

Town Of Groton, Vermont – Selectboard Minutes, December 17th, 2015 (Approved)

The duly warned meeting of the Groton Selectboard of December 17th, 2015 was held at the Groton Community Building, 1476 Scott Highway, Groton, Vermont.

Attendance for the meeting included Shawn Crown, Tom Gandin, Don Bliss, and Dan Robinson.

The Following Selectboard Members were in attendance: Peter Lyon, Mary Grant, and Andrew Dorsett

The Meeting was called to order at 6:10 PM

Updates/Adjustments to the Agenda:

Peter Lyon made the following adjustments to the agenda: Building Committee Notes, Cemetery Maintenance Invoices, Review of the Personnel Policy, Update on NVDA, Storage of the Mower/Sidewalk Snow blower, Approve December 3rd Minutes and Update on Harv Orr Road.

Cemetery Maintenance Invoices:

Tom Gandin reported to the Board that he had submitted his 2014 invoice Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> 2014. He realized that during tax time that he had not received payment for the invoice. He brought it to the attention of the Cemetery Board and asked how they wanted to clear up the matter. The Cemetery Board wanted him to continue with 2015 maintenance and resubmit the 2014 invoice for payment. Peter asked if the invoice was for 2014 and 2015, Tom replied he had been paid for 2015. Peter asked Tom what the amount was, Tom replied \$700. Peter asked Lisa to look in the budget and see where funds could be reallocated to the Cemetery fund to pay Tom's invoice. Lisa said there was \$545.67 in the Select Board's budget for postage and supplies and \$500.00 in Planning that wasn't going to be used. Mary made a motion to use the \$500 from Planning budget and \$200 for the Select Board's budget to pay the 2014 invoice from for cemetery cleaning. Peter seconded the motion. There was no discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

Building Committee Resolution to form an Economic Development Committee:

Mary Grant briefed the Select Board on the Building Committee's resolution to form an Economic Development Committee that would include representatives from each department and committee. The committee would prepare the Capital Investment Plan for the Town's buildings, structures and facilities and update it's usage policies. This would allow for input from all of the departments and committees help manage the maintenance and upkeep of Town properties. Mary asked the Select Board Secretary to send a draft copy of the resolution to the Select Board members for their review. Peter thought the plan was a good one and thanked Mary for her efforts.

NVDA Update:

Peter briefed the Board that he had attended an NVDA meeting in Newport, VT. NVDA did a financial statement review and acceptance, approval of audits, approval of Lowell town plan, and received a report on economic development programs and profiles, and analysis for the city of Newport. Peter said that if anyone ever wanted any of the documentation from NVDA, to let him know, he would be happy to pass them along.

#### Harv Orr Road Update:

Shawn Crown wanted to update Mary Grant on the meeting that was held December 10<sup>th</sup> on Harv Orr Road and get a status of the end result of the meeting. Shawn informed the Board that his sisters still weren't happy with the way the road is ditched and lack of stone on the upper end to prevent debris from plugging the stone on the lower end which would force water over the road. Peter said that he had asked the question about whether or not any more stone was needed and the answer was that they were satisfied with the stone to date. Mary added that they were satisfied "to date", but that the meeting was to determine if anything more needed to be done before spring. Everyone agreed that in the spring, the banks need to be cut back and more mulch put on to prevent erosion, But there may need to be more stone in the ditches up on the Great Road end. Mary said that it is raining now, and asked what the ditches are doing? Shawn answered they are eroding. Mary said it will need more stone on the upper end to slow the water down. Mary said that she will talk with Brent to see what more can be done. She said that this has been an unusually wet fall and may prohibit some work. Peter said this is his understanding of the 2 items agreed upon, one, Brent will cut back the banks in the spring and mulch them, and to handle the water at the base. Brent would like to install a culvert to move the water to the left side of the road, and the property owner wants the water to remain on the right side. Brent has agreed to talk with the property owner during the winter to resolve the issue. Mary said that we will have to wait to see how the road winters, the volunteers may have some work to do. The town has spent money there and can't continue to do so. Shawn said that they were doing the work and Brent came up and dug ditches when he wasn't supposed to do any work. Shawn asked if he could get a copy of the specs for a class 3 road. Mary said we can get them for him, NVDA has them and the town has adopted them for the Highway Dept. Mary asked the Select Board Secretary to get a copy for Shawn. Mary and Shawn agreed that a coordination meeting be held during the winter to get everyone on the same plan to move forward in the spring. Mary said that we have issues that we need to work and that the Harv Orr Road volunteers have issues that they need to work. Shawn said that not all of the property owners were on the same page initially and has led to some problems. Peter said that Mary will get with Brent and find out if some additional stone needs to be put in. Shawn said it was nice for them to all get together and talk it through so everyone is working together.

