

Town Of Groton, Vermont – Selectboard Minutes April 7th, 2016 (Approved)

The duly warned meeting of the Groton Selectboard of April 7th, 2016 was held at the Groton Community Building, 1476 Scott Highway.

Attendance for the meeting included: Gary Lamberton, Tristan Vaughan, Wayne Knott, Linda Nunn, Shaun Stetson, Phillip Palmer, Lynne Palmer, Brent Smith, Kristian Connolly, Sarah Demers, Alissa Smith, Henry Knott, David Boyce, Ed Ballam (J.O.) Shelby Peters, Josh Slayton, Matt Page, Carrie Peters, Lisa Hart, Kitty Diggins, and Dan Robinson.

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

The Meeting was called to order at 6:05 PM

Review/Approve March 17th Minutes:

Lisa wanted to add the discussion in reference to the Library's concern about wage increases not being retro-active to January 1st. This discussion took place during the Financials/Budget update. With no other changes Wade made a motion to approve the minutes for the 17th of March Minutes. Mary seconded the motion and the motion passed with 2 votes, Andrew had not yet arrived at the meeting.

Financials and Budget Update:

Lisa distributed her budget report to the Board for their review. She asked that they contact her with any questions they may have and she will be ready to address their questions at the next meeting. Mary asked Lisa if there was anything important that they needed to be aware of, Lisa replied that everyone should be at 25% because we are at the end of the 1st quarter.

Department Updates:

* Cleaning Contract – Lisa gave the contract to the Board to review, Mary asked when the contract started, when it ends and when it can be put out to bid again. Lisa said it is an annual contract and went into effect in December 2015. Lisa reported that the last two invoices she got was a little higher than previous invoices. She went on to say that the budget was based on \$180 per month and the February and March invoices were up \$20 and \$25 respectfully. When asked about the increase, Judy responded that she increased her fee. Lisa told the Board that \$2340 was the amount budgeted for cleaning and this would raise the amount to \$2600. Mary asked what the contract amount was, Lisa said \$2340. Mary and Wade said that was what she would be paid. Lisa said that Rita has told her that the gym was taking longer to clean because of the increased use. Wade said that she has contracted with the Town and if she has concerns, then she should come to the Board and discuss them. Mary added that if she needs to change or modify the contract, then she should come to the Board and discuss it she can't arbitrarily change it herself. Mary added that she should definitely come in and talk to the Board because there is a lot in the contract that isn't being done. Mary went on to say that if it is worth it to pay her more money because of increased usage and to have all of those things done then it needs to be discussed.

* Collector of Delinquent Taxes – Lisa reported that a fax was received for Annie dated April 4th showing \$80,000 in outstanding taxes. Lisa went on to say she has not been able to contact Annie. The CPA has also been unable to reach Annie and the Treasurer's office can't reconcile without Annie's input. Lisa said that she was able to get the bank statements but couldn't make heads or tails of her deposits.

Lisa added that there was a whole list of concerns, there was a training session on Wednesday but Annie didn't attend. Mary said that Annie needs to come in and address these issues. Mary said that the Board will contact her and set up a time when they can meet and go into executive session and review her status.

