

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

**Monday, November 18, 2024, 6:00 pm**

Present at the meeting in the Town Hall:

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

Also: Morgan Wilbur, Colby Record, Amber Stevens, Gavin Goodwin, Danielle Goodwin, Joe Neal, Suzanne Welch, Dottie Cannon, Mike McConnell, Wendy Martin, Pasty Ellis, Patrick Cooperman, Angela Moulton, Liisa Kissel, Rodney Record, Gatlan Turk, Vanessa Bogosian-Kellogg, and Noralee Hall

Present online: Kim Record, Nancy Merrill, Lain Stevens, Charlie Bonin, Cheryl Kaufman, John Patterson, and Mollie Parent

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 Anna Keegan to adopt the agenda. Motion passed unanimously.

3. Approve Minutes of the November 4, 2024, meeting: It was moved by Anna Keegan, seconded by Steve Sargent, to approve the minutes of the November 4, 2024, meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

4. Approve Minutes of the November 12, 2024, Special Budget Meeting: It was moved by Cathy Siano-Goodwin, seconded by John Gregory, to approve the minutes of the November 12, 2024, Special Budget Meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

5. Approve Minutes of the November 13, 2024, Public Hearing for Discontinuance: It was moved by Anna Keegan, seconded by Steve Sargent, to approve the minutes of the November 13, 2024, Public Hearing for Discontinuance. Motion passed unanimously.

6. Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP) Grant Agreement: Morgan Wilbur introduced the program by saying Mike McConnell from the Windham Regional Commission had helped put together an application for the Municipal Energy Resilience Program. Wilbur said the Town had been awarded \$55,440.00 for projects such as replacing windows, upgrading lighting, and HVAC projects. Cathy Siano-Goodwin asked what the Town match was. Wilbur said there was no Town match. Siano-Goodwin also asked if the money could be used on other Town-owned buildings. McConnell said the grant application was submitted specifically for the Town Hall.

It was moved by John Gregory, seconded by Anna Keegan, to authorize Joe Pollio to sign the Municipal Energy Resilience Program Grant Agreement. Motion passed unanimously.

7. Catalis Agreement: Joe Pollio mentioned that the State of Vermont and the legislature are forcing the Town to purchase a new program for Lister software. Hardy Merrill said this program, Catalis, controls all of the Lister's database including the grand list. He said the current program is out of date. Anna Keegan asked how much the current program costs. Merrill estimated around \$3,000. Pollio said the Town has no choice because of the legislature. Wendy Martin objected to Pollio's editorial comments regarding the legislature, especially given he is a public official.

It was moved by John Gregory, seconded by Anna Keegan to accept the Catalis agreement as presented. Motion passed unanimously.

8. Highway Report: Colby Record said he would be on vacation, pre-approved by the Selectboard, for 2 weeks. The rest of the Highway Crew would be patching holes on Route 121 and Chester Road, as well as cutting brush on Middletown Road. John Gregory asked for an update on the trailer. Morgan Wilbur said the request for proposals is advertised and bids are due by November 27<sup>th</sup>; she anticipates having several bids to open at the next regular Selectboard meeting. Cathy Siano-Goodwin asked if they were prepared for snow. Record said all of the trucks were ready, except for the bed chain on the new truck. Record said he would get that done as soon as he's back from vacation.

9. Clerk/Treasurer: Kim Record said she received a schedule from the bond bank for \$675,000 for 20 years and she asked for a schedule for 15 years which she anticipates receiving shortly. John Gregory mentioned the interest for the 20-year bond is significant but estimates there would be a reduction in interest over the 15-year schedule.

#### 10. Committee Reports:

Personnel Committee: Cathy Siano-Goodwin said she and Steve Sargent are working on some amendments to the Personnel Policy.

July 2023 Flood Update: Morgan Wilbur presented a draft request for proposals for the Hinkley Brook Road culvert #24. She said that this project went through FEMA mitigation, and it is the recommendation that the project be put out to bid to obtain qualified quotes. Wilbur also said she and John Gregory would be meeting with Stevens & Associates for a site visit at the Eastman Road Retaining Wall.

It was moved by Anna Keegan, seconded by Cathy Siano-Goodwin, to advertise the Hinkley Brook Road culvert #24 Request for Proposals. Motion passed unanimously.

11. Ordinance Regulating Dogs and Wolf Hybrids – Second Reading: Morgan Wilbur said the only change from the last reading was some language on the Dog Control Area on page 2, to include strictly just the village of Grafton. Rodney Record asked if the ordinance had been in place during the last dog incident, whether or not the ordinance would have addressed the issue. Wilbur said if the ordinance was in place there would be a defined area where dogs are required to be leashed. Keegan also stated that the dog aggressor dog was on a leash but was not under the control of its owner. Wendy Martin asked if signs would be posted around town to notify people of the new leash law. Joe Pollio said the ordinance would be posted on the website, in the *Grafton News*, bulletin boards, etc. Martin reiterated that she was initially talking about visitors coming into town. Pollio expressed disinterest in hanging signs all around the village. Cathy Siano-Goodwin suggested talking with the Town Attorney and the Animal Control Officer.