#### Review and Approve 2016 Tax Anticipation Note:

Lisa presented the Board with the 2016 TAN. She said that the Town had gotten an increase from \$300,000 to \$500,000 which the bank help her prepare the paperwork for. Peter ask why we wouldn't do all of our banking at Union. There may be a savings to consolidate the Town's account in one bank. Lisa said that when time permits she would look into it, however, this time of year she didn't have a lot of time for side projects. Peter asked if she would like him to have Union Bank draw up a proposal. Lisa said that he could if he would like, but she wasn't able to take that on now. Peter said that was fine, but it would be something the board could look at. Mary asked if the TAN had been approved at a previous meeting, Lisa said yes, it just required signatures. Lisa asked about the Minutes of the previous meeting approving the TAN and the statement that the reserves be used before the TAN. Peter said yes, not just reserves, but reserves that were stable. Lisa said that she has been advised not to use reserves and presented Peter with a statute, treasurer's handbook and advice from the town's auditing firm advising her not to use reserves first. Mary said anything reserved or set aside cannot be used. Peter said that he had spoken with VLCT and VLCT counsel said it was perfectly fine. Peter said it's because you are borrowing your own money. Peter asked for copies of Lisa's references and said that he would go back to VLCT for clarification. Both Peter and Mary wanted a ruling so they could be sure that they were doing the right thing.

#### Review and approve Building Use Agreement:

Peter asked if the agreement had updated been updated for review. The Select Board Secretary answered that it was not ready for review and asked if it could be moved to the next meeting. It was agreed that it would be updated and sent out in draft for review before the next meeting. Peter asked if Linda Nunn had a chance to look at it the email that went out. Linda said that she had not. The major concern being the insurance cost for families/groups that didn't have coverage. Mary and Andrew talked about possibilities that are available for an inexpensive alternative to offer. The Town's attorney is advising against waiving the requirement. Andrew suggested checking around for pricing of a rider that someone wishing to rent the facility could "purchase" for the day of the rental. Mary said the Town should be able to get a rider through the Town's insurance company at a reasonable rate. Mary suggested that the town shop through the general market to find the best rate possible and possibly lower the rates for a rider. Peter asked if Linda could get a cost estimate of a rider, Lisa added that she could assist, Mary said if there was any issues talk to the insurance company to pass it along to her and she would take care of it.

#### Approval of December 3<sup>rd</sup> 2015 Select Board Minutes:

Mary moved to approve the minutes of the December 3<sup>rd</sup> 2015 Select Board minutes. Andrew seconded. Peter made a correction to the donor of the town's Christmas tree. The donors were Leon and Brenda Darling. Andrew made a correction to a statement he made referencing property owners abutting class 4 roads from "maintain" to "improve". Mary asked the Select Board Secretary to add the Treasurer and Town Clerk to the email distribution list. Peter mentioned to Andrew that the Select Board Secretary had offered to maintain the voice recordings of the Select Board meetings in the Select Board file cabinet. Andrew suggested that once the Minutes were approved the recordings could present a conflict if someone wanted to challenge the minutes. He had seen that happen in a previous position. His office was advised to overwrite and recordings once the meeting minutes were approved. The Secretary stated that his recordings were used to ensure the minutes were as complete as possible and any remaining on his device would be deleted at the meetings end. Peter asked Linda what she did with her copies that she records. Linda said she doesn't record all the time, but just as a back-up for the Secretary and that she records over the old files. The Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes.

