

MINUTES SELECTBOARD MEETING
Grafton Town Hall Upstairs In Person/Live
With accommodation for persons unable to attend in person via interactive Zoom

Monday, April 15, 2024, 6:00 pm

Present at the meeting in the Town Hall:

Selectboard: Chair Joe Pollio, Vice Chair Cathy Siano-Goodwin, John Gregory, and Steve Sargent

Also: Morgan Wilbur, Dottie Cannon, Kirk Goodwin, Wendy Martin, Amber Stevens, Lisa Record, Russell Record, Dave Rogers, Colby Record, Sam Battaglino, Liisa Kissel, Don Dougall, Patsy Ellis, Patrick Cooperman, Wendy Martin, and Anna Keegan

Present online: Suzanne Welch, Cheryl Kaufman, FactTV, Donna Alexander, Lain Stevens, Charlie Bonin, Vanessa Kellogg, Mollie Parent, and Stoner Wallen

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

2. Adopt Agenda: It was moved by John Gregory, seconded by Cathy Siano-Goodwin to adopt the agenda. Motion passed unanimously.

3. Approve Minutes of the April 1, 2024, meeting: It was moved by Cathy Siano-Goodwin, seconded by John Gregory, to approve the minutes of the April 1, 2024, meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

4. Approve Minutes of the April 8, 2024, Special meeting: It was moved by Cathy Siano-Goodwin, seconded by Steve Sargent, to approve the minutes of the April 8, 2024, Special meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

5. Highway Report: Colby Record gave an update on roads that have been graded. Those roads are: Route 121 West, Wright Orchard Road, Anderson Road, Fisher Hill Road, Cabell Road, Hinkley Brook Road, Middletown Road, Avery Park Drive, Middletown Cemetery Road, Woodchuck Hill Road, Fire Pond Road and Parker Hill Road. Cathy Siano-Goodwin asked about cleaning out ditches on Parker Hill Road. Record said he would try to get there in the following days.

Excess Weight Permits: Cota & Cota and Structural Wood Corporation

It was moved by Cathy Siano-Goodwin, seconded by Steve Sargent, to approve the weight permits and to authorize the Town Administrator to sign and issue. Motion passed unanimously.

6. Clerk/Treasurer:

Liquor Licenses: Morgan Wilbur said MKT submitted their liquor licenses which included a 1st class and 2nd class permit and the Grafton Nature Museum submitted a one-time catering permit. Wilbur said that Kim Record, Town Clerk, had always just approved the catering permits when they were submitted. These are often submitted randomly throughout the year. She suggested the Selectboard authorize Record to approve those when they come in.

It was moved by John Gregory, seconded by Cathy Siano-Goodwin, to authorize Kim Record, Town Clerk to approve the one-time catering permit for the Grafton Nature Museum as well as the 1st and 2nd class permits for MKT. Motion passed unanimously.

It was moved by John Gregory, seconded by Cathy Siano-Goodwin, to authorize Kim Record, Town Clerk to approve all one-time outside catering permits. Motion passed unanimously.

7. Committee Reports:

Personnel Committee: There was no report.

Wastewater Committee: Joe Pollio said the committee was still waiting to hear from Tighe & Bond to see where the project stands.

July 2023 Flood Update: Morgan Wilbur said she had submitted the correct forms to request reimbursement for all of the Federal-Aid highways: Route 121 East, Houghtonville Road (Route 121 West), and Route 35. Wilbur said the total reimbursement request for all of the damage on those roads was just under \$340,000. Wilbur also said she spoke with the town's new FEMA PDMG that day about the Bell Road culvert and she hopes to work more on the FEMA work in the coming weeks with the new FEMA team. John Gregory said he thought things would begin to progress smoothly with the new FEMA leadership. Don Dougall asked if there were any responses from the letter that was sent to the State representatives. Wilbur said there was a response from Becca Balint's office, but it wasn't overly helpful. Heather Chase also responded and suggested contacting FEMA directly, which had already been done.

8. Village Park Request for Proposals for Easy Access Trail Project: Morgan Wilbur said she had worked with the Village Park Volunteers to construct the Request for Proposals. This work would include smoothing and re-establishing an easy access trail as part of the Learning Center project. The work for this project would be covered by a grant that has already been awarded. Wilbur requested the Request for Proposals be advertised.

It was moved by Cathy Siano-Goodwin, seconded by Steve Sargent, to advertise the Request for Proposals for the Village Park Easy Access Trail Project. Motion passed unanimously.

