**MINUTES SELECTBOARD MEETING**

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

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

**Monday, October 17, 2022, 6 pm**

Present at the meeting in the Town Hall:

Selectboard: Chair Joe Pollio, Cathy Siano-Goodwin, John Gregory, and Suzanne Welch.

Not present: Rich Thompson.

Also: Sam Battaglino, Dottie Cannon, Don Dougall, Mike Faulkner, Lynn Field, Mike Field, Mary Feder, Cheryl Kaufman, Bill Kearns, Liisa Kissel, Margo Matt, Kim Record, Allan Sands, Eric Stevens, Morgan Stevens, and Wendy Martin.

Present online: Amber Stevens, Charlie Bonin, FACT TV.

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

2. Adopt Agenda: Chair Joe Pollio asked that the Windham Regional Commission agreement topic be added as item 6a to the agenda. Suzanne Welch said that Other Business should be a separate item on the agenda as #8. She said the next meeting was the Public Hearing on November 7 at 5:30 pm, followed by the board’s regular meeting. It was moved by Suzanne Welch, seconded by Cathy Siano-Goodwin, to adopt the agenda as amended. Motion passed unanimously.

3. Approve minutes of the October 3, 2022 meeting. It was moved by Cathy Siano-Goodwin, seconded by Suzanne Welch, to approve the minutes of the October 3, 2022 meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

4. Highway Report:

Interim Road Foreman Mike Faulkner said that the new truck would arrive in the next couple of weeks. The crew is ditching, dealing with leaves, and getting back to grading. There had been an accident by the guardrails on Route 121 near Sessler Bridge. Joe Pollio said that damages should be covered by the driver’s insurance.

Faulker said the town had received some salt to start off the winter.

John Gregory asked how many hours the grader was run each year and Faulkner said he would let him know.

• FEMA projects status. Bill Kearns said that everything has been sent in for Ledge Road. He said that FEMA is no longer in the state and matters were being dealt with regionally, which could slow things down. He said that the administration reimbursement would be handled separately—this is the time that John Gregory, Bill Kearns, Michelle Dolloph, and the highway crew used for administration—and that Michelle Dolloph was checking a few things before sending it the following week. Suzanne Welch for clarification on what the town was still owed; Treasurer Kim Record said that the town had received $279,128 from the feds and was expecting an additional $185,225. The administration fees will then be reimbursed and will amount to less than $24,000.

• VTrans: Bridge #10, Walker Bridge, utility relocation agreement. It was moved by Cathy Siano-Goodwin, seconded by John Gregory, to make and sign the order for state utilities to move their utilities as set form in the agreement titled “Relocation Agreement Order.” Motion passed unanimously.

• VTrans: Walker Bridge and comments back to VTrans. Joe Pollio said that the state had finished its engineerin and given the board the specs on the bridge, and would like comments from the board. The deadline was October 31. He said that he didn’t know what more the board could do because the town must follow the state’s plans at this point, unless it wants the plans to change. Suzanne Welch said that at the last meeting the Highway Committee was to review the plans and get back to the board; she asked if John Gregory and Rich Thompson had looked at the plans. Gregory said that as far as he was concerned, they were fine. Cathy Siano-Goodwin asked if there were major changes and Gregory said that the dollar amount was the only change. It was moved by Suzanne Welch, seconded by John Gregory, to accept the final plan for the Walker Bridge project as presented by VTrans. Motion passed unanimously.

5. Clerk/Treasurer Report:

• Quarterlies. Kim Record said she had distributed these to the board and assumed there were no questions.

• Audit/Sullivan Powers. Record said that she’d received the draft copy of the audit, she’s reviewed it and made the journal entries, similar to what had been requested by the auditors the previous year. The auditor told Record that the town ended the fiscal year fairly well, considering the position it had been in with FEMA. Record said that the town had used approximately $315,000 in unassigned funds last year and that fund now stands at -$755. It was a timing issue, she said, which will balance out with the audit. She told that board that the auditor will add to the report that the town had not been reimbursed by FEMA and that would happen in the next couple of days. Suzanne Welch asked how the town had had enough cash to pay for the necessary repairs being reimbursed by FEMA and Record said it was because of those reserves. Fred Duplessis (Sullivan Powers) had recommended setting aside 15% every year for just that reason.

• Special Budget Meeting(s). Record gave the board budget worksheets and asked members to pencil them in before meeting. The library, Rescue Squad, and the Fire Department had been invited to make their budget requests at the November 7th meeting. After discussion, it was decided to meet on Monday, November 14 at 5 pm. If Rich Thompson can’t make that time, the board will meet in the morning instead. Another meeting was scheduled tentatively for November 28 at 5 pm.

6. Golden Cross Ambulance discussion. This will be discussed with Keith Hermiz when he attends the November 7th meeting from the Rescue Squad.

6a. Windham Regional Commission proposal. Grafton’s representatives to the Windham Regional Commission (Eric Stevens and Cheryl Kaufman) were present to discuss the proposal from the WRC to adopt bylaw amendments that would enable WRC to administratively support intermunicipal service agreements among towns. Stevens and Kaufman, as Grafton’s reps, would be voting on the proposal, which would require 67% for it to pass. Stevens said that presently, municipalities may make such agreements with each other but the WRC is not allowed to be a part of those agreements as an administrator. On its face, Stevens thought it was good because in the future it would make things easier in some towns. His apprehension was that if this were the “normal” way government functioned, towns would relinquish their control over some functions and if 80% of the towns chose this route, it would be moving closer to a county government system. He said that he believes at present Vermont has strong state government, strong town (local) government and weak county government; if this agreement goes through, it would be the beginning of a county government by default. Stevens said he didn’t think this was necessarily a bad thing but the towns would lose some semblance of control; it’s not a black-and-white issue, he said. He and Kaufman planned to vote for it but wanted the Selectboard’s input.