* Library building update – Mary asked the Library what their concerns and questions were. Kristian said that their decision was to talk to the Select Board because the Library has an interest in how this resolves itself, but it is ultimately up to the Town on whether or not they want to own this building. It is up to the Board to make the decision based on the information, the math and everything else that they need to do on behalf of the town to accept what seems to be a free transfer of the building, but there are issues that will determine whether or not it's going to be free. Mary asked if Kristian had the information that Peter presented in writing. Kristian said only in the form of minutes. He added that from what Peter briefed, there have not been any direct negotiations with Rural Edge. Kristian also said that Peter indicated there were 3 options to explore. #1 continue as we are with Rural Edge as the landlord and Library as tenants in hope the rent doesn't go up. #2 Ask Rural Edge to repay the \$50,000 loan that was made to the building restoration project in 2005-2006. Rural Edge has acknowledged that was a loan. And continue with the tenant/landlord relationship. Or #3 accept the building as repayment of the loan and the Town becomes the owner of the building. Peter has not discussed these options with Rural Edge. This is where he turned the decision over to the Library and town to make. Peter said that Rural Edge told him they would like to have the issue resolved by June. Kristian said the town's attorney indicated that this isn't a timetable we need to be pressured by. Kristian also reported that he feels that Rural Edge wants to get out from under the building and if the town doesn't want the building, there is always the possibility that Rural Edge could sell the building, or raise the Library's rent. Mary asked what the Library's input was. Alissa stated that it is their hope would be to pursue the purchase of the building. That is their preference. Mary added that the apartment upstairs could be converted into office/meeting space so they wouldn't have to manage a tenant. Kristian said that the library isn't interested in being a landlord. He went on to say that evidently there was an unwritten agreement that 5 years after the project was complete, the building was supposed to be transferred to the town. He added that he wanted to Town to be fully aware of what it may be getting. Tristan added that when he and Gary were on the Select Board they dealt with the same thing, the same three options, and they never got anywhere, they just kept paying the same rent because it was cheap. They could never get any further in the discussion. Mary said that the Board will have to do some research into the cost of owning the building, utilities, maintenance, etc. Kristian added that Rural Edge has said, after ten years, that there were cost overages in the original project which they would like to be compensated for. Mary said the Board would look into all of the financial issues. Kitty asked if this would be something that the voters would have to vote on Mary said yes, once the Board has all of the information and has done a cost analysis. Other concerns raised were the property lines and responsibilities for sidewalks, parking etc. Mary said that their offices are close to her work and she would go to them and see what they can give her for operating expenses on the building and report back to the Board.

* Fire House overhead doors. – Phillip announced that the project will begin on April 8th. He asked if he should have a purchase order. Andrew said yes it should be an open purchase order because they will be drawing from it. Mary told Phillip that he will sign it and she will sign behind him.

* Highway Mutual Aid – Brent reported that they are in the process of renewing agreements for mutual aid for highways with neighboring towns and wanted to ask permission to proceed.

* Fire Department Sidewalk Concerns – Henry Knott Presented videos that the Fire Department made of emergency vehicles exiting the Community Building/Fire Department parking lot and turning right onto Route 302. The video showed their concern that the nose of the fire truck crosses the yellow line which creates an unsafe situation if there is oncoming traffic. The Fire Department would like the sidewalk project adjusted to eliminate the proposed section between the Community Building lawn and the electric pole so that they can enter Route 302 at an angle keeping the vehicle in the appropriate lane. Fire Department personnel said that they have been using that section for decades and are not sure why the sidewalk is going to be put across that section of the parking lot. Andrew answered that modern transportation guidelines state that you want to limit the distance pedestrians cross where there is traffic entering and exiting. The intent is to reduce the area they have to cross whether it is at an intersection or a parking lot. The 40 foot in this design is an engineered turning radius that is actually above the standard which is 30 feet. The additional 10 feet was added to accommodate the Fire Department. Andrew added that other towns, like Barre, as an example, the Fire Trucks go right out onto the road so this is a much better setup. Mary said that the electric pole is such a nuisance. Andrew said yes and ideally the pole would be to remove it or relocate it, but the cost is so high. Tristan said he wasn't sure he understood the problem, because it looked like there was plenty of room to get out of the parking lot. Andrew said that currently there is no delineation of spaces entering or exiting the parking lot. The sidewalk project will address a lot of the concerns that VTRANS has right now. Tristan said that space was always kind of a gray area, he never knew whether or not to drive through there or whether or not he could park there. Andrew mentioned other right hand turns like Route 302 onto Route 232. Brent said that there is more space there and a more stable shoulder. Phillip added that regardless of how it was engineered, the trucks will have to cross the center line coming out of the parking lot. Tristan pointed out that he owns a trucking company and his trucks cross the centerline every time they pull out onto the road. Mary offered a quick project run down for the attendees that were unfamiliar with the project status. Andrew said that the project being proposed isn't outside of what other municipalities are doing with the exception of giving adding an additional 10 to the parking lot opening to give emergency vehicles more room to enter and exit the parking lot. Tristan suggested putting in a traffic light that would stop traffic when the Fire Department needs to respond to a call. Brent suggested altering the sidewalk to resemble the "island" sidewalk between Artesano and the Library. Mary was unsure if that would make entering and exiting the parking lot more confusing or not. Andrew said that he doesn't see the need to adjust the design. The Fire Department has trucks with flashing lights and sirens, so getting out of the parking lot shouldn't be an issue. Andrew voiced his concern that they can continue to adjust engineered designs and eventually the project will be out of money before any work is done. He added that all of these concerns have been heard and taken into consideration and the engineers came up with a plan to address concerns as best they could. Henry asked why the project has to start on this side of the parking lot. Andrew responded that when the project was it's initial planning last year, that was when we decided on where the project would start. Linda wanted to comment that she sees traffic coming and going from her office and a number of large vehicles using the end of the driveway as a turn around. Parking during fall foliage would be hampered by having new sidewalks that vehicles won't be able to get on, winter plowing concerns and drainage. Wade voiced his concerns about safety and he doesn't feel that safety has been taken into consideration. There are drivers that come through town seemingly mindless of things around them. Andrew stated that the State feels all of these issues have been adequately addressed. Mary asked Andrew if he and Brent were working with NVDA, Brent said he hadn't heard anything. Andrew said the point the project was at was VTRANS had a list of issues from NVDA, Fire Dept, etc that had to be addressed, which have been addressed. He added that he believes that they are just waiting for permission to release the RFP.