9. Open Local Hazard Mitigation Plan Bids: Morgan Wilbur said 4 bids were submitted via email. The 4 companies were: Fairweather Science, LLC, OPH Consulting, Threat Owl, LLC, and Seam Solutions. Wilbur will review these and be prepared to recommend a firm the next meeting.

10. Approve Local Emergency Management Plan: Morgan Wilbur said the Emergency Management Committee met last Thursday and reviewed the LEMP. There were some minor revisions, but they are comfortable submitting the presented plan.

It was moved by John Gregory, seconded by Cathy Siano-Goodwin, to approve the Local Emergency Management Plan for Grafton for the upcoming year as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

11. Windham County Humane Society Contract 2024-2025: Morgan Wilbur presented a contract for the Windham County Humane Society for animal holding for the fiscal year 2024-2025. She said the yearly rate remained the same as last year at \$385. Cathy Siano-Goodwin asked how many animals within Grafton used the services provided by the Humane Society. Wilbur did not know the answer but will ask Kim Record or the Animal Control Officer.

It was moved by Cathy Siano-Goodwin, seconded by Steve Sargent, to approve the FY 2024-2025 Windham County Humane Society Contract. Motion passed unanimously.

12. Short-Term Rental Discussion: Joe Pollio opened the discussion by inviting members of the public to give their thoughts on the presented draft ordinance. Sam Battaglino asked why there were no provisions for parking. Pollio stated there is not an established individual to enforce this type of concern. Suzanne Welch recommended the Selectboard take down the recommendations given and then consult with the Town Attorney. Welch stated she had concerns about garbage being properly disposed of and concerns about third-party entities purchasing property in Grafton for the sole purpose of renting it out and not being a contributing individual to the

community. Russell Record said he does not own a short-term rental (STR) but understands how there could be issues with parking, garbage, etc. However, Record felt it was not fair to charge STRs a fee for operation when other businesses, such as the store, museums, galleries, etc. operate without paying a fee to the Town. Record also mentioned concerns about ensuring the septic for these properties are up-to-code. Pollio said there are provisions within the draft ordinance requiring septic pumping to occur more often. Record responded by saying the pumping isn't usually the issue; it's the fact that the leach fields get overwhelmed. Welch said in the Town of Chester's ordinance, there is enforcement for the advertisement. For instance, if more people are staying in the home than is advertised for, there is a fine. She recommended having a provision such as that in Grafton's ordinance. Cathy Siano-Goodwin asked who would enforce all of this, and who would be the STR administrator. Wendy Martin stated she had a feeling that it's not going to be enforceable, but it could show homeowners that someone is paying attention to what is happening and that there are expectations. Welch then recommended that if homeowners do not reside in the Town of Grafton or live nearby, they should be required to hire a property management company that works in Grafton. She suggested this would give the Town a contact person and also give to the companies who are already working within the town. Welch also suggested that Morgan Wilbur has spent a lot of her time working on flood recovery work but felt that she could take on the role of STR Administrator when the workload from the flood eases. Liisa Kissel said that in a way, these properties are no different than if someone owns a long-term rental. A fire marshal still has to inspect the property and they have to pay a rooms and meals tax; those are not something that the Town enforces. There is a civic responsibility of the property owner. Welch stated she does not want venture capitalists to come into the town and cause the property costs to go up, way out of scale. These investors are not engaged in the community, and they take advantage of the beautiful environment that has been created. Lisa Record stated that the property owner's renters insurance company has likely already asked questions such as the fire alarms, number of occupants, etc. Amber Stevens stated that the State of Vermont is working on a bill that will add an additional 10% rooms and meals tax as their way to slow down the industry.

List of recommendations

- Parking and garbage disposal provisions
- Fire and smoke alarm requirements
- Provision regarding the listing advertisement
- Ask the Town Attorney if properties owned by third-party companies can be inspected by the Health Officer
- Provision requiring third-party companies to hire a local property management company

13. Other Business: There was no other business.

14. Public Comment: Don Dougall asked for clarification about the appointment of a Selectboard member. Joe Pollio said they originally were going to appoint someone at this meeting, on April 15th, however, after a petition was filed to have an election, the Selectboard decided to cancel the appointment.

15. Next regular meeting: Monday, May 6, 2024, at 6 pm.

16. Adjourn. It was moved by Steve Sargent, seconded by John Gregory, to adjourn the meeting at 7:00 pm. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Morgan Wilbur
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