**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 5, 2022, 6:00 pm**

Present at the meeting in the Town Hall:

Selectboard: Chair Joe Pollio, Vice Chair Cathy Siano-Goodwin, John Gregory, Suzanne Welch, and Rich Thompson

Also: Dottie Cannon, Nancy Merrill, Hardy Merrill, Gail Ann Fisher, Mike Faulkner (Interim highway foreman), Morgan Wilbur (Town Administrator), and Kim Record (Town Clerk), Bob Donald, Russell Record, Colby Record, Cheryl Kaufman, Donna Alexander

Present online: Amber Stevens, Wendy Martin, Fred Duplessis

1. Call to order: The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm.

2. Adopt Agenda: It was moved by Suzanne Welch, seconded by John Gregory to adopt the agenda. Motion passed unanimously.

3. Approve Minutes of the November 21, 2022, meeting: It was moved by Cathy Siano-Goodwin, seconded by Suzanne Welch, to approve the minutes of the November 21, 2022 meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

4. Sullivan Powers Presentation: Fred Duplessis gave an overview of the audit. He discussed his firm’s recommendations for the Town which included doing a fraud risk assessment and looking into the investments. They recommend doing a fraud risk assessment to reduce the possibility of fraudulent activities. The second is investments. These investments are recorded at current market value rather than historical costs. Duplessis said the town can either liquidate the investments or research historical costs. John Gregory said he did have a few questions, but Kim Record had been able to answer them prior to the meeting. Suzanne Welch gave special recognition to Kim Record, Michelle Dolloph, and the Town auditors that do the work that results in having no material weaknesses, and no significant deficiencies. The board thanked Duplesis for his work and presentation.

5. Sheriff Mark Anderson - 2023/2024 Budget: Sheriff Mark Anderson introduced himself and said he was present to discuss the budget for the upcoming fiscal year as well as the Animal Control Officer. John Gregory talked about the new traffic control ordinance that was recently changed. Gregory said the only change from the Sheriff’s recommendations was there will only be (1) stop sign at the Cambridgeport Bridge. Everything else was all set; the Town just has not yet put the signs up or painted the lines. Anderson noted that it is not critical for the lines to be painted but would be helpful. After some discussion on the placement of signs at the Cambridgeport Bridge, Anderson said his office would maintain data of crashes, stops, and so on. Gregory asked for clarification on placement of the stop bar lines to be painted. Anderson said the stop bar being painted ahead of the sign should be fine, but the town should check to make sure it is compliant with Vermont Law.

Windham County Sheriff's Department currently uses the contract model per fiscal year. They do an average hourly contract based on call volume. Suzanne Welch asked for clarification because the current contract says 8 hours. However, her calculation shows the policing falls just short of that at about 7 hours per month. Anderson said that has caught him off guard but if they do not provide the full hours, they will either write a check for a refund or roll the hours into the next fiscal year. Welch asked for clarification on the hourly rate going up from $60 per hour to $62 per hour. Anderson explained that they do not have control over the costs. They are seeing this cost change due to increases in fuel, insurance, and retirement plans.

Anderson gave a brief overview of the Animal Control program. He described that this program was like insurance. Many towns don’t have the tools to handle the problems that may arise but having access to this service has been beneficial for several area towns. Grafton currently pays 10% of the cost for this service and the remainder is distributed amongst the other towns in the program. Cathy Siano-Goodwin mentioned that many towns in the area utilize their constable a lot and that the Town of Grafton should look into what we can provide in terms of training to the constable that we currently have in place. Anderson said many towns use the constable as a gap for any areas of the ordinance that the Animal Control program does not cover, such as barking dog complaints. Kim Record asked if Ashley Pinger, the current ACO, could be called upon to look into unregistered dogs in town. Anderson said that in May they will have a discussion and likely send out a letter explaining more.

6. Discuss replacing the generator with Windham Foundation: Suzanne Welch recused herself from this discussion (she is a WF Board Trustee). Bob Donald, CEO of the Windham Foundation said that the generator that is used to power its buildings and the Town Office is in need of replacement. He has come across a grant through FEMA that will help fund this project but needs approval from the Town. Donald explained that FEMA does not give grants to 3rd parties, and it was his understanding that the grant needs to go through town government. Donald said the Windham Foundation was not asking for any money from the town government but for the support for the program and signature on the application. After further discussion, all parties came to the agreement to look into this grant more and ensure that it is even legal to have the Town apply for the grant.

7. Town Listers: Update: Chair Hardy Merrill presented two documents for board members’ signatures. The first was the PVR-4155 for the Grand List 2021, which is the Certificate of No Appeal or Suit Pending. Merrill explained that this would have been completed earlier, but the Mozafarri tax appeal has been pending and has since been withdrawn. All board members signed the form. The second form was the PVR-4261, the Errors and Omissions Certificate. This form indicates discrepancies discovered by the listers after the Grand List was closed on April 1, 2022. He notes two items on the form:

* The Grafton Historical Society has been classified erroneously as a taxable property and it is not taxable, so that has to be reversed and the Town Treasurer cancelled the tax bill issued in the amount of $5,585.64.
* In the case of the Ward Life Estate, two parcels had been combined into one, which has reduced its taxes by $627.20. That has been reversed.

All board members signed the forms.