Andrew went on to say that he expects that in the next week or so. He also said that he had gotten an additional \$14,000 extra for the project and at this point he's not sure that they will have enough money in the fund to proceed. The additional engineering cost to address these concerns and others have reduced the available money from the grant and our match reducing the amount available for construction. Linda asked why don't they start down in the village and come this way. Andrew answered that the plan has already been engineered, that's what the meeting last year was for. We have been approved for this section, we can't afford to re-engineer another section. Phillip asked if Andrew has been in touch with the Road Commissioner on the sidewalk project. Andrew answered that this is a project that we walked together and the project is at the same phase it has been at for the last 6 months, engineering and design and once we get to construction we will be working together and moving forward. Phillip asked who was getting paperwork, and who was not getting paperwork. Mary said right now, Brent and Andrew are working together and any email she has gotten she forwards to them. Tristan stated that from what he was hearing, he didn't believe that they project was ready, Andrew answered that this was one piece that was being revisited but the plan had already been adjusted to address some of their concern. Brent wanted to add that the engineers have said that the project is over budget, it looks like a pounded thumb to have granite curb in the middle of a project, Sidewalk professionals have told him to continue with grass, eliminate granite curb which is expensive. Andrew said that is a bid alternative. Once we have bids, then we can look at alternatives, concrete versus granite etc. We don't know if we are over budget until we get bids, and we can't put it out to bid until we get approval from the State and that's where we are now. We have gone through the process, taken it to the State, have taken input, amended plans accordingly with State engineers that deal with these issues across the whole State not just Groton, now we are at the point once we get the go ahead, to release the RFP's then we can sit down and go through the bid alternatives. Brent added that the Select Board gave sidewalks to the Highway Department and doesn't feel that he has had any input into the project. Brent went on to say that the doesn't feel that the drain that the engineers designed is suitable and that a grass curb would mitigate any drainage issues, this coming from a sidewalk expert he has spoken with. This also takes care of the run-off. Brent asked that he have more input into the project as it proceeds. Mary asked Andrew to ensure he is working with Brent as he moves forward. Brent asked Mary for a Board motion, Mary moved that Brent and Andrew work together to look at the specifications and get the RFP out. Wade 2nd the motion and it passed unanimously.

* Approval of Gravel and Chloride purchases – Mary asked for motions to allow Brent release RFP's for Chloride and Gravel. Andrew moved to allow Brent to advertise the RFP for stone products, Wade 2nd the motion, and the motion passed unanimously. After further review Andrew moved to allow Brent to advertise the RFP for chloride, Wade 2nd the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

* Heath Hill Road – Mary asked Tristan to talk to Brent about Heath Hill Rd. Tristan said they had already talked. Andrew asked if it was a Class IV, Tristan said Class IV unpassable/unusable. Andrew said that he should look at the ordinance and follow the steps to make the process easier. Tristan asked about throwing up the road, Andrew said that it would have to have a public hearing. Tristan said he would look into the steps and start the process.

* Listers – Kitty briefed that Corallogic wanted to purchase a copy of the tax maps. She asked if it was permissible for her to make those copies and charge \$250. Andrew said that he has sold maps to Corallogic for \$950. When Kitty questioned the amount, Andrew said that Corallogic sells that information to other companies, so \$950 is a bargain. Andrew made a motion to allow Kitty to invoice Corallogic at her discretion up to \$1000 for a digital copy of the Town's tax map. Wade 2nd the motion and it passed unanimously.

