

Town Of Groton, Vermont – Selectboard Minutes April 21st, 2016 (Approved)

The duly warned meeting of the Groton Selectboard of April 21st, 2016 was held at the Groton Community Building, 1476 Scott Highway.

Attendance for the meeting included: Gary Lamberton, Wayne Knott, Dorothy Knott, Henry Knott, Linda Nunn, Carrie Peters, Brent Smith, Alex Nuti-de Biasi (J.O.), George Houghton, Lauren Robinson, and Dan Robinson.

The Following Selectboard Members were in attendance: Mary Grant and Wade Johnson

The Meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM

Review/Approve April 7<sup>th</sup> Minutes:

Mary asked that “budget” be removed from the title, and repeated words in a sentence removed from page 3. With no other changes Wade made a motion to approve the minutes for the April 7<sup>th</sup> meeting. Mary seconded the motion and the motion passed with 2 votes, Andrew had not yet arrived at the meeting.

Financials and Budget Update:

Mary and Wade stated that overall the financials looked good. Mary wanted to point out that the Community Building revenues were up and thanked Linda Nunn for her efforts. Carrie pointed out that the BMU Youth Basketball rental fee for last year was deposited this year, Mary acknowledged that and said that with the increased usage, the revenue is still above last year at this time. Mary asked Brent about the Grader repair done earlier in the year. She asked if the \$6835 cost that extended the life of the grader could come out of his capital fund. Brent said that it could. Mary said it should, so it doesn't artificially inflate his budget. Wade made a motion accept the financial report, Mary seconded and the motion passed with votes from the 2 members present.

Department Updates:

\* Open stone products bids – Mary and Wade opened the bids for stone products and reviewed them. Brent explained that each of the bidders provided a price list of their products by size and their locations. This would allow him to pick the lowest price product from the nearest location. Brent informed the Board that Groton would be hauling their own crushed stone, so distance was important. The bidders were aware that he would be buying from various vendors and understood the reasons. Brent presented the Board with a spreadsheet that explained how he determines vendors based on product and location to ensure he is getting the best price. The Select Board asked that if in the future he could request the price sheets, update his spreadsheet and present that to the Board for approval. That would be an acceptable process so long as he could show that he was getting competitive prices. Wade made a motion to approve the highway Dept request to purchase stone products as shown on the spreadsheet, Mary seconded and the motion passed with votes from the 2 members present.

\* Constable – Jim was not present so will be added to the next agenda.

\* Town Clerk – Linda reported that Michelle Gaskil was going to attend to present the Board with a check for \$381, the proceeds for the Spring Bazaar, however she was ill and unable to attend.

\* Linda mentioned that she has received a number of complaints about the vacant building to the left of the Post Office. Mary asked the Secretary if there had been a letter sent to the property owner from the Board. The Secretary reported that Andrew was going to draft a letter, but was unsure if that had occurred. Linda reported that she had called the State Fire Marshall and asked for guidance. He said that he would stop by on his way back through from a meeting in Newbury. Gary added that Nathan Puffer had looked at the building and said that the timbers are separating from the walls and are beginning to bow. Wade had previously spoken with the owner who asked if the town wanted to use it as a training burn. Wade replied that it was too close to surrounding structures and it would be too dangerous to do a controlled burn. Wade moved to allow Linda to have the Fire Marshall inspect the building and submit a report to the Town. Mary seconded and the motion passed with votes from the two members in attendance.

\* Linda asked the Board's permission to ask Tai Kwon Do to do a better job storing their equipment and locate it on the stage so that it doesn't hamper access to the tables and chairs. Mary said that would be a good idea.

\*Cleaning Contract Review: Carrie reported that Rita was going to honor the contract as signed so no further action was needed.

Mary said that she wanted to adjust the agenda so that she could get the other departments heard before the Board reviewed the Collector of Delinquent Taxes report.

