

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

The duly warned meeting of the Groton Selectboard of January 7th, 2015 was held at the Groton Community Building, 1476 Scott Highway.

Attendance for the meeting included Linda Nunn, Brent Smith, Jim Downing, Dorothy Knott, Wayne Knott, Kitty Diggins, Carrie Peters, Lynne Palmer, Phillip Palmer, Shaun Stetson, Mark Shallburg, Roberta Dana, Pastor Dennis Walton, and Dan Robinson.

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

The Meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM

Updates/Adjustments to the Agenda:

Peter Lyon made the following adjustments to the agenda: Request of 411 extension, Address Board on contractor hiring practices, Update on Sidewalk Bid, Disposition of Green Mountain Community Solar Lease Option Payment, Review Powers Estimates, Review the Resolution to Create a Community and Economic Development Committee, Approve minutes for December 10, 17, and 29, and Update on Fire Department Building Doors.

Request of a 411 Extension:

Kitty described how current use is being done this year and it is putting everyone behind. The cut-off date is January 15th. She was told that she could request an extension until the 31st of January. Peter asked her to form that into a motion for the Select Board. Kitty asked the Board to move that the Listers submit a letter requesting an extension for submission of the 411 until January 31st of 2016. Andrew made the motion, Peter seconded it. The board voted unanimously to approve.

Contractor Hiring Procedures:

Mark Shallburg asked to share his concern about contractor hiring practices with the Select Board. His major concern was the way contractors use subcontractors that may not be identified as such. He was concerned that the general contractor may not have the appropriate insurance to cover the sub contractors improperly classified as employees or that the sub contractor may not be properly insured. He went on to share that when this occurs the Town is ultimately responsible. The Board thanked Mark for his input and the Board said that they would follow-up to ensure that the proper certificates of insurance were on file.

Review and approve the Community Building Use agreement:

Mary wanted to go over the agreement again. She went over the difference between a rental agreement and a use agreement where the user made a donation. A user agreement would eliminate the insurance requirement that renters have making use of the building more available to residents that can't afford the insurance premium or don't otherwise have access to insurance for the hour or two they want to use the gym or kitchen. Mary wanted to know if VLCT had another agreement that pertained to "use" and not just rental. Andrew said he would like to get the rental policy in place and let the residents who want to have the fees/insurance policy requirement waived, submit a request to the Select Board. There has been a lot of work done to the building in recent months and a policy to protect the facility should be in place.

Andrew asked if there was a way to put some of the events under a department or committee, thus placing them under the Town's insurance umbrella. Roberta Dana said that if any organization received profit from the event, then that would be a conflict. The Board agreed that would be inappropriate. Peter said the Town's attorney was adamant that insurance be in place to protect the Town's assets. Andrew suggested that he would make a motion to approve the policy and deal with issues as they arise and amend the policy as needed. He also suggested a security deposit of \$100 and the town hold the check until after the event and if there was no damage, simply return the check. Linda expressed her concern that by passing this agreement, use of the facility will be priced out of reach of average residents and the only rentals will be for organizations that can afford the insurance. Linda went on to review the rentals for the past 90 days. Andrew went over the number of rentals by type and the predominant number of users without insurance are the local residents having small gatherings. Linda asked how many lawsuits have been brought toward the Town in the time she has been controlling the key. Andrew answered that you can't use the past as a predictor of the future, and the Board's primary focus was to protect the taxpayer. Maybe the best solution would be to tell them to come before the Board and ask for a waiver of the insurance requirement. Linda added that the Board should keep the key and calendar. Kitty asked if there was a way to find an insurance binder that could be affordable for family gatherings at an affordable price. Peter indicated that BMU has a policy in place similar to this and weigh each event and decide whether or not to require the insurance. Peter stated that by having a deposit, it will make the person in charge pay more attention to event goers and activities that may cause damage to the facility. Andrew made a motion to approve the Facility rental agreement with a \$50 deposit for Groton Residents and \$100 for Non-Residents, Mary seconded the motion. The Board approved the motion unanimously. Andrew moved to make the effective date February 1st, 2016, Mary seconded, and the Board approved unanimously. Peter also commented that the dates for the ceiling insulation installation on February 9th, 10th and 11th raising the insulation R value to R-60 following Efficiency Vermont Standards.

Discuss Prayer at Town Meeting:

Peter introduced Pastor Dennis Walton and asked him to talk about the policy he was asked to draft concerning prayer at Town Meeting. The core of the policy says that before the gavel is struck, the floor is opened up for anyone who wishes to pray. This is open to any body of any faith. Upon conclusion, the pledge of allegiance is said, then the gavel is struck and town meeting business begins. Peter asked if anyone had any questions or comments. After a few positive comments, Andrew made the motion to adopt the policy, Mary seconded the motion and the Board adopted the resolution unanimously. Peter asked the Secretary to get a copy to the Auditors to include in the Town Report so that attendees were aware the policy had been adopted.

