**MINUTES SELECTBOARD MEETING**

**Grafton Town Hall Upstairs In Person/Live**

**With accommodation for persons unable to attend in person via interactive Microsoft Teams**

**Monday, December 6, 2021, 6 pm**

Present at the meeting in the Town Hall:

Selectboard: Joe Pollio, John Gregory, Cathy Siano-Goodwin and Suzanne Welch. After appointment Richard Thompson joined the Board at the front table.

Also: Dottie Cannon, Don Dougall, Joan Lake, Eric Stevens (Planning Commission), Richard Thompson (Town Health Officer), Noralee Hall, Dave Rogers, Wendy Martin, Kim Record (Town Clerk/Treasurer), Danny Taylor (Highway Foreman), and Bill Kearns, (Town Administrator).

Present online: Charlie Bonin, Chris Wallace (Planning Commission), Hardy Merrill, Nancy Merrill, and Fact8TV.

1. Call to order: The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

2. Adopt Agenda: Joe Pollio asked that the agenda be amended to include under Highway the letter to VTrans asking for assistance on Fed Aid Hwy Route 121 and move the filling of the Selectboard vacancy to just after the minutes. There was discussion of removing the Health officer update, but that was left. Joe Pollio moved, seconded by John Gregory to adopt the agenda as amended. Motion passed unanimously.

3. Approve minutes of the November 15, 2021, meeting. Suzanne Welch moved to amend., under Highway Report. third bullet point, first phrase to add “Conference” to read Act 250 Application Pre-Hearing Conference and to attach the Act 250 Pre-Hearing Conference Report because it stated the rationale for entering into the executive session. The motion was seconded by John Gregory and passed unanimously.

4. Vacancy on Selectboard: Receive Letters of interest in the position, invite those person who submitted letters an opportunity to speak. Discussion and appointment. (If needed, see Executive Session below). The Chair asked that the persons who had stepped forward and asked to be appointed to the vacant position on the Selectboard, Noralee Hall and Richard Thompson, address the Selectboard if they wished. Noralee Hall was called upon to speak first. She stated she had filled a vacancy in the Board previously and had enjoyed it. She had experienced alot in the town including TS Irene recovery and found she enjoyed the work and solving issues as they arose in the community. Richard Thompson stated that he wanted to serve the community and that now he had the time and the opportunity to fill out a term, experience the job, and, if he liked it, run for the Board in March.

The Chair then presented an option to move to appointment or retire to executive session as allowed for appointment of officers. Suzanne Welch moved, second by Cathy Siano-Goodwin to go to executive session later in the meeting as on the agenda to discuss and consider the appointment of a replacement, a town official, as provided in 1 VSA 313 (a) (3). Discussion, Joe Pollio stated he wanted to act on it early in the meeting to allow the person to participate and stated he preferred it all be done in open session. Suzanne Welch preferred the executive session and stated the persons could remain at the meeting and hear all the discussion and business. The discussion then turned to going into executive session now to consider the appointment. Suzanne Welch withdrew the first motion, with Cathy Siano-Goodwin, the second agreeing. Suzanne Welch then offered a substitute motion, second Cathy Siano-Goodwin to go into executive session now under the authority of 1 VSA 313 (a) (3) to consider the appointment of a person to fill the vacancy on the Selectboard. Motion passed unanimously. The Selectboard went downstairs and entered into executive session.

The selectboard cam back to the hall and re-opened the Selectboard meeting. The Chair stated that the Board had come a unanimous consent to appoint Richard Thompson. Cathy Siano-Goodwin moved, second john Gregory to appoint Richard Thompson to fulfill the balance of the term for the position vacated by Sue Allen. Motion passed unanimously. The Clerk had Richard take execute the oath of office and he was seated at the front table for the balance of the meeting.

5. Health Officer, Status of Building at 3992 Rte. 121 e Cambridgeport. Richard Thompson, Town Health Officer, concerning the status of 3992 Rte. 121 E, commonly referred to as the CIC Building, stated that he had reached out to Shawn Donovan of ANR, who reported they continue to evacuate the air under the building, but have detected a new, not historic, contamination of an unknown source. No action has been taken at the find at this time. Richard continues to monitor the building.