#### Storage of the Mower/Sidewalk Snow Blower:

Peter said that Don Bliss had asked the Select Board for recommendations for storage of the snow blower during the winter. It is too far out of town for him to keep it at his house. Previously he had stored it in the left hand bay of the Fire House. Alternatives had been researched such as building a small storage shed, and addition onto the Community Building and moving the Pump House. All of which were not feasible of within current year budget. The Select Board felt it was appropriate to respectfully ask the Fire Department to house the snow blower for this winter season. Don indicated that would be a good plan. Andrew made a motion to respectfully ask the Fire Department to house the Town's snow blower in the Fire House for this winter season. Mary seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously. The Board thanked Don for coming in.

The Meeting took a 5 minute break, during which Peter signed a PO for the church clock repairs. He also mentioned the bulb conversion to LED 2 years ago and have not needed to be replaced since.

Peter asked Lisa what the mileage reimbursement was currently. Lisa answered 48 cents. She added that the rate should be 57 cents, we are at 48 cents which it has been since 2007.

#### Review 2015 Year End Budget vs Projected Spending:

Peter asked Lisa about the funding for the electrical code problem which totaled roughly \$900. Peter said it should come from Highway and not General. Andrew indicated that there was over \$20,000, but didn't know what may be out there for invoices. Peter said Brent shouldn't be spending money so there shouldn't be any invoices. Andrew asked what the repair was for, Peter answered the bring power from the pump over to the building. Lisa asked what build, Highway or here? Peter answered Highway. Andrew reviewed the Highway budget and determined that the money could come from Highway garage repairs. Peter said that he would have Mary sign a PO and he would stop by in the morning with the invoice. Andrew made a motion that the Town bring the electrical up to code at the salt shed. Mary seconded the motion. Lisa asked who was doing the work, Peter answered Tim Cory, Cory Electric. The motion passed unanimously. Lisa questioned expenditures from Highway without talking to Brent. The Board answered that because it was an issue of code, he just needs to be notified of what actions the Board took.

Lisa brought up the renovations to Linda's office. There was discussion of doing just the wall and not the carpet, that there would be money enough. Peter asked for a breakdown of what each part of the project was. Andrew said because each part of the project was separate, the job would not have to go out to bid. Lisa found money in the following accounts, Elections- \$1067.37, Auditors \$2053.56 totaling \$3120.93 to go towards the work in Linda's office. Lisa and Linda indicated that they were going to hold off on carpet. Andrew asked if there was any other place to look for money so the project would be complete. Lisa said there was \$200 in the Tree Warden's budget that wasn't going to be used. Linda mentioned that there had been discussion of removing the carpet with volunteers to save the removal/disposal cost. Peter asked how much it would save. Linda read off the estimate \$211.50 labor and \$148.05 for disposal. Mary added not to forget that her stipend was going to the project. Peter asked Lisa how much that was, she answered \$300. Lisa recapped the list, \$200 - Tree Warden, \$265 - Building Committee mileage, \$579 - Animal Control. Peter said if his math was correct, and Linda was able to coordinate carpet removal, then we have a match. Mary moved that we utilize the funds identified for the energy efficiency upgrades in the Town Clerks Office. Andrew seconded the motion. Peter asked Lisa if she wanted to double check the math before the vote. Lisa said it looks good. The board voted unanimously to approve the motion.

Peter asked Lisa if we were going to close out the year on or under budget. Lisa answered that she hopes so, she has asked everyone to stop spending. Mary said the team will work together to make sure that the town is on target for end of year.