Review Status of the Final Payment to MLC for the New Fire Truck & Status of the Sale of the Old Truck:

Peter said the truck was delivered on December 22nd. The Fire Department issued a note to Larry Dingee of Dingee Construction saying they had a few items of concern of things they would like to have resolved. They met with Larry on January 3rd and they have agreed that payment should take place. Dorothy Knott indicated that all issues have been resolved. Peter has the documents for MLC to process the payment of \$70,568.71 and as part of the transaction there is a payment coming to the town for a little over \$12 for interest on unspent monies. Peter ask Larry if he had any questions. Larry indicated that he was satisfied that they had completed their work. Wayne Knott expressed he gratitude to Larry for his work and expertise. Andrew made the motion to make the final payment, Mary seconded the motion and the Board voted unanimously to approve the motion.

Review the Rutland Solar & Wind Resolution:

Update on the Fire Department Building Overhead Doors:

Phillip Palmer reported to the Board that at a previous meeting it had been suggested to put doors and installation into one RFP which they did. The deadline was set for January 21st.

Green Mountain Community Solar Lease Option Payment Status:

Peter asked the other members of the Board for suggestions on where to keep this money so that it can be tracked. Andrew suggested that it go under a revenue line item. Andrew said that perhaps writing a warrant article to create reserve fund and fund it at \$500 to come from an unreserved fund balance which was the amount of the lease option deposit. Peter asked Carrie if she would work with Andrew to draft the resolution.

Powers Plumbing Estimates:

Peter went over the Estimates from Powers Plumbing, \$300 to fix a broken sewer pipe, \$1125 to replace sewer pump in the tank, \$950 for a vent to the existing sewer tank. Peter indicated that the estimates were over 30 days old, but was sure that he would honor them. Peter asked Carrie if there was any unused money from 2015 to finish up this work. Carrie thought there was approximately \$6000 left. Peter asked the other members what their thoughts were. Andrew said if the work needs to be done then he makes a motion to complete the work if there are funds available. Mary 2nd the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Finalize 2015 Year End Budget and Projected Spending:

Peter asked Carrie if she had any questions or items for the Board or items to address. Carrie asked about Highway, Mary indicated that the Salt was coming out of the 2016 budget. She went on to say that there was \$15,000 to set aside for Gravel so Brent's budget would not continue to spike. Carrie said that it had all been changed around, \$2500 for salt, \$7,000 to replenish the sidewalk match, and \$16,000 to go into the gravel. Andrew asked if we need to adjust that at all, Mary said yes we have too. Peter said as a single point, he would take it from sidewalks and put it in gravel. That would keep him level. Brent added that at the last meeting they had decided to put salt into the 2016 budget. Peter said that would give them \$16,500 for the infrastructure reserve for gravel. Andrew made the motion to put off salt until 2016 and put \$16,500 into the infrastructure reserve, Mary seconded the motion and the board passed the motion unanimously. Carrie asked if she could just adjust the figure to reflect the monies remaining. Peter asked Andrew to amend the motion to say "up to \$16,500". Andrew made that amendment, Mary seconded the motion and the board voted unanimously to approve.

Formally adopt the Resolution from the Building Committee:

The Building Committee submitted a resolution for the Select Board to adopt that would create the Community and Economic Development Committee. This committee would look at managing all of the Towns buildings, facilities and structures and assist the department heads in establishing a budget for the maintenance and upkeep. Departments/Committees will send letters nominating a member of their department/committee to the Select Board and Building Committee members wishing to be members of the new committee would submit letters of interest to the Select Board to be "members at large".

Andrew made the motion to adopt the resolution with the following change: the Committee will be a 9 member committee. Preference for open seats goes to a member of each of the listed departments, committees & clubs. Remaining open seats will be given to the interested individuals that submit a letter of interest to the Select Board. Mary seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously to adopt the resolution.

Review Railroad Street Drainage issue:

Peter asked for an update of the Railroad Street Drainage issue from Andrew and Brent. Andrew said that they have spoken briefly but still needs to be resolved and both Andrew and Brent are continuing to work on a solution. Phillip said that the resident had approached him saying that she had needed to add a second pump, however, there was no water running currently so he was unsure what she was talking about. Andrew said that he had planned to drive over there to have a 1st hand look and would update the board at another meeting.