\*Tree Warden: Henry reported that Harry Chandler had spoken with Brent and had concerns with the work on Harv Orr Road. He was concerned that some of tree cutting being done was predominantly done on his property when it made more sense to cut from the Wasko property on the other side of the road. Harry said if any more trees are cut, they should be cut on the Wasko side because that is the southern exposure and would help dry the road out. Henry added that Jim Langloise arrived and discussion continued and at one point they walked the road. Henry reported that Mr Chandler doesn't want any more cutting on his property until things even up and the road pushes back to where it was. Mary stated that as Tree Warden, it his role to settle the disputes, Henry said yes. Mary added that it is his recommendation that no trees be cut on the Chandler property, only on the southern exposure. Henry said that Mr Chandler would be open to more cutting, as long as it was evened up. Mary said though for the benefit of the road, the trees on the southern exposure would help dry the road out. Mary said to put his recommendations into writing and the Board will back him.

Town Burning and Composting Policies: Wade reported that the State has been pushing composting. Since the closing of the stump dump a lot of people have been asking what to do with leaves and such, and some folks have been burning them without permits. According to the State Air Quality Control, burning leaves is illegal. Wade said he's not sure what the Town Wants to do. Creating another stump dump is an option, but that raises a lot of other issues, permits, having an attendant, etc. Wade said he would appreciate hearing from the Town to get their input. Ryegate will take leaves, but transporting them there is an issue. Mary said that we will need to do some research to see what our options are.

Dave Boyce Request to use old RR Bed for property Access: Mary ask David what he has found out, David said he was waiting to see what the Board has found. Wade said that he has tried reading through all of the deeds and documentation but because it is all written in legal terms, it is hard for a layman to understand what some of it means. Mary said that it really needs to have a legal review because any institution giving a loan would want to see a clear right of way. David showed the Board a map that he had and indicated that he had someone reviewing this for him.

Mary saw that Warren Tripp's name was on the map and suggested that he would also be a good person to talk to. Mary suggested that David have his person continue to review his paperwork and Wade would speak with Warren Tripp to see what he may remember about the work he had done previously on a right of way to the property.

Appoint Energy Coordinator: Mary asked if there has been any interest parties identified or letter of interest. The Secretary reported negative.

Public Comment: Alex Nuti-de Biasi, editor of the Journal Opinion, commented that he heard earlier that the Board was interested in going into an Executive Session with the Delinquent Tax Collector. Alex went on to say that it is his understanding that the Select Board has no legal authority to enter into a non-public session with an independently elected officer. Alex added that State law and the Delinquent Tax Collectors handbook outlines that elected officials are responsible only to the electorate. Mary Asked if there was anyone else had comment. Hearing no other comment, she asked if Annie wanted to provide her report to the Board in open meeting. Annie said she was unsure what the Board was looking for. Mary said that she wanted to go over her policies and procedures. There were some comments in a Journal Opinion article that she felt needed to be clarified. The \$80,000 that was owed is what Annie was collecting not that there was any other issue. Annie said that there were a number of errors in the article, one being that she had failed to attend training, when she had attended that training in the past and there was no requirement to attend it a second time. She has been collecting delinquent taxes for a number of years, so attending the class would have been a waste of taxpayer dollars. The way it was portrayed in the paper was that this training was a requirement and she just didn't attend. Then the article stated that she was a no show at a previous Select Board meeting, when she wasn't formally asked to attend and at the time of the meeting she was out of State. Annie went on to say that she didn't realize that this was going to be the depth of the conversation until she started receiving phone calls about an article in the newspaper. Annie said that she felt like someone had a beef. She understands that the Select Board needs to know what the status of delinquent tax collections are and status of any pending tax sales. Annie added that she is prepared to give the Board any information that they need including the report from Batchelder and the results of her visit with Bonnie earlier that day. She said that the notes were brief but should answer any questions they may have. Mary said that the sheet from Bonnie is in the Treasurer's office, and went over some of the processes, picking up checks from the town office, recording deposits in NEMRC in a timely manner, turn around to the town, There had not been an issue previously, because Annie and Roberta would do this process at the end of each month. Mary asked Carrie if Lisa was still balancing the checkbooks with Batchelder over the phone, Carrie said no, that they had gotten up to date now, Mary said that they should be continuing to do that we are paying them \$1600 a month to assisting to balance the Treasurer's books and we are still waiting for her recommendations. Carrie said that she mentioned it the last time she was here, but that wouldn't be needed that was a list of all of her services. Mary added that we will review that to see what the Treasurer's roles are. Mary asked Annie if she was ok with the notations from Batchelder's. Annie said yes, but wanted to add that there was some lag in the December January timeframe because her daughter was in the hospital, so there was a lag between the time payments were picked up, deposited and posted in NEMRC. One of the issues identified is that some deposits were made at the end of one month and posted in the beginning of another which throws the numbers off. Annie added that there are also connectivity issues with her computer and the computer she connects with remotely. When her computer drops off in the middle of posting a deposit, she's not sure whether or not it has posted or lost when the computer lost connection. Annie said that Bonnie made the suggestion to keep a manual log of her deposits so she would be able to balance that against NEMRC to make sure that she has a reference to check against.