#### Review Proposed 2016 Budget:

Lisa walked the board through the packet she prepared for them. She started with a couple questions for the board. She said that the current rate is 48 cents and she is proposing that it be increased to the IRS rate of 57 cents. Mary said that the IRS rate is going to go down in January. It may not be a good idea to follow the IRS rate because it is prone to change. Lisa said that it's hard to plan without setting a rate, and she feels it should go up even if it's a little bit just to get it closer to the IRS rate. Peter added that the price of fuel is down and cars are more efficient than ever and he feels the mileage rate should be going down not up. He continued by saying that he is interested in the bottom line, it's easy to spend a little more on every item, but what is the bottom line. Lisa said she updated the packet and not much has changed since last week's packet. Mary said she wants to dig deeper, but was interested in the bottom line as well, how much is the budget projected to go up. Peter asked which page had the final budget, Lisa pointed him to the last page.

Peter said the bottom line was more than the 1.75% target they were shooting for. Mary indicated there were more lines that needed to have amounts put in. Peter asked what the final result was for insurance. Lisa replied that it had already been figured in. Peter asked what the change was. Lisa said she thought she had covered that already. Peter asked if we had the new rates from VLCT. Lisa asked what insurance he meant because their health insurance was Blue Cross not through VLCT. Andrew said we don't use the health trust. Linda said Roberta couldn't get them through the health trust, so she went direct to Blue Cross. Peter said by his math 1.75% would be \$13,000 increase and there is \$23,000 booked in there. Peter added that by not needing to pay for Lisa's insurance, the town saves \$20,000 and asked where in the budget was that \$20,000. Lisa answered that a lot has been added to the budget. Mary added that they have added Bookkeeper wages. Lisa said that she has just been going line by line updating. Lisa started at the top briefing the Select Board stipends were staying the same, the Selectboard Secretary meeting pay was \$65 x 2 per month = \$130 x 12 months = \$1,560. For Bookkeeper wages, she plugged in The Secretary's work around meetings at 12 hours x \$16 per hour = \$192 x 52 weeks = \$9,984. Mary said so this is Dan, Lisa said yes this is Dan, Mary said not the auditing money. Peter said we had Bookkeeper in there for last year, Lisa said yes for \$6500 and she was told to move that down to Treasurer, then there was an increase in payroll taxes. Mary said the Select Board has gone up \$10,000 and the Town Clerk insurance has gone down by \$4000. Linda said because she is 65 she has Medicare and wanted to ask the Select Board if the Town would pay her supplement. Andrew asked how much that was, Linda responded about \$300. Mary asked if anything was put in for raises, Lisa answered that she had put in a 1.75% raise. Andrew said he would like to propose an HSA with a \$5000 deductible attached to it that would help keep premiums down. Mary said that Linda will be going on Medicare and Lisa doesn't use the insurance so it is only Philip and Brent so the savings may add up. Mary and Andrew continued the discussion of health care options. Lisa said the health care costs for highway was \$31,818.68. Andrew asked how much the employee cost was, Lisa said there is no cost to the employee. Andrew asked, and they are getting the platinum plan? Linda said yes. Andrew indicated that was not a fair policy to the taxpayer. Mary said that policy was established when insurance rates were a lot cheaper, Peter agreed that the policy was dated. Andrew suggested that they require highway cover 5% of the cost. Peter said that other agencies require a 10 to 15% employee payment. Mary said that Philip and Brent need to be part of the conversation. Andrew suggested that a representative from VLCT Healthtrust be included and provide some insight into plans and rate comparisons that may provide a cost savings on various plans. The Select Board Secretary said he would get in touch with Larry Smith at VLCT to try and set something up. Andrew said this was essentially a pay cut for the Highway Department. Mary said that this is a big issue. Peter agreed that it was a big issue and everybody is getting hit by it both public and private sectors. Andrew asked about dental, Lisa answered that was all included in the cost for insurance. Andrew said that the information we need from VLCT is can the town get in on the Health Trust, or the Health Care Exchange, and can someone provide a briefing to the town on the options and cost. Lisa and Andrew discussed the type of insurance currently offered and the coverage that the Highway Department has being grandfathered because of longevity. Andrew said that there still should be an employee contribution because years ago insurance was 2% of what it is today and it isn't responsible for the board to not consider that. All agreed that this was going to be a difficult undertaking. Mary said that we have to do what's fair, and Andrew added that we have to do it quick. Mary asked when it needed to be done, Lisa answered that it is all done and has been renewed for January 1<sup>st</sup>. Peter asked what had been renewed? Lisa said, health, eye, dental AFLAC, all of it had to be done. Mary said we still need to have this discussion. Andrew said if there is a huge savings by jumping to the health trust, he would not be afraid to saying it's still open enrollment.