6. Highway Report

* + FEMA meetings – status of Recovery. John Gregory stated that he and Danny Taylor, Michelle Dolloph, Bill Kearns and Kim Record met with Kathleen Sullivan of FEMA and broke the projects down to sites for which site Kathleen is organizing files which she expects to have done by Friday. Meanwhile john and Michelle are getting the repair cost information together. This is all the road erosion sites. We hope to replace five culverts. The one on Ledge Rd, for which there is yet not Hydraulics and Hydrology Report (H&H) from VTrans will be dealt with once that is done. With regard to that site, it has been decided not to relocate that road, but rather put in a bridge that fits the H&H requirements. The town will move forward with the replacement of four other culverts (#s 17 and 24 on Hinkley Brook, #2 on Putnam Forest Rd and #32 on Middletown Road) once we get estimates of the costs of purchase and installation. The mapping equipment and software is not yet available from WRC, and cannot be used for this event, but will aid us enormously in the next event. Danny Taylor stated that Kathleen Sullivan had made the entire process so much easier for all of us. Suzanne Welch stated she would be willing to pick up the equipment at the WRC when it was ready.
  + Rte. 121 E paving update. Bazin did patch the spot on the Cambridgeport Bridge but did not clean the debris that it had swept onto abutting lawns. That issue remained. Cathy Siano-Goodwin raised the issue and the need to have the centerline painted. Danny Taylor stated VTrans striping was over for the season and much work was left undone because of the cost and scarcity of paint. When asked, Danny stated he would see if there was a source for having both ends of Route 121 striped.
  + Update on guardrails Danny Taylor stated all the guardrails had been installed on Cabell and repaired on Route 35 -Chester Rd.
  + Request for Assistance to VTrans for Fed Aid Highway damage repairs (July storm) on Rte. 121 East and West. Joe Pollio presented a letter to the Board for their approval and authorization for him to sign and send to VTrans for reimbursement for the cost of the repairs to Route 121. It being a Fed Aid Highway, it did not receive emergency repair funding from FEMA. Motion John Gregory, second Cathy Siano-Goodwin to authorize the request for assistance letter to VTrans over Joe Pollio’s signature. Motion passed unanimously.

7. Clerk/Treasurer

# Delinquent Tax Policy amendment. Kim Record explained the issue with the dates set for determining the interest due on delinquent tax payments, and presented the cleaner, clearer language. After the discussion Suzanne moved, second Cathy Siano-Goodwin to amend the first paragraph of Section 4 concerning interest to state: Interest Charges: A 1% interest charge per month or fraction thereof will be calculated on the day following the tax due date on the unpaid portion of that installment. The interest rate is 1 % for the first three months and 1.5% thereafter. Motion Passed unanimously. Bill Kearns will have the amended Policy on the table in the office for the selectboard to sign.

# Ballot for town meeting. Because of COVID pandemic last year we did not have our traditional town meeting and all votes were by Australian Ballot with ballots mailed to every voter. This year the Clerk believes we will have Town Meeting in its traditional, original form, with voting on most of the Articles from the floor, and offices by election ballots. The cost of sending ballots to everyone is fairly high and not necessary if we run the Town Meeting as we have in the past. But by law the Selectboard does have a choice and the Clerk asked them to make the choice now. After discussion it was moved by Cathy Siano-Goodwin, second John Gregory, Second Cathy Siano-Goodwin to return to the original way of voting at Town Meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

* + MVP Health Insurance – Decision. The Clerk presented the facts that the MVP Health Insurance for employees – family plan – cost $2277.62/month, as opposed to $2478/month for Blue Cross with similar benefits and stated the employees experience with MVP had been good and she recommends the Town stay with MVP. After discussion it was moved by Cathy Siano-Goodwin, second John Gregory to retain MVP Health Insurance for the employees’ health coverage. Motion passed unanimously.
  + Timeline for budget and Article s for Town Meeting. The clerk presented the following dates for action to be taken or meetings held:
    1. December 9, 2021, at 4 PM, Selectboard budget meeting. See the updated budget sheets provided
    2. December 20 Selectboard meeting complete budget. Then we move to town Report and Articles.
    3. January 3 Public Hearing for Capital Budget at 5:30 pm before SB meeting.
    4. January 13 All Articles to be finalized – all petitioned articles to have been presented.
    5. January 17 at Selectboard meeting adopt Articles and approve the Warning for Town Meeting,

7. Budget – Set the Hour Limits of sheriff service for the July 2022 – June 2023 Contract. Discussion ensued on coverage and the cost. Suzanne Welch noted that the hours averaged 8 hours a month but were erratic with some months a lot less and others a lot more suggested we set a minimum per month. After discussion on what the Board wanted to do, it was moved by Suzanne Welch, second Cathy Siano-Goodwin to level fund when we budgeted for the 2022 – 2023 fiscal year. In further discussion Bill kearns stated the 1st Sgt spent time off the books in town when he was on way to take prisoners to court.

1. Cemetery Deeds to be signed by SB. There were two deeds for Cathy Siano-Goodwin, Clerk of the Board, to sign and she did.

