any spending down of that fund once a year in April, and/or there could be a single audit requirement.

Kevin Gish asked Lucy to seek out model article language to include on the ballot for March 2024.

6. Selectboard Assistant Reports

Nicola recently learned that the Old Town Hall building needs some more immediate repairs due to floor instability. Apparently, the conditions are deteriorating. We have a quote from Jack Jones for the full repair of the flooring and there is a possibility of exploring other options in the shorter term. Nicola will explore options.

Nicola noted that the carpentry contract with Jack Jones expires at the end of November. Nicola is waiting to hear from Jack as to whether he would like to extend that contract for any length of time. She will bring this back to the Board for review if so.

Nicola is waiting for an additional update for drainage project at the Baxter Memorial Library in conjunction with the School District and Seven Stars. Nicola reported that the permit allowing for municipal access to the catch basin on Route 14 is set to expire on December 31st. The State has

recommended allowing that permit to expire. The Town will then need to reapply for a permit when the plans are formalized, and the project is slated to move forward to construction.

The Efficiency Vermont Lighting upgrade is almost complete. Though the project was not wholly without some complications, Tilden Electrical contractors have been great. They should be wrapping up soon. All invoices will need to be paid by mid-December meetings. The project needs to be closed out by December 31st to be eligible for reimbursement from Efficiency Vermont.

All other building improvements, such as the Old Town Hall ADA ramp and exterior painting, are on hold currently, and the Town is still waiting to hear from the State regarding the date for the Level 2 Assessments.

The comment period for the Local Concerns phase of the Scoping Study has been completed. The Town is now waiting for the Municipal Project Manager and the Scoping Study Consultant to advise us on the next steps.

Website upgrade: Nicola and Lucy have identified at least one contractor who can perform a website transfer and upgrade for under \$5000. Ongoing costs for the maintenance of the site would be \$2000 per year with a guaranteed upgrade of the website every 3 years as part of the contract agreement.

Nicola also spoke with Mike Tisdale about our current IT support set up. The Town is currently operating under what is called a “Break/Fix” model. Ideally the Town would look to have a more actively managed support system. Nicola asked Mike to pull together quotes for the Town including providing his current hourly rates under the “Break/Fix” model and the mid-level active management plan so we can have a better sense for budgeting in FY25.

Nicola has drafted a Cardiac Emergency Response Plan for the Town buildings as we now have AEDs installed. The plan is under review with South Royalton Rescue to ensure we have a viable plan. Nicola will then ask the Board to review the plan for possible acceptance in December.

Finally, Nicola and Lucy are drafting a Personnel Policy so the policy can be updated to follow actual practices as well as current statute. Once the document has been reviewed by our insurer, we will look for Selectboard input and submit the document for legal review prior to acceptance of the policy by the Board.

7. **Review Minutes: November 6th and November 7th, 2023**

Kevin Gish made a motion to accept the minutes from November 6th with spelling changes. Scott Henkels seconded. Motion approved 2-0-0.

Scott Henkels made a motion to accept the minutes from November 7th as presented. Kevin Gish seconded. Motion approved 2-0-0.

8. **Warrants**

Scott Henkels made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1564 in the amount of \$17,135.24 with payments to ATG \$146.62, Aubuchon Hardware \$319.65, Blue Cross Blue Shield \$2,642.93, Casella Waste \$108.32, CVC Paging \$134.72, Chase Site Services \$13,616.00, Cott Systems \$170.00. Kevin Gish seconded. Motion approved 2-0-0.

Kevin Gish made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1565 in the amount of \$2,241.31 with payments to Eastern Sales \$193.00, EC Fiber \$151.00, Evans Motor Fuels \$1,354.81, Foley Services \$112.44, Future Supply Corp. \$252.00, Magee office products \$113.14, Nicola Shipman \$64.95. Scott Henkels seconded. Motion approved 2-0-0.

Scott Henkels made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1566 in the amount of \$19,639.27 with payments to Pete's Tire Barns \$215.95, Pike Industries \$18,569.36, Royal Auto Parts \$67.36, Sabil and Sons \$540.54, Suburban Propane \$246.06. Kevin Gish seconded. Motion approved 2-0-0.

Kevin Gish made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1567 in the amount of \$19,878.86 with payments to Tarrant, Gillies, and Shems \$1,180.80, Twin State Sand and Gravel \$1,598.51, Tyler Wight Heating \$173.81, U.S.P.S. \$132.00, Valley News \$217.80, Viking-Cives \$456.94, Windsor County Sheriffs \$16,119.00. Scott Henkels seconded. Motion approved 2-0-0.

Scott Henkels made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1568 in the amount of \$10,905.29 with payments to Fuss and O'Neill \$2,865.52, Mudgett, Jennett, and Krogh-Wisner \$5,400, Tilden Electric \$2,639.77. Kevin Gish seconded. Motion approved 2-0-0.

Kevin Gish made a motion to approve AP Warrant 1569 from the Old School House Fund in the amount of \$142.96 with payment to Crystal Rock \$142.96. Scott Henkels seconded. Motion approved 2-0-0.

Scott Henkels made a motion to ratify the HRA reimbursement warrant for October 1 – October 31, 2023 in the amount of \$56.99. Kevin Gish seconded. Motion approved 2-0-0.

