

Town Of Groton, Vermont – Selectboard Meeting Minutes, November 19, 2015 (Approved)

The duly warned Budget Meeting of November 19, 2015 was held at the Groton Community Building, 1476 Scott Highway.

Attendance for the meeting included: Lisa Hart, Carrie Peters, Linda Nunn, Brent Smith, Shawn Crown, Dorothy Knott, Henry Knott, Jim Downing, Alissa Smith, Anne Hatch, Lt Fred Cornell and Dan Robinson.

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

The Meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM

Updates, Adjustments to the agenda:

Law Enforcement/Emergency Services radio communications update with Lt Fred Cornell.

Updating the Personnel Policy adopted in 1997.

Town meeting Moderator replacement vice Wayne Dyer retiring from the position.

Recreation Committee discussion with Anne Hatch.

Peter Lyon started the meeting with an update on the Community Building Gym floor. In a previous Select Board meeting Brad Houghton, BMU Youth Sports Coach, stated that in order for Youth basketball games to be held in the Community Building, the floor would need to be repaired. The floor had become rippled in places over the years and could present a tripping hazard during games. Peter received an estimate to repair the floor from Bo Wilson for \$1000.00 in labor and materials. Area Rotary's led by the Woodsville/Wells River Rotary has donated \$1000.00 to cover that cost. Peter added that he will get an exact list of the Rotary's contributing to the donation so they can be recognized. Anne Hatch asked when that work would be done, Peter indicated that he believed it would be done within the next few days, as it was just a matter of Bo Wilson fitting it in his schedule.

Law Enforcement/Emergency Services Radio Communications update:

Peter introduced LT Fred Cornell from the VT State Police to discuss the Law Enforcement/Emergency Services statewide transition to digital communications. LT Cornell covered the reduction in dispatching services across the state and indicated that they are not accepting any more dispatch contracts. Even if they were able to, it would be a very short term solution as the VSP is transitioning to digital communications just as the sheriff's departments are. He offered that the town continues to look for municipal grant monies to assist in the cost of updating the constable. This can be a costly conversion, but without it we will not be able to communicate with other agencies throughout the state. Currently the Fire Department is remaining analog but needs to be in the planning process so they can prepare for their inevitable transition. LT Cornell indicated that he would forward the contact information for his technical advisor to assist with identifying what equipment would best suit the needs of the town. Jim Downing asked why the State Police doesn't notify him when they are answering calls in town. He would like to be informed as he is very familiar with the town and it's residents and may be able to offer some assistance. LT Cornell indicated that because of the small staff and number of calls, they rarely get the opportunity to notify local constables. He offered Jim the opportunity to attending a morning meeting and introduce himself to the other officers in Bradford as an outreach and Jim Accepted the invitation.

Peter wanted to add that Steve Genereaux would be arriving and the agenda would be adjusted so that Steve could make his presentation and answer questions so that he would be able to leave at his convenience.

Review Proposed 2016 Library Budget:

Alissa Smith presented the Select Board with the Groton Free Library 2016 budget. With the Librarian wages included a 2% cost of living increase. The overall budget increased by 1.73% below the Select Board's requested cap. Lisa Hart asked if the Library was able to find a cleaning service contract. Anne Hatch indicated they have not. Lisa added that she is looking in her files as well and has still not found one.

Recreation Committee Discussion:

Anne Hatch asked how the Recreation Funds can be accessed. Lisa Hart presented the board with a letter from the Recreation Committee appointing Lisa Hatch as the Recreation Committee Chairperson. The Select Board accepted the letter into record. Peter answered that as the Chairperson, she can present Lisa with a PO for the funds needed. Mary made the motion to accept the Letter of appointment, Peter seconded the motion and the Board voted unanimously to approve. The motion was amended to refer to the position as Acting Chairperson. Once a meeting has been warned and convened, the Committee can nominate and elect a Chairperson. Anne wanted clarification on open meeting rules. Mary wanted to update the Recreation committee on grants that are being applied for to address the floor and ceiling insulation issues so they are aware of what the Select Board is doing in support of Recreation Committee activities.