1. Christmas – use of the Town Road. As Fire and Rescue are part of the event and were thus aware of the arrangements, there was no issue found with the use of town roads for Christmas in the village. It being the weekend, even if logging in the Village park were to start, they are not to work on weekends.
2. Planning Commission - Report of Commission on status. Present at the meeting in person Eric Stevens, and on-line Chris Wallace. The Chair, Joe Pollio stated we need to have an active planning commission meeting. Eric Stevens explained that the last meeting planned was to be a zoom meeting, but they were informed that there had to be a physical location of the meeting so the public could attend, and one member had to be at that place. The idea for a meeting dropped. The Chair asked how we get the PC back. Chris Wallace stated the commission is down one member, but there is a party interested. He suggested he would ask the Commissioners if they could make meeting dates, the first one next week or the second Tues. in January. They would meet, nominate a person to the Selectboard to be appointed by the Selectboard to bring their membership back to five, then meet and reorganize, and propose a public meeting place and make arrangement for the virtual part of that. The Chair asked them to proceed with that the Chris stated he would take the lead and do it. Bill Kearns will help with notices and meeting if needed.
3. Committee Reports:
   * Cemetery committee: Still inquiring of the owner of the Land near Houghtonville Cemetery. Bill Kearns will contact the owner again. Anyone wanting to sell or donate land for a cemetery, please contact the Town. The fisher family, per Dave Rogers, was still pursuing such a gift. Dave Rogers reported that the flags are still up in some of the cemeteries. Cathy Siano-Goodwin asked whether a letter had been written to Austin. Bill kearns stated he had not, but had talked to Austin and thanked him. Cathy stated it would have been good to acknowledge Austin’s work.
   * Highway committee: none
   * Parks committee: The volunteers through Mike Fields and Margo Matt have filed the town’s application for the ERSA grant and are awaiting word on whether or not the Town will be awarded the grant. No word on the beginning of logging
   * Personnel committee: See below, skipped for the time being.
   * Buildings committees: Heat pumps, still on back order. Elevator: Kim record and bill kearns talked with the Architect last week. Thigs are progressing well. He had preliminary sketches of the plans for the LULA (Limited Utility, limited Access elevator) and we discussed refinements. He is also looking at making the bathroom ADA compliant, replacing the closet that will be removed with a new closet in the stairwell between the stairs. He feels the back stair fire escape can wait. The bathroom may be made compliant by removing the sliding door and having direct access to the room form the hall on our side and the PO on the other.
   * Water Wastewater committee. T&B response? Joe Pollio will review the contract and get back to the Board next meeting. The MKT had to redo its septic, and had no choice, the state told them what they had to do to fix the system. The cost to the store is $84,000, for a system that will serve several homes or buildings. She has spoken ne to Lynette Claudon who has worked with the town on the wastewater issue and works for the state. Lynnette has suggested that the MKT system may be a system that works for the Town and Tighe and Bond would consider it. The other issue in town are contaminated wells (2) the school and its neighbor. The Tighe and Bond study is to look at water as well as septic. Suzanne asked whether the town had made application for the Priority list, which the Town must apply for.
   * Personnel committee. Personnel Policy revision review: Suzanne and Cathy led the discussion. They began in March and looked at all the past editions including the 2016 and then the 2018 that was done by Attorney Robin Stern and Bill Kearns. They talked to all the employees, and they sought information and advice from VLCT, who model is the one followed. Review of the policy by sections. In short, the following sections had no proposed edits: 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27. These section had changes and in the process each of the edited portions were underlined and explained. These Sections are 1, 2, 7 (discussion between 32 vs 40 hours), 11 Alcohol and Drug from VLCT model used, 12 references to state law as basis, 13, 18 benefits and each benefit has eligibility stated. 19 added Columbus Day/indigenous Peoples 20 language emboldened on vacation leave notice and eligibility stated, 28 overtime/comp time – employees follow this correctly at this time. There was also a handout and discussion about limiting or not comp time accrual. 29 and 30 harassment suggest reporting to “any SB member.”

Items noted for further discussion: non replenishment of comp time, 80 hours of comp time at end of year no roll over, harassment to whom reported clear eligibility in policy. This will return to the SB meeting on Dec 20.

Noralee Hall commented on how well the presentation was done by Suzanne and Cathy.

1. Other Business None
2. Public Comment
   * Don Dougal asked the status of the Emerald Ash Borer issue, where the town stood on the issue, if there was money budgeted to meet the need to remove dangerous trees, was anyone asked to advise the town on the Emerald Ash Borer issue, and whether there was anything done about the Tree Warden. The latter, Joe Pollio state, was without anyone to volunteer to do it. There was not comment on the other issue raised.
   * Don then asked about the Rte. 121 West cleanup and why one of the properties was not cleaned up. Cathy Siano-Goodwin responded for the reason the landowner was concerned about liability exposure if they allowed any clean up and thus would not allow it on their land. The other sites were cleaned. Don then asked what happened to the money given for the cleanup. Cathy reported the money donated was used for the disposal of the huge amount of trash that was removed, and all accounted for there.

14. Next Regular Meeting – Monday December 20, 2021 @ 6:00 PM.

15. Adjourn. Motion by John Gregory, second Richard Thompson to adjourn at 8:20 PM. Motion unanimously approved.

Respectfully presented,

William G. Kearns