Lisa asked for budget purposes, how do we move on, Mary answered leave the numbers there and we can adjust them down the road if needed. Peter said we still have a \$10,000 overspend. Lisa said this is where she is looking for guidance, she has put in all of the numbers she has been given and this is how it comes out. Andrew said he had a question about the Assistant Treasurer wages. He knew that initially Lisa needed the help because she was new to the position and was learning the system, was there any way to pay her the higher salary, but reduce her hours. Lisa said she is only working 12-16 hour per week now. Andrew asked if it made sense to reduce the assistant's hours and use an auditor for professional assistance. Mary said we are adding Dan, and Lisa is adding Carrie, so now we have to negotiate. Linda added that they are paying Dan where she used to do a lot of the Secretary's duties during Town Clerk time. Peter said that looking at the details, asked under building repairs, where did we put the insulation. We got a \$12,000 grant minus the \$1600 from Efficiency Vermont, so we have a little over \$10,000. Where would these funds go. Mary indicated that it would be added as a line item, and another to set aside money in a reserve account which would need to be voted on as a separate item. And the \$10,000 added into the budget. Andrew asked about the hours in the Treasurers Department, Lisa answered that there is a lot that she does, especially for the Select Board, Andrew answered that some of that would be shifted to the Secretary. Peter indicated that the Stump Dump is closed so that line can be zeroed. Mary read through the Constable's budget and the board discussed the communication upgrades and dispatch fee increases. Andrew and Mary settled on the Assistant Treasurer hours at 15 hours for budget planning. Andrew commented on the Constable's budget, the Sheriff's department had been used previously and was not satisfactory for the town because of slow response times. Jim's budget was pretty tight his only major increase was to upgrade to digital radios. Andrew commented that there may be grant money available to help with that expense. Peter asked if the bottom line totals included reserve fund funding, Lisa said no. Peter said that we were around \$100,000 over. Lisa asked if she should put all of the appropriations in. Mary said yes so that we would have a better picture of where the budget is at. Peter said if you want a clearer picture of the problem areas, the Fire Department is up \$18,000. Peter said with the anticipated sale of the old truck that may offset some of that increase. Andrew indicated that there may be revenue to help offset that as well. Peter said the next area of concern was the Highway Department which was up \$22,000. Peter said that there are smaller increases that get swallowed up with the larger increases but they do add up. The discussion went back to funding for professional accounting/auditor services and hours for an Assistant Treasurer as well as the positions of current and delinquent tax collector. There was a question of residency of the Collector of Delinquent taxes. She resides in Wells River but owns and maintains a residence in Groton. Andrew asked the Secretary to research what appointments VSA allows the Select Board to make. Peter asked Lisa what amount was set aside for a professional audit for 2016. \$6000 was used for professional services this year. Peter asked her if she felt that she needed an audit in 2016. Lisa said that she would like to have the compilation again to help finish the 2016 end of year. Andrew asked if there was a way to place the budget report in Excel and send it to him. Peter indicated that we were still looking at a \$50,000 increase. Andrew asked where the biggest increases were. Peter said Fire Department had a \$18,000 for maintenance and a vehicle payment. Next one is the Law Enforcement up \$6,000 for radios, pagers and training. The radios are a one-time purchase. Peter asked Lisa if she could add the 2015 spending to the report he is looking at. The next one was Highway which is up \$22,000. The major culprit is gravel crushing. Andrew said it would make sense to set aside an amount every year to help manage budget fluctuations. Andrew said the best way to look at the issues was to have an anticipated revenue report for 2016. He asked Lisa if she had done that report yet, Lisa said not yet. Andrew gave Lisa a point of contact, Donna Kelty, to help walk her through producing the report.