Harv Orr Road/Railroad Street Status:

Railroad Street Update is moved to next meeting. Harv Orr Road. Brent Smith reported that there was a little more work to do on the 1st section. They had a request to rake it, so they did that and then got a complaint that it was raked, mostly from the stone that was used. Brent spoke with Jim Langloise and was asked to put some stone in where one of the culverts was. It was muddy when the culvert was installed. The areas where there was loose ground was mulched ahead of bad weather to hold back the top soil. Mary indicated that she wanted stone in one of the ditches on the 1st section to widen the road. Mary also indicated that the banks needed to go back further but will have to wait until spring. Mary said that Rusty Crown had put hay out on some of the banks, and Brent had finished the job. Mary also stated that she had explained the culvert placement to Rusty during their discussion. Mary reiterated the need for the stone on the 1st section of the road as logging trucks will be using that road in the near future. Mary wanted to pass along that there needs to be a landowner meeting before spring work begins to get everyone on the same sheet of music. Shawn Crown wanted to add that the snowmobile club was going to install a culvert on North County Road and they may want to coordinate that because there was going to be some work done on that road as well. Mary wanted to make sure that Brent was in the loop to prevent having to redo work.

Review Proposed 2016 Sidewalk Budget:

Brent reported he had not received any guidance or previous figures to work with to put together a budget. He asked Peter about the grant received for sidewalk repair. Peter reviewed the sidewalk monies overwhelmingly approved by the voters at last Town Meeting and the monies received through an NVDA grant with the assistance of Doug Morton for the repairs. The project would start at the westerly end of town and the amount of funds received, would go to the crossover to the Methodist Church. The remaining funds could be used for engineering or to apply for a grant to do the next section of sidewalk. Brent asked for a timeframe, Peter said this was looking like early 2016. Peter indicated to

Brent that this would have to be a joint effort to put together a workable budget to take care of sidewalks. Mary asked Brent if he had a copy of the grant application to review, Brent said that he has not seen one. The Select Board will provide Brent a copy of the grant application to assist him in determining Highway Department requirements. Brent asked if this was a 10 year plan, Peter said that they had not gotten that far yet, that they would see where best to use the remaining \$8000 once the first section was done. Brent said, it was his job to figure out what the Board was expecting for highway on the sidewalk project. This would allow him to classify labor and equipment cost related to the project into the overall project cost. Brent asked how many hour are they looking for, Peter recommended that he talk to Doug Morton, he would be able to give a fair estimate of what "in kind" services would be required. Peter said that the rest of the side walk budget could be level funded. Mary added that Brent would need to look into what additional work would be needed to be funded up front in the budget. Mary also added that Brent should develop a capital plan and develop a budget based on that plan, this would help the Board when they are looking for grant money for various projects. Peter indicated the immediate goal was to get to the Baptist church. Brent indicated that sounded good. Brent also asked about a bill for driveway repair. Peter reported that he had received a call from Steve Viviano about the bill he had gotten, and was concerned about the level of the bill. Peter told Steve that his view was that it was a fantastic bill and a good deal. Steve said he was going to talk with Brent to go over the work done so he would feel better about the amount and get a check written. Lisa asked that Steve make the check out to the paving company. Brent indicated that he would let Steve know. Peter asked Brent if that answered his question, Brent said yes.

Solar For the Town Update:

Steve Genereaux represents Green Mountain Community Solar and is presenting Groton with a solar package that would be installed on Town property on Goodfellow Road. GMCS would lease the property from the Town of Groton for \$4000.00 per year plus pay \$400.00 in property taxes for 30years. Currently this property generates no revenue for the town. GMCS indicated that this is a good site as the panels aren't in view and there is easy access to the site. Groton Fire Department wanted to report that GMCS has been a good partner for the town as they had shifted a previous project to allow the Fire Department access to it's water source for the fire trucks. Steve asked the Select Board for some basic municipal electric usage info, ie number of meters and average usage. Lisa indicated that she could put that together for him.

Library Loan Status:

Peter said that he wanted this item on the agenda so that he could inform the board of the effort being made by himself and Diane Kreis to unravel the \$50,000 loan made to Rural Edge (formerly Gilman Housing Trust) for the Library Building. Peter added that he has met with the CEO of Rural Edge and they are currently reaching out to all of the controlling parties to come back to them with a proposal, and that would be a two part proposal. One would be the disposition of the \$50,000 loan, and the second would be to give the building to the Town of Groton at low or no cost to the town. Peter will update the board as the situation develops. Anne hatch asked if there was a timeframe that they were looking at, Peter answered that the next meetings were in December and that Rural Edge was pushing to resolve the issue so he expected it to move at a good pace. He also indicated that this had been a long process, so he wasn't fixed on a timeline. Mary added that Rural Edge, by getting rid of the Library building, would reduce their tax burden and allow them to focus on the other rental units in town. Linda mentioned the apartment unit over the library. Peter said that the apartment over the library is a market rate apartment and the town could lease that space to help pay to maintain the building.