Kitty presented the Board with the estimates from Powers Plumbing to repair a broken sewer pipe and replace the sewer pump tank and pump. The Community & Economic Development Committee voted to recommend the repairs be completed. Total cost of the repairs was \$3976.00. Mary said that the Board should accept the estimates and approve them. Andrew made the motion to approve the work, Wade 2nd, and the Board voted unanimously to approve. Linda suggested to Mary that maybe the Community Club may pitch in to help pay the bill.

Dave Boyce Request to use old RR Bed for property Access: Mary reviewed the location of the property. Dave said that it's 3/10 of a mile from the last driveway. Gary Lamberton reported that the 302 Buckeroos snowmobile club uses that section of RR bed for trail for snowmobile trail and the club voted to ask the Select Board to say no to approving Dave's request. Gary also reminded the Board that this is also designated as part of the Cross Vermont Trail which is a recreational trail used by hikers and cyclist and the section that goes through the State Forest is off limits to vehicles. Kitty mentioned that if the Board approves this use, then that would set precedence. Andrew said that he would want more information and perhaps get some advice on how to proceed. Mary agreed that more steps need to be taken to determine if this is a roadway or a trail and who owns the property it passes on. Mary told Dave it would be on the agenda for the next meeting.

Signatures for the Town Clerk: The Select Board signed the Liquor License renewals for the Upper Valley Grill and the State Forest Country Store. Linda presented the Board with the contract for mowing the cemeteries. Mary asked if it has been put out for bid, Linda said no because there have been issues previously putting it out to bid, so the Cemetery Commission had permission to renew the contract. Mary asked how many years he has been doing it, Linda said forever. Brent said that contracts can be renewed. Andrew said that if we have policies, then we should follow them. Mary said that we will put out a notice that the Town is accepting bids to mow the cemeteries. Linda gave Mary a request from the Ryegate Flash, (Tony Dennis) to use the Community Building Gym for basketball and waive the fee. There will be no foods and drinks. Mary agreed as long as they have insurance. Andrew moved that the Board waive the fee as long as they can provide a certificate of insurance. Wade 2nd the motion and the motion passed unanimously. Linda passed along a complaint from a resident at Clarks Landing about a smell (possibly sewer) coming from a neighbor's house. Andrew said that should be passed along to the health officer. Linda said that he has already been notified. The Board said that as long as all of the proper people have been notified then they would leave it at that unless further action was needed.

Appoint an Energy Coordinator: Mary said that we need to post an announcement to see if there is any interest in the community.

Open to Public: Kristian wanted to confirm that there were not going to be any retroactive pay raise, Mary said that is correct. Andrew said that he just asked Phillip how pay raises were handled historically, and Phillip said that they were done town meeting to town meeting so retroactive raises weren't an issue.

Mary wanted to inform the Board about the proposal to have the CEDC advertise the Event Coordinator position, and take that on under their committee as part of economic part of the committee and help bring activities into town. Carrie asked how the money would be used for the position. Mary said that the money authorized would be used partially for supplies and partially for the stipend. Wade moved to have the Treasurer's office to create a line for the Event Coordinator with \$1300 for supplies and \$1000 for a stipend. Andrew 2nd the motion and the motion passed unanimously. Phillip asked how the Board was able to take money from one committee and give it to another committee. The Secretary explained that the money was approved by the voters for the position, the Rec Committee didn't want to manage the position so a proposal was made for the CEDC to manage the position so the Town wouldn't lose the opportunity to bring some events and activities to the town.

Review Update Personnel Policy: Mary asked the Board if they wanted to table the Personnel policy and take it up at the next meeting. The other board members and Departments agreed and set the May 5th meeting to be primarily focused on the personnel policy.

Set Agenda for the Next Meeting:

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

- *Financials
- *Gravel Bids
- *Review David Boyce's request to use a section of the RR bed for year around access to his property.
- *Appoint Energy Coordinator
- *Delinquent Tax Collector Update executive session
- *Cleaning Contract Review executive session
- *Continue Personnel Policy
- *Update on Town Burning policy/Compost policy

Meeting adjourned at 8:17pm.

Minutes prepared by Dan Robinson, Select Board Secretary