Peter asked Lisa to refresh the report removing the Stump Dump and adding in the reserve funds. Then print the revenue projections, and refresh the Year to Date vs Actual. Andrew said that she should adjust the Assistant Treasurer hours to 15 hours per week x \$16.00. Andrew wanted to know when everyone could get together again. Peter asked everyone for a date and time. Peter briefed the benchmarks for sending the Town report to the printer on January 26<sup>th</sup>. Proof to the town on the 29<sup>th</sup> and the final proof on February 4<sup>th</sup> and get mailed on February 16<sup>th</sup>. A date time was set for December 29<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm.

Mary asked if the Board could review the personnel policy. Peter asked about the line that states who the policy pertains to. Mary said that some of the wording needs to be changed if we want the policy to be inclusive of both employees and elected officials and how do we establish which, based on hours of work. Discussion continued around identifying part time and full time descriptions. Peter stated that he had spoken with Bill Hall at VLCT and Bill didn't think elected officials needed to be included in the policy at all. The consensus of the town employees was that the policy should be developed for everyone. Discussion continued about the number of hours worked by full time versus part time employees. Peter asked about setting the Town Office hours. Linda said the hours should be set by the holder of the position and not related to the Town office hours. For the drug and alcohol paragraph, there needs to be a note about operation of town equipment while under the influence. The Secretary said he would check with Brent about the Town's policy and reference it in that paragraph. Linda said that she has attended all of the State training and has tried to get a policy adopted. Peter asked if she had a copy of the VLCT drug policy. The Secretary said he would work with Linda to get that done. Peter said have for the next meeting and the Board would review and adopt the policy. The next discussion included the medical benefits. Peter asked about the insurance buyout amount. Andrew agreed with a buyout program but that the amount was high. He suggested \$3500 and that the eligible employee be able to show that they have medical coverage. Mary wanted to ensure that the wording be adjusted to ensure to reflect the correct terminology for the Town's full time staff. Peter wanted to inform everyone that the Insurance benefit information be removed. Peter asked Lisa when we have to make a decision on the insurance. Lisa said that it was already done, it was just rolled over. Peter said that it wasn't legal, the Board didn't approve it. He believed there needed to be discussion before it was rolled over. Peter said that this needed to be a specific topic of discussion. Andrew said that there are still opportunities to get briefed by VLCT to research the Health Trust. The Board recognized that the Read Folder needs to be added to the agenda for review. Discussion continued for comp-time and overtime. Andrew suggested that the Secretary speak with Phil Page the road foreman in Bradford and poll how other surrounding towns handle this. To wrap up the review, Peter asked the Secretary to forward a copy of the VLCT model to the Board for comparison.

Andrew made a motion to direct Peter to sign the grant agreement for municipal planning, Mary 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion and the board voted unanimously to approve. The grant amount was \$7629.00.

The Board reviewed the Fire inspection report and instructed the Secretary to post the seating capacity signs in the gym.

Andrew asked if the town was having a tax sale. Lisa said the Collector of Delinquent taxes said the Attorney is recommending no, however no decision has been made. Andrew asked the Secretary to call Jeffery Taylor from Bradford to discuss one. Linda said there was going to be one in January.

Select Board Meeting was adjourned at 9:27 PM.

Minutes prepared by Dan Robinson, Select Board Secretary