Discussion ensued: the town could pull out of the agreement at any time; example of American Rescue Plant Act (ARPA) funds coming to towns and not counties and how that benefited the towns; this agreement would allow towns to ask for WRC as administrator but wouldn’t require it; Grafton is already joining with other towns for an animal control agreement —zoning bylaws and flood zone planning would be needed at some point in the future.

Stevens said that Grafton is free to engage in agreements with any town without restrictions; this vote would allow WRC to act in an administrative role, if the town asks WRC to do so.

It was moved by Suzanne Welch, seconded by John Gregory, to recommend that Grafton’s representatives to the Windham Regional Commission vote against the proposal to enable WRC to support administratively intermunicipal service agreements among towns. Motion passed unanimously.

7. Committee Reports:

• Cemetery Committee: Joe Pollio said there had not yet been a meeting with Jones; he and John Gregory have been busy but will meet to amend the cemetery policy the following week.

• Highway Committee: No report.

• Parks Committee: Mike Field, Margo Matt and Al Sands were present to report to the Selectboard about the Village Park. Matt began with a presentation of major projects: logging completed; ERSA grant proposal had been rejected in February 2022; RTP grant proposal had been rejected in August 2022. She talked about the parking and entrance area: the entrance road, parking area, porta-potty niche, and trailheads completed by the Grafton highway crew; Grafton Improvement Association paid for two months of the porta-potty; kiosk was installed by the highway crew; walking sticks and a holder at the kiosk were donated. Other plantings were completed. Work was done on the trails and grounds, including hazard trees removed, spring maintenance, connector trail raked and seeded, new bench was made and installed at picnic area, and a new trail continuing the yellow trail to the top of the logged area had been sited for 2023.

Mike Field said that the group also decided to refocus to make its role clearer, as in maintaining trails, clearing brush and focusing on trees. The group would no longer pursue grants nor the independent raising of funds. The group has been approached by people who want to donate but have big questions about the park. He said perhaps some methodology could be developed to help with this. With the limited remaining funds, Field encourages plowing the park area for snowshoers and other winter users. He said that the additional porta-potty in town could perhaps be promoted. (The other one is at Winnie Park on Route 121.)

Al Sands said that the two projects not funded would have funded an easy access trail (flat for accessibility), and an activity/learning center (formerly a lean-to); the latter would cost $10-12,000 for materials. The center would be the priority project. He said the group was reluctant to invest time and money until it knows the plans for the water-wastewater project location.

Joe Pollio asked how much the group would like to see in a budget line. Sands that originally the idea was that the timber sale revenues would be a line item and earmarked for the Village Park. He asked if the maintenance and mowing (at Winnie Park as well) were still part of the Selectboard’s budget. Kim Record said that the mowing was coming out of that budget, yes; the park group still had its reserve. Cathy Siano-Goodwin asked if the group had approached the school because it had some ESSA funds to help with building the new playground. Sands said the school had not been asked, as far as he knew. He said the three of them in the group were burned out trying to write grants and beat the bushes for money. They were willing to work but were not interested in fundraising. Siano-Goodwin said it wasn’t fundraising, it was accessing the money. She asked if they had approached the Windham Foundation. Pollio suggested the Ames-Holt Fund. Margo Matt said the three would prefer to spend their time working on the park and leave the fundraising to other individuals. Pollio said the board would look into it.

• Personnel Committee: No report.

• Buildings Committee: Bill Kearns said that most of the work was done; the elevator was supposed to be shipped the end of October and it could take as long as six weeks to arrive. Flooring in the entryway will be replaced; if there are remaining funds, he recommended replacing the carpet in the Listers’ office. Kearns said the town will be given a price on refinishing the upstairs Town Hall floor.

• Wastewater-Water Committee: Joe Pollio said that Tighe & Bond would provide a list of the September 28th meeting attendees and questions asked. The committee was scheduled to meet with Tighe & Bond and the state the next morning via Zoom (the meeting was called by the state). Al Sands asked if the committee could ask for a map that delineates the areas being considered for the leach field. Bill Kearns said he didn’t think Tighe & Bond would be ready with answers. Sands said that there weren’t many Selectboard members present at the meeting to hear the presentation and questions; he thought the Windham Foundation should have been present as well.

8. Other Business: There was no Other Business.

9. Public Comment: Sam Battaglino asked if a working light bulb could be installed at the top of the stairwell, outside the meeting room. Kim Record said the electricians would take care of it.

Eric Stevens said the Planning Commission was looking for places to store large-format maps; he will discuss this with Kim Record.

Cathy Siano-Goodwin said that the school was building a new playground and asked if permitting was needed. Bill Kearns said that the school board should check with the state.

Suzanne Welch said that Don Dougall had been diligent in providing information to the board about Chester’s undertaking of its short-term rentals situation. Joe Pollio said that he had met with Bill Kearns, Kim Record, and Morgan Stevens about it. Dougall said the board should read the recent *Chester Telegraph* article about the issue.

Welch acknowledged the recent passing of long-time resident (and Selectboard meeting attendee), Joan Lake. Welch said she was glad to see so many in attendance at this meeting.

Siano-Goodwin welcomed Morgan Stevens as Town Administrator.

10. Next regular meeting: Monday, November 7, 2022 at 6 pm. This meeting will be preceded by the Traffic Ordinances Public Hearing at 5:30 pm at the Town Hall.

11. Adjourn. It was moved by Suzanne Welch, seconded by Cathy Siano-Goodwin, to adjourn the meeting at 7:29 pm. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy Martin