Update Sidewalk Bids:

Peter wanted to inform the other Board Members that he had been in contact with Jon at the Agency of Transportation and Doug at NVDA on the request for proposals. Peter asked if the board wanted to review the RFPs or just let Doug manage them. Andrew said as long as the RFP's were for the work as designed and Peter said yes. Andrew made a motion to allow Peter to work with Doug and John to get the RFPs out, Mary seconded the motion and the Board voted unanimously to approve.

Peter wanted to move along to the 2016 budget, Roberta Dana, in attendance, asked if she could get some questions answered on the 2015 budget before moving on. Peter told her to go ahead and they would address them as best they could. Roberta pointed out to total of all funds was not what was voted on at Town Meeting. There were some funds that were added at Town Meeting, \$3000 for the Fire Department, \$13,000 for a 2014 audit, and that line is only showing \$10,500. She went on to say that without going line for line, to see, but the General fund was \$420,253.00 and it should have been \$423,777.00. Roberta said if you look at the town report we went into Town Meeting with \$410,777.00, and then we added \$16,000, so it should have come out to \$426,777.00 (audit and Fire Dept added). Roberta also indicated that a budget report she has said the total was \$433,963.50. Peter said let's give Carrie a chance go off line and take a look. Roberta said that there were also some issues for the Highway budget. The budget was \$347,877 and her report stated \$354,777. Peter suggested that Roberta put together a worksheet by line with her concerns so that they could be addressed in a more organized way. Roberta said that would be ok with her as she had just gotten the budget report. Peter added that she should give her worksheet to Carrie and Lisa and make sure they have everything where it's supposed to be. Peter asked if there was anything else, Roberta replied that she would wait until the 2016 budget was discussed.

Finalize 2016 Budget:

Carrie said that the only thing left was to move some highway accounts but the bottom lines were good. Peter asked Jim Downing to walk the board through his budget. Peter indicated that Jims budget was the hard one from the previous meeting. Jim said that he was thinking that he could eliminate the radar sign he was asking the board for. Andrew said that VLCT has a passive safety grant that may cover half the cost of the sign which would save roughly \$1500. Peter went on to training funds. Carrie indicated that she thought the line for training was to pay for the cost of the course and not wages for training. Discussion continued around on how to carry the training/wages and mileage. Jim indicated that most of the training he has taken is at little or no cost and he takes the cruiser to save on mileage. Peter told Jim that his 2015 budget was \$16,325 and is proposing \$24,000.

Jim indicated that he's not sure how it has jumps so much. Mary explained that radios and pagers, radar sign and re-worked training. Peter asked about the doubling of the dispatch fees, Jim indicated that increase was due to the number of calls he has made and would be higher if he called in every stop that he made. Andrew suggested that maybe putting the new radios on a warrant article and let the voters decide.

Peter mentioned that the voters may also be interested in getting a second constable lined up to give some continuity in the office when Jim decides it's time to retire. Peter thinks maybe it may be time now to look into funding that training requirement and the expense it will incur. Mary clarified how the warrant article should read and what should be included. Andrew said radios and pagers, Jim said he doesn't use the pager and he was going to pass that off to Brent. Peter asked if there was any grant money available. Jim and Andrew tossed around a few that may be available. Andrew asked if there was a better price for radios, Jim said that he had the best price available. Mary suggested that the warrant article read "amount for capital purchases and the Select Board would look for grants to reduce the total amount" This warrant article would include the radar sign and radios. Peter said that he believes the radar sign should be moved to another year. Andrew suggested that the grant for the radar sign would cover half of the cost. Jim's budget adjustments were Training - \$200, Mileage - \$0, Radios - \$0, Jim asked for \$200 for ammunition for practice and qualification bringing the total to \$550, Peter said the price of gas is down so he should reduce gas to \$900, cruiser repairs level at \$300. Before moving on Jim wanted to inform the Board that he has gotten a lot of complaints about the yellow building next to the Post Office. Lee Jackson has been contracted to take the building down, however he has not done much and the building could come down and hurt someone. Peter suggested that maybe the State Fire Marshall could inspect it and make a recommendation. Wayne Knott said that he would make a call and see what he can do. Andrew asked if we could get something before the next meeting, Wayne said it shouldn't be a problem. Jim also wanted to ask the Select Board if there was a way he could get some disc's to download his camera onto. Currently Gary Lamberton downloads his camera and Jim has no idea where the files are. He would like to eliminate Gary altogether and control the files himself. The Board thought that would be appropriate. Linda and the Select Board Secretary indicated that they may have a solution for Jim where he can keep his downloads in the town vault. Peter asked Jim to get with the Secretary and work on a solution to safe guard the cameras files.