Annie said that her plan is to review back through the system to ensure that all of her deposits have posted. She created a spreadsheet to help her track amounts, penalties and interest. This gives her another way to double check NEMRC's balances. Annie wanted to report that she still had \$66,478.97 in outstanding taxes, we had started with \$143,285.00 so we are better than half way there, but this year it is slow. Annie added that there was another recommendation to transfer money to the town on a monthly basis. The only reason that she was doing it every two months was that she was following State statute which says every two months. Annie said she has no problem with monthly transfers. Mary mentioned to Gary Lamberton that there is a need to for more bandwidth at the Town Offices to help alleviate the issues Annie has with her computer dropping off. Gary said that he Has tested the bandwidth and it was not bad, however he was testing after hours and he is sure that during the day bandwidth is half of what it is after hours. Gary suggested checking with Fairpoint to see if there is a way to increase bandwidth or getting a price from Charter to upgrade. The Secretary asked about a note at the bottom of Annie's report referencing training coming out of her budget, Mary said that issue has been addressed, if department wants to attend training, then it has to be paid for out of their budget. The Board thanked Annie for her time and for preparing her report for them.

Wade reported that he had a question from a concerned citizen wondering why the Planning Commission survey was available at the Town Offices, Library and at one business in town and not all businesses. Wade said that he would ask. Carrie said that the Commission wanted to put the survey in three locations, so they picked the Town Offices, the Library and because her and Julie Oliver who is also on the Planning Commission, are owners at Groton Tire and Auto, that they would locate a box there.

Mary reported the letter and cost for the kitchen sprinkler system. Mary said that the contract with them needs to be signed so that they can move forward and get the design work done. Wade asked which account this would come out of, Mary replied, the Community Building Improvement fund. She added that we will do what we have to do to make the building safe for community use.

Mary also reported on the Dam Removal easement from Green Mountain Power. Brent said that he would be happy to be the fact finder for the Town and report his findings back to the town. Brent and Wade both stated that it would be a good multi-use piece of land for the Town as a recreation site or trail head for the Cross Vermont Trail.

Mary briefed the Vermont Watershed grant looking for residents along the Wells River to allow them to place temperature sensors in the river to take a temperature survey to determine which waters are better for trout.

Sidewalk Update: Brent reported that he has asked Andrew for an update but hasn't received any response. Wade asked if the Select Board has signed anything on the project. Mary said that they have signed the grant paperwork, and the project has gone through its various stages and the next phase is to release the RFP. That hasn't happened but it needs to then we can decide whether or not we need more money or need to make adjustments. We can't put the RFP out until we've finished public discussion. Brent said that there was an email from Peter saying that they had been approved. Carrie said at Town Meeting? Brent said no, the changes the engineers made. Mary asked if they were the right changes. Brent said no. Wade asked who he was referring to as approving them, Brent said that he had talked to Andrew and the town had approved them. Wade said that he is concerned with the lack of communication and at the last meeting The Board said that Brent was to be kept in the loop.

Mary reported on the Library Building status. She said she is waiting on Rural Edge to give her a cost analysis of the annual maintenance cost.

Mary asked the Secretary to email the Chairman of the CEDC to stop in and sign the PO for the kitchen design. He said he would send an email to Erich in the morning.

Set Agenda for the Next Meeting:

The following items will be added to the agenda for the next meeting-

- \*Chlorine Bids
- \*Mowing Bids
- \*Event Planner Position
- \*Personnel Policy

Meeting adjourned at 7:26pm.

Minutes prepared by Dan Robinson, Select Board Secretary