Next Steps in Audit Recommendations:

Lisa reported that she forwarded the contracts signed at the last Select Board meeting to Pace & Hawley. She asked them how the town pays for their services, Pace & Hawley said the town could send the payment and they would hold it as a retainer. She has asked when they would be able to start and has not heard back. Peter wanted to know how much we would send them because the 2 contracts were for “up to” \$2000 and “up to” \$4000 and the town could not over spend. Mary said we would send the entire amount and Pace & Hawley would be responsible for sending a monthly statement indicating how much they have charged against the retainer. If the services are less than the retainer, the town would be refunded the difference. Lisa will be putting together the list of items needed once she receives it from Pace & Hawley.

Community Building Rules and Policy:

Mary started by stating that the policy needs to be reviewed to ensure that it is up to date and that people and groups that rent the available space in the building understand that if they misuse the building they will be held liable for any damage and asked to leave. The Town’s insurance policy will have to be updated as well. Discussion ensued about checking the building after each user and who does it, and the additional hours required because of the number of users in the building outside of regular business hours. Suggestions were made to install security cameras or increase the fee to cover a stipend for someone to check the building. Steve Genereaux suggested adding a checklist to back side of the rental agreement for users to check before and after they use the space. The Select Board recommended the addition of the checklist and update to policy to describe how to use the checklist. Mary also wanted to look into the cost of installing cameras in the gym. Linda indicated she had the base document and would update it and also include the checklist.

Peter wanted to make a motion to allow BMU to have its youth Basketball games in the Community Building gym. He also wanted to ensure that the appropriate level of insurance was in force to protect the town and best serve the Youth Basketball program. Peter made a motion to approve BMU Youth Basketball request to use the Gym for games subject to verification that the proper insurance coverage is in place. Mary seconded the motion and the board voted unanimous to approve. Lisa asked about when Bo Wilson would be able to do the gym floor. Peter said that it would be done before the games start. The work would have to be done during office hours so as not to interfere with scheduled usage. Dorothy Knott questioned who was responsible for the insurance. The Select Board indicated it was a joint responsibility, BMU for the children playing and Groton for everyone else. Any suit that may be filed will generally be against all insurance carriers involved.

Linda showed the Select Board a letter she found that volunteers are supposed to sign before they start any volunteer work for the town. Peter indicated that there should be a waiver signed by all volunteers for insurance purposes.

Henry Knott briefed the Select Board of parking issues that the Fire Department experienced recently. He wanted to get suggestions from the Select Board of how to remedy the issues that they have with vehicles blocking the fire house and finding parking spaces for 1st responders. Peter suggested that they provide estimates for signage, line painting and recommended parking spaces to mark “Emergency Services Only”. The Emergency Services will put together a proposal and bring it back to the Select Board. Henry also asked if the Constable can check the parking lot if there is a large event at the Community Building. Peter said to check with Jim and see if that is possible.

Brent Smith suggested that as part of the fee to rent the Community Building, that over a certain number of people attending the event, and additional amount be included to cover the cost of having the Constable or another individual available to manage the parking of vehicles to ensure that the fire house doors aren't blocked and there is parking available for the 1st responders. Peter asked that Emergency Services establish what that number limit would be and ask Jim what he felt that fee would be. Mary suggested that the building occupancy rate also be posted in the gym. Lisa also suggested adding parking to the checklist on the back of the rental agreement. Peter also suggested adding a "towing" warning.

Town Moderator Vacancy:

Peter announced that Wayne Dyer Has submitted a letter resigning as the Moderator for Town Meeting. He has recognized that there are at least 2 people that are interested in the position, Hank Eaton and Mark Simanski. He wanted to notify the Select Board early so they could think about training sessions. Mary added that this was an elected position, and that if they wanted the position, then they should run at Town Meeting. Peter suggested that the Select Board post that the position will be vacant for Town Meeting and are looking to the voters for candidates.