Scott Henkels made a motion to ratify Checks #38 and #39 for checks written for the Chester Downer Fund with payments to Pine Hill Cemetery \$180.00 Windsor County Probate Court \$85.00. Kevin Gish seconded. Motion approved 2-0-0.

Kevin Gish made a motion to approve the payroll warrant for the period 11/5 - 11/18/2023 with a cash draw of \$14,895.89. Scott Henkels seconded. Motion approved 2-0-0.

9. **Planning Commission Candidate**

Kevin Gish welcomed Dana Colson. Kevin opened the floor to Dana so that Dana would have an opportunity to share in serving on the Planning Commission.

Dana would like to get more involved with Town government. Dana would like to work with fellow residents and ask constructive questions when he sees a need. As far as planning / development, Dana said he would like to try to find middle ground and be a constructive member of the team.

10. **Executive Session**

Kevin Gish made a motion to enter executive session for the purposes of appointment of a public officer per 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3) at 7:27PM. Scott Henkels seconded. Motion approved 2-0-0.

Kevin Gish made a motion to exit executive session at 7:28PM. Scott Henkels seconded. Motion approved 2-0-0.

11. Resume Open Meeting

Scott Henkels made a motion to appoint Dana Colson to fill a vacancy on the Planning Commission for a three-year term ending March 2026. Kevin Gish seconded. Motion approved 2-0-0.

12. Town Meeting 2024 Articles for Consideration

Cathy Sartor said several residents have raised the question of if/how the Town might consider moving to an Australian Ballot style vote in 2025. Cathy added that if the Selectboard did not wish to explore the question at this time, the voters do have the option to petition by January 18th. The petition would require 10% of registered voters to sign to be a conforming petition.

Kevin Gish was in favor of giving voters an opportunity to vote on the issue, but he also suggested that the Selectboard should wait to decide this question until Sarah Pfeiffer is also in attendance. Scott Henkels agreed that it would be best to wait before deciding.

Nicola Shipman will add this to item to the December 4th agenda so the Selectboard can fully consider the option to add those articles required.

14. Executive Session

Kevin Gish made a motion to enter executive session to address the potential employment of a road crew member at 7:51PM with attendees to include Scott Henkels, Kevin Gish, Frank Rogers, Road Foreman and Lucy Pierpont, Human Resources. Scott Henkels seconded. Motion approved 2-0-0.

Kevin Gish made a motion to exit executive session at 8:18PM. Scott Henkels seconded. Motion approved 2-0-0.

Scott Henkels made a motion to extend a job offer to a Level 3 Road Crew member at a rate of \$26.00 per hour. Kevin Gish seconded. Motion approved 2-0-0.

15. Budget Discussion: Departmental Wages

Kevin Gish opened the discussion around Departmental Wages with Scott and Kevin reviewing six options provided by Lucy Pierpont. The options included a variety of percentage increases and/or dollar amount increases.

Kevin Gish said that the original decision to add a December raise was to accommodate for unexpected increases in health care costs.

Kevin and Scott instructed Lucy to use Option 6 as the working departmental wages model for budgeting purposes. This option would allow for a single \$1.50 increase across the board which would be effective July 1, 2024.

16. **Snow Removal Contract with School District**

Kevin Gish made a motion to sign the Snow Removal Contract Agreement with the Sharon School District for the term December 1, 2023 through April 30, 2024 at a rate not to exceed \$91.50 per snow event. Scott Henkels seconded. Motion approved 2-0-0.

17. **Loader Bid Results**

Frank suggested that of the options, the two loaders he would recommend included the John Deere and the Milton CAT. Frank's primary feedback is that while the John Deere is most cost effective, the level of service with CAT has been excellent.

Scott Henkels asked if the power angle broom could be an option for future purchase since it hadn't yet been budgeted for. Frank said the tool would be a useful one, but the Town could function without one until a later date. All the components needed for the attachment would already be installed on the loader, so it wouldn't be a challenge to install.

Frank noted that a power angle broom can sweep all the black top, aprons, and bridges (which are supposed to be swept clear once per year). The broom parts would need to be changed from time to time and maintenance for the broom would need to be included in the maintenance and repair budget for the loader.

Kevin Gish made a motion to 1) award the contract for a replacement loader to United Construction & Forestry for the purchase of a John Deere 524P Loader with the purchase price not to exceed \$199,300 with the trade-in value for the current CAT Loader at \$75,000 for a net not-to-exceed price of \$124,300 and 2) authorize a loan of \$120,000. Scott Henkels seconded. Motion approved 2-0-0.

18. **250th Commemoration**

The State is seeking municipalities interested in joining in their efforts to mark the 250th anniversary of the signing of the declaration of independence over a three-year period starting in 2025 through 2027.

Nicola Shipman noted that there is limited internal capacity to spearhead additional committees, but she will advertise the opportunity to see if there is anyone willing to take up the effort. The Selectboard is not interested in funding events, and there is no State funding for this project.

19. **ARPA Funding**

Nicola Shipman noted that she had stalled out in her progress to understand the cost of the lease through American Tower for expanded radio communications. She will continue to reach out to find solutions.

Lucy Pierpont will provide draft article language to the Board for establishing a reserve fund to resolve the ARPA allocation question.

19. **Other Business**

The TH-46 Site Visit will be rescheduled to December 16th at 12:30PM

20. **Adjourn**

Scott Henkels made a motion to adjourn at 9:00PM. Kevin Gish seconded. Motion approved 2-0-0.

Respectfully submitted by Nicola Shipman