Peter asked the Fire Department if they were ready to go over their budget, Dorothy indicated she was. Peter asked Dorothy to go over the items the board asked about at the last meeting. Emergency Services General Dorothy said that contracts still had not been set so those figures were still unknown. Peter said that fuel prices were down so as with other departments, are looking to reduce here as well. Dorothy Said she could reduce fuel oil to \$2800, propane - \$250, dues - \$1700, radios and pagers - \$1225. Peter asked Dorothy to make a note that it 2017 her electric will be \$0 because the Fire Department will be on solar. Carrie asked about the phone bill. Brent explained that Groton pays half of the line for Newbury going direct to Grafton County to save the cost of having their own. Phone split to \$1100 and \$400 to cover both. Dorothy wanted to go over training with Lisa and Carrie to ensure expenses were put in the right categories. Peter moved on to Fire Department, Dorothy indicated that dues were going to go up so those totals were anticipated estimates. Gas for the year was down so they budgeted \$600 because they use non-ethanol gasoline and are still able to keep the cost down, diesel - \$625, and lease payment \$20, 320.59, Repairs and maintenance reduced to \$3500. Dorothy wanted to double check that expenses had been entered in the correct spaces. She indicated that she would spend time with the Treasurer's office to review her budget. She asked if that concluded her review for the evening? Peter said for this phase, that his overall goal was really trying to reduce the overall budget to give some back to the tax payers.

Wayne wanted to add that they are trying to maintain Level I and Level II certifications and asked Dorothy to run that numbers for that training. She said they have 9 people that are Level I and Level II certified That would be \$100 per day x 3 days each = \$2700, and there is 11 others that do the 1 day training at BMU that's \$1100 which totals \$3800 that they know they will have for training. Peter asked what the status of the truck sale. Wayne said there were no bids, but he has someone in the department looking at getting it on line to generate more interest. Andrew said that are a couple of websites that deal in just retired municipal vehicles. Dorothy said that they are researching all avenues. Roberta wanted to ask about one item on the 2016 budget. She wanted to know when the 2014 audit was going to happen because she did not see funds for it in the 2016 budget. Andrew said that during the meeting that was attended by the auditors and Nathan Hawley, the Board got input from the town auditors, that a review and compilation would satisfy the intent of the voters to have an accounting of the 2014 books and the two months going into 2015 when Lisa became the Treasurer. Roberta said that it was her understanding that if Nathan did a compilation he would be able to help train the new treasurer, but during an audit he would not be able to train. That is why she feels an audit still needs to be done. Andrew suggested that he would want to review the minutes, but he was sure that the auditors were on board with Nathan Hawley's recommendations. Peter explained that audits had been done for 2010, 2011, and 2012. Peter went on to say he was an Auditor during that time and the three audits all revealed the same findings , so Nathan recommended that the findings be cleared up before another audit is performed and writing up the same findings a fourth time. Roberta said that several of the findings had been fixed and there were some that could not be fixed until the town were GASB compliant in Pace & Hawley's opinion. Peter disagreed with that statement saying that there were still a number of issues to address. The second part of the conversation was that Nathan looked at both Lisa and Roberta and said this can be a hand off if both parties agree the books are good, but Lisa wanted Nathan to get involved and Roberta concurred. The Board has put \$2000 on one part of it and \$6000 on the other part. Peter said that he agrees with the way Andrew described the meeting as accurate. Roberta said there has not been an audit of 2014 as the voters asked and if she has to ask again at this Town Meeting, she will. Peter said the deal The Board booked was creditable and it was time to move on.

Andrew went over the health insurance worksheet Lisa put together. Andrew showed the 5% contribution and 5% pay raise to soften the impact on the employee. Roberta asked if other towns had been polled to see what other towns. Peter said that Barnet pays 90%. Roberta said that South Ryegate pays 100%. Mary said that there are differences in the plans that towns offer so it is hard to quantify a percentage of what an employee contributes. Andrew said that he would like to see more shopping around done for next year to get the best insurance coverage for the best price. Phillip brought up that of all of the local municipal employees, other towns may have their employees pay into their health insurance but Groton has the lowest wages in the area. Peter said the challenge is to find a way to take care of the town's employees and control cost at the same time. Peter ask the secretary to make copies of the wage analysis spreadsheet Roberta prepared for the other Board members to use in preparation of further discussion of insurance contributions.

Peter asked the other Select Board members if they were able to attend a special budget next week. Everyone decided that January 14th at 6PM would be good.

Phillip wanted to inform the board that he was back to work on light duty.

Approval of Minutes:

December 10th 2015, Andrew moved to approve, Mary 2nd, the board voted to approve.

December 17th 2015, Andrew moved to approve, Mary 2nd, the board voted to approve.

December 29th 2015, Mary moved to approve, Andrew 2nd, the board voted to approve.

Select Board Meeting was adjourned at 9:20 pm.

Minutes prepared by Dan Robinson, Select Board Secretary