Joe Pollio asked Merrill to discuss recent matters regarding the education tax rate at the state level. Merrill said that on December 1, the Commissioner of Taxes released the education tax rate letter for the year. There is a $63 million surplus, which can’t be retained and how taxpayers will receive reductions is being discussed at the state level. The commissioner is estimating an $.08 reduction in the Non-Resident (Nonhomestead) tax rate (there was a reduction last year). The other item impacts the Homestead rate and Merrill said they’re estimating the Homestead “yield” to be $15,479 vs. $13,314 this year. When that yield is divided by total spending on the number of students, this is how the tax rate is calculated. Merrill said that if it goes up to $15,000, it’s a significant impact for everyone. He doesn’t see a big increase in the homestead tax rate, but the school board hasn’t yet calculated its budget for the next fiscal year.

8. Highway: Mike Faulkner reported the new truck was in Westminster and they may get it by the end of the week. All of the signs and signposts for the new traffic ordinance have been delivered. The Highway Crew will start putting those in when they have time. Morgan Wilbur reported she was applying for the Vermont Better Roads Grant for the culvert by Dick Desrochers barn on Middletown Road. The total project comes to approximately $36,000 and the 20% local match will be just over $7,000. The grant application is due next Friday, December 16th.

9. Clerk/Treasurer: Kim Record is working on the Town Report. There are offices that will be available, and she has petitions that are available to be picked up anytime in her office. Record reported that Michelle Dolloph is doing a great job on delinquent taxes; delinquencies are currently down to about $5,000 for the 2021-2022 taxes.

10. Committee Reports:

Cemetery Committee: Houghtonville Cemetery. Matthew Dowd is willing to give up a portion of his land to give it to the town. It will be a 150 by 150 which is approximately ½ of an acre. Bruce Jones is also a landowner that is willing to give the town a piece as well. It’s a piece that could be 50-60 feet wide by 150 feet long. That would help him too because he wouldn’t have to drive through the middle of the cemetery to get to his land. John is meeting with Joe DiBernardo to get it surveyed. Both landowners have gifted the land, so there is no cost to the town. The only cost is for the surveying and clearing of the land. Cathy Siano-Goodwin asked if there were any other abutters. Gregory said no, since this is just a boundary line adjustment there’s paperwork to be filed with the state, it does not have to be handled like an actual subdivision.

Highway Committee: No discussion

Parks Committee: Suzanne Welch reported that the letter of interest for the RTP grant was accepted. We can now apply for that grant as a town.

Personnel Committee: Cathy Siano-Goodwin proposed an increase to the Town Treasurer’s salary of $4,000 which would be $23,500 and an increase to the Town Clerk’s salary of $1,000 which would be $33,600. This would be in effect starting on January 1, 2023.

It was moved by Cathy Siano-Goodwin, seconded by John Gregory, to approve the increase of the Treasure’s salary to be $23,500 and the Clerk’s salary to be $33,600 starting on January 1, 2023. Motion passed unanimously.

Buildings Committee: After some discussion, it was agreed that the committee was going to look into the issue with the current boiler. Morgan Wilbur reported that the elevator would be delivered the next day, and installation would begin on Wednesday. The board left the discussion up to Kim Record in regard to closing the lobby while the elevator gets installed. Record also reported that the vault door was being fixed on Thursday. Wilbur will also get in touch with All Season’s in regard to the dumpster since it is in the way for snow removal this winter.

Water Wastewater Committee: Joe Pollio spoke with Tighe & Bond and the Alpine Field does not perk. The next step was to go back to the drawing board and see if there was another alternative. There has been no update since then. The public had concerns about funding for Tighe & Bond to continue research. The chair said it shouldn’t affect the funding but will look into it further.

11. Zoom vs. Microsoft Teams: Morgan Wilbur presented the differences between the Zoom free versus the pro plan. The pro plan will work best for the Town since the maximum time limit is 30 hours whereas the free plan only allows meetings to be 40 minutes in length. Kim Record said it was it's much easier to connect into Zoom rather than Microsoft Teams. Nancy Merrill said that when from listening at home, the sound is quite challenging to hear.

It was moved by Suzanne Welch, seconded by Cathy Siano-Goodwin, to purchase the Zoom Pro plan. Motion passed unanimously.

12. All Season’s Change Order: Morgan Wilbur presented a change order for the contract with All Seasons Construction. This change order was to delete the brass railing and to install a new lobby door and lobby lights.

It was moved by Rich Thompson, seconded by Cathy Siano-Goodwin to allow Morgan Wilbur to sign off on the changes presented in the All Seasons Change Order. Motion passed unanimously.

13. Cemetery Deed: A cemetery deed was presented to the Selectboard clerk, Rich Thompson. This deed is for the selling of a plot to Bruce and Julia Larson.

14. Other Business: Amber Stevens reported that Ivor will plan to remove the snow for fire escape for an additional $35 each time. Removal includes shoveling of the staircase and a path around the building to where the cars park.

It was moved by Suzanne Welch, seconded by Cathy Siano-Goodwin, to approve Ivor Stevens Grounds Maintenance to shovel the fire escape staircase and a path around the building for $35 each snowstorm. Motion passed unanimously.

15. Public Comment: Amber Stevens asked if there was a start date for implementing the new traffic ordinance. She would like to notify the town of Athens of the change to the Cambridgeport Bridge intersection. John Gregory said there was no a bid from the painter yet, so there was no defined date. The Selectboard was fine with Stevens notifying the town of Athens of this change coming in the future.

16. Next regular meeting: Monday, December 19, 2022, at 6 PM. There will also be a Public Hearing on Monday, December 19, 2022, at 5:30 PM (Capital Budget discussion).

17. Adjourn. It was moved by Cathy Siano-Goodwin, seconded by John Gregory, to adjourn the special meeting at 7:29 pm. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Morgan Wilbur