Next Steps on the 2016 Budget:

Lisa distributed the budget maintenance report and briefed that they were keying in on the items that were covered during the Budget meeting. Lisa said that she and Carrie had started on salaries and the highway budget. Lisa has reached out to VLCT to assist with the insurance figures. Peter indicated that once the budget maintenance report was complete, then the Select Board could review and finalize its numbers. Mary indicated that the board needed to meet with Brent to look at his long term highway plan. Then a second meeting with the Treasurer to go over the budget line by line for accuracy. Mary continued the discussion to determine date/time for meetings. Mary suggested having meetings earlier in the day. Peter was concerned that it would limit the voter's ability to participate. Peter suggested that they pick up the topic when Andrew was available for input. Peter also suggested that they poll other towns to determine when they have their meetings.

Personnel Policy:

Peter briefed that he got a copy of the 1997 town personnel policy and a copy of the VLCT personnel policy template. He also suggested that it all be handed off to the Select Board Secretary to update and provide copies for everyone to review so it could be adopted and put into effect in January. Lisa indicated that some of the town employees have begun to review it and take notes. Lisa wanted to have the policy include elected officials. She is waiting for VLCT for input as to how to include elected officials in the personnel policy. Discussion continued on how elected officials are to be included in the policy.

Round Table:

Lisa and Carrie will not be available for the next meeting. Financial update will be covered at the 2nd meeting in December. Highway will be covered at the 1st meeting in December.

Lisa asked if the building water was tested annually. Mary indicated that would be a question for the Building Committee.

Lisa reported that a resident came into the Town Clerks office and asked that the Zoning administrator go to each of the houses that received a letter about excess clutter and junk, and show them exactly what needs to be moved/removed. Lisa was asking for the Select Boards recommendations. Mary asked if there was a list of items in the Zoning Bylaws. Linda indicated that the list was not specific. She also indicated that the Zoning Administrator was not sure what the specific complaint was, so was unsure

what to tell the residents. Peter suggested that Brad come in and meet with the select Board and go over the issue.

Lisa reported that the street light outside of Groton Tire and Auto is out and asked who to contact. Peter said to contact Green Mountain Power and they should be able to take care of it.

Lisa was presented a bill and was unsure where it was from and for what purpose. Peter indicated that this was the 2nd time the bill had been presented. And it was for a compactor and pavement cutter that was used for Powder Spring Road. Lisa also reported that she had not seen any more donations for that project. She asked where to pay bills from for that project. Peter suggested that she go over budget lines with Andrew to assist with finishing up that project.

Brent wanted to add a comment to the Junk clean-up. He had heard or read about towns that allowed screening of unsightly properties with a stockade fence or something similar. This would keep the junk cars and things out of sight.

Linda briefed the estimates she had received to rehab the front wall in her office to add insulation, rewire outlets, replace the interior wall, and replace carpet. The total of estimates came to \$4141.31. Linda suggested pulling the carpet themselves to reuse to help reduce the cost of the carpet estimate. The Treasurer's office is reviewing the budget to find room in end of year monies to cover the cost of this project. Peter stated that if the budget is balanced then he supports the project. Lisa said that she is close to being able to say one way or the other. Carrie reported that the insurance money from Lisa that was put into wages for her will not be spent and could be used for Linda's office. Peter said that they will wait until the next meeting to give the Treasurer time to review and make sure the budget is balanced.

Lisa wanted to set an end of year date as a suspense date for bills to be submitted for payment. Mary Suggested the 20th of the month as this was the standard for most agencies. Brent said that he believed last year or the year before, dates were changed because fuel bills were late and had to be paid in January. Mary indicated that those bills were accounts receivable and could be paid out of previous year's money. Mary said that other than that, a drop dead has to be set to allow for end of year reports to be complete. Mary indicated that Lisa should send a message to all Department heads to notify them of what date she has set for a cutoff.

Approve Minutes:

Mary made a motion to approve the Nov 5th 2015 Minutes, Peter 2nd the motion, and the board voted unanimously to approve.

Mary made a motion to approve the Nov 7th 2015 Minutes, Peter 2nd the motion, and the board voted unanimously to approve.

Peter read into the record the Secretary of State's memo that the town report is only required to be sent to the voters of the town. The Select Board said that additional copies can be maintained at the Community Building for anyone else who wants them, Peter also said that the contract for printing is for a per copy price which may save a small amount in printing.

Select Board Meeting was adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Minutes prepared by Dan Robinson, Select Board Secretary