12. Short-Term Rental Ordinance: Morgan Wilbur and Anna Keegan presented a slide show stating the goals and objectives of the proposed ordinance as well as what would be expected of the property owners. Angela Moulton began the discussion by asking what prompted the ordinance. Joe Pollio stated there had been 2 complaints that he knew of within the last year. Moulton then asked if the main concern is about investors coming into town. Keegan said there are a number of concerns including septic, parking, noise, etc. She also mentioned that many Towns in the surrounding area are handling this topic as well. There was a concern about property owners purchasing the properties and not having a vested interest in the Town. There was a discussion about the septic pumping section within the ordinance. Moulton felt that 2 years was excessive for properties that may not be rented very much. Pollio explained that the village has a serious problem with wastewater and the Town needs to work to ensure the aquifer is not contaminated. Further, the Selectboard has to account for the property to be rented all of the time. Moulton stated that the Grafton Inn buildings, should be included in the

ordinance, especially for the septic pumping requirements. Suzanne Welch noted that the Grafton Inn, because they serve food and beverages, falls into a different section of Vermont law, which is even more strict. Moulton went on to say that the Grafton Inn would not be able to host large weddings without the short-term rentals in the village. Moulton also suggested taking tents and yurts out of the ordinance. Wendy Martin mentioned that the Town of Grafton has changed greatly in the past 30 years and that there is a feeling of having no places to live in the town. She said that if short-term rentals are the way to go, that is fine, but thought there should be some type of registry of their operation to the Town. Welch stated that Grafton runs on hard-working people, philanthropy, and volunteerism. She said that short-term rental operators are able to charge a high price point because of the beauty of the town. She expressed a desire to keep the money cycling through the Town, in reference to the caretakers of these properties. Keegan stated the intent of the ordinance was not to shut these businesses down but rather to have a clear and transparent ordinance that keeps the safety of the townspeople and visitors at the forefront of importance. Joe Neal introduced himself and said that he represents Riverledge Farm. He said the only thing that gave him pause when reading the ordinance was language in sections 9 and 10 about an \$800 per day fee for a violation. Keegan stated the language had been consistent throughout all of the ordinances she had read, but she would look into that further.

Discussion continued about the requirement of providing proof of short-term rental insurance or homeowners' insurance with a short-term rental endorsement. Danielle Goodwin stated that Airbnb covers insurance for her rental. Moulton said she had a commercial policy to cover any possible damage caused by a renter. Goodwin stated she was not renting her actual home; she rents an outbuilding and would not be obtaining additional insurance because of the ordinance. Keegan said the ordinance does not ask for additional insurance, simply proof of what insurance is on the property to cover the guests visiting.

Gatlin Turk introduced himself and said he purchased "The Deanery" on Route 121 East. He explained that he has made significant capital improvements on his short-term rental, which is an investment in the community. He explained that he and his family fell in love with Grafton and began operating a short-term rental because they felt Grafton is a place people needed to see. Turk asked if a fire safety inspection is mandatory because the verbiage states it may be. Keegan explained that it would be required if the State of Vermont requires an inspection. Turk also had a concern about the language in section 7 stating "The Selectboard may, from time to time, modify these fees...". He suggested adding "fair and reasonable" to the statement because the Selectboard changes frequently and there could be an unreasonable fee required with a new board. Welch asked Turk if he had plans on living in Grafton. Turk said his primary residence is in Texas with his family, but they would like to spend 3 months through the summers in Vermont.

Goodwin questioned why an ordinance was necessary if there had only been 2 complaints.

Vanessa Bogosian-Kellogg said she owns a short-term rental property as well as a primary residence in Grafton. She found the discussion very informative, and it was interesting to hear others' points of view. She said that when she first read the draft, it was frustrating because she had been operating a short-term rental for 8 years. However, she feels the ordinance provides some guidance and helps set some ground rules for owners and property managers. She said she sees having an ordinance in place can provide benefits for the Town and future short-term rentals. She also mentioned there is an opportunity for local businesses because the hosts of these properties can make recommendations of things to do in Grafton. Lastly, she expressed that she would greatly prefer to have a local property management company, rather than a large corporation. Pollio said the ordinance was intended to set parameters, the Town doesn't have intentions of getting rid of short-term rentals entirely.

Liisa Kissel said it is clear these are operating businesses in town and the Selectboard is doing what they need to do to regulate them to ensure general safety. She felt the ordinance was a baseline regulation and there was no intention of prohibiting these businesses.

Welch thanked everyone for their input. Pollio said all of the comments were valued and some revisions would be made because the ordinance cannot be unrealistic.

13. Other Business: There was no Other Business.

14. Public Comment: Wendy Martin asked if the Selectboard had made a decision about the Stormwater Planning project that Margo Ghia presented. Morgan Wilbur said at one of the special Selectboard meetings the board approved to move forward with the project.

Dottie Cannon said she was very pleased with the cemetery fence repair and asked if there were plans to extend the fence up the hill towards the Warrens' property. Joe Pollio noted that the gate had also been repaired.

Angela Moulton asked if the Town had any plans of accepting tax payments online. Kim Record said she does not have the capability to accept online payments and there would be an expense to the Town; therefore, it has not been an option as of yet.

15. Next regular meeting: Monday, December 2, 2024, at 6 pm.

16. Executive Session: At 7:34 p.m., it was moved by Anna Keegan, seconded by Cathy Siano-Goodwin, to enter Executive Session to discuss "evaluation of employees" per 1 V.S.A. § 313 (3). Motion passed unanimously.

At 8:12 p.m., it was moved by Cathy Siano-Goodwin, seconded by Steve Sargent, to exit Executive Session. Motion passed unanimously.

It was moved by Cathy Siano-Goodwin, seconded by John Greogry, to end David Rogers' probationary period as of November 5, 2024, and for his pay to remain \$29 per hour and that Colby Record would assign Lain Stevens and Nathaniel Noyes to take Skip Lisle's training on the management of the beaver flow devices. Motion passed unanimously.

17. Adjourn. It was moved by Joe Pollio, seconded by Anna Keegan, to adjourn the meeting at 8:13 pm. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,  
*Morgan Wilbur*  
Morgan Wilbur