**Selectboard Meeting**

**Richford, Vermont**

**Approved Meeting Minutes**

**August 21, 2023**

Chair Pond called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm with members Wally Steinhour, Alan Fletcher, and Kristen Sheperd (phone) present. Guests at the meeting included Robert Wetherby (Zoom), Rowena Brown, Franklin County Sheriff Officer Andre Labier, Jonas Hardy, Will Ducolon, Joey Randall, Zoning Administrator John Libbey, Lister Eric Collins, Town Administrator Michael Olio, and Cameraman Gerry Vaisey.

The board said the pledge of allegiance.

Chair Pond recognized guests. He started with Will Duncolon. He would like to put a gate on his property along the Bear Run Road to keep people from trespassing. Will said there is a turnaround for the town’s plow trucks which would be left open for them. Selectman Fletcher asked if he was the only one on the road? The Northeast Wilderness Trust owns land there. Chair Pond asked for more description on the road. Lister Eric Collins said Bear Run Road is a class 3 road. The selectboard could give Will permission to put a gate up, but it would be classified as a pent road and would remain unlocked. Under Vermont law, class 1-4 roads cannot be locked. Selectwoman Sheperd asked about the land trust that owns land adjacent to this property? Chair Pond said they wouldn’t be involved with this. Selectman Steinhour added a land trust essentially means there won’t be any development of the land. Eric continued explaining an alternative would be to ‘throw up’ the road. This requires the selectboard agreeing to remove the road from town rights and going through public hearings. Chair Pond does not the value of the road to the town. Selectman Fletcher asked Will if he is willing to take on the responsibility of maintaining that stretch of road? Will responded that it’s only 150 feet stretch from his house, and he would maintain it. Selectman Fletcher’s concern is it’s hard to know if they would need the road for future developments. Selectman Steinhour asked Eric if he saw concerns? Eric said he agreed with Selectman Fletcher, you never know what the future holds, but it is a dead end. He added Will’s deed would need to be reviewed for any easements on the property. Will said the only easement is one for him to access a spring. Jonas added they want to make it work for everyone. Chair Pond proposed conducting a site visit, and the board agreed. Next step is to setup a date and time.

Zoning Administrator John Libbey asked the selectboard for permission to work with the attorney on a Main Street property that has caused multiple zoning issues. He sent a citation, but the owners did not accept it. The attorney said they would still be responsible even if they did not accept the letter. John added there were illegal burns again. Chair Pond emphasized residents need to call 911 when this happens so they can go there and deal with the issue.

Selectman Steinhour made a motion to allow Zoning Administrator John Libbey to work with the attorney on zoning violations for a Main Street property. Selectman Fletcher seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

John added the property owner on the Guilmette Road paid their $ 5,000 fine and accepted the lien on their property. He sent new pictures of non-compliance to the attorney.

Rowena Brown said there is a DRB meeting on Wednesday August 23rd at 6:00 pm for a subdivision and sale of property from the Vermont Land Trust and Nature Conservancy at town hall. She would like to see the selectboard there. Selectwoman Sheperd asked for clarification about the land trust. Selectman Steinhour said this is land being sold to another conservation group and then asked what is the goal of the sale? John said it is to keep it preserved. Eric explained that a land trust is a perpetual private individual agreement for a sum of money to place their property in a conservatory.

Eric attended the meeting to inform the board of three errors and omissions for properties. The first is a property initially listed as a one-acre lot, but in actuality is .62 acres due to a sale of land falling through. The second one is a 220 square foot shed on town land that gets paid for through the owner’s tax bill. This year the bill was over $ 1,000 for the shed when it used to be $ 84. Third, Notch is claiming the grocery store is nontaxable since they are the entity running it. Selectman Steinhour said the business is for profit. Eric agreed and is looking for clarification on it since the grocery store business is a for-profit business. No signatures are needed yet, but Eric wanted to share this with the board.

Officer Andre Labier said he responded to the Bear Run Road incident, and he is aware of the Main Street property disturbance. He is working on repercussions.

Robert Wetherby attended the meeting through Zoom. He was just listening in.

The selectboard moved to approve the 8/7/23 selectboard meeting minutes. Selectman Steinhour had suggested a couple revisions before approving them. He wanted the open meeting law paragraph to explicitly state the selectboard admitted to the open meeting law violation, and proposed a solution. Second was he wanted a statement saying “with permission from the landowner, the highway crew cleared brush behind the Masonic building.”

Selectman Fletcher approved the meeting minutes with the revisions. Selectman Steinhour seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

Update from Town Administrator – The grants-in-aid agreement for 2024 was available for the selectboard to sign. This is a yearly grant for the highway department to help improve water runoff on roads. The grant allotment was $ 12,000 with a $ 3,000 match. Chair Pond signed the agreement.

The USDA Community Facilities Grant closeout is nearly completed. Waiting for one more check to be cashed by Radio North. The total cost for 2 new radio units and installation was $ 21,866.44. This is over $ 4,491.44 from what was originally quoted for the grant which was $ 17,375. USDA is covering $ 9,000 of the cost. The ARPA funds needed for this will be $ 12,866.44.

Selectman Steinhour motioned to approve $ 12,866.44 of APRA funds for the two EMS radio units. Chair Pond seconded. Motioned passed 4-0.

For the Rail Trail Extension project the total amount spent to this point is $ 156,818.39. The match was $ 13,777.70. It is a mix of state and federal funds. Selectman Fletcher suggested reaching out to state and federal representatives for their assistance.

Selectman Steinhour motioned to step away from the rail trail extension project and to reach out to state and federal representatives for their assistance. Chair Pond seconded. Motioned passed 4-0.

Vermont Natural Forest Products reached out and are interested in the tax stabilization program. Selectman Fletcher doesn’t think they are eligible, it is used for expansion. If they are looking for a tax reduction, he said they could try to appeal their taxes. Selectwoman Sheperd asked if this could be relayed to the company through a letter? Selectman Steinhour suggested Alan and himself can review the program and work on a response.

The village downtown designation renewal application is submitted.

The VLCT PACIF grant closeout was submitted.

Vtrans has not sent the grant agreement for the HSIP small grant yet.

Highway Report – Selectman Steinhour reported the crushing of stones is completed and they are stockpiled. They are finished with stockpiling winter sand as well. Now it is a continuation of grading and general maintenance. Selectwoman Sheperd said a new parking ban sign is needed coming into town by the Jolley Store. Selectman Steinhour agreed. An email was forwarded to Selectman Steinhour about posting a children play sign. He wondered what the town’s duty was. He feels this sign can be placed anywhere. The selectboard is willing to give permission to the residents to install one. A motion was initially made, but Selectman Steinhour said he will research further and report back instead. Speed bumps and signs are to be ordered.

Buildings Report – Selectwoman Paquette did not attend the meeting. She reported to Chair Pond the eye wash station and sink were replaced in the town hall boiler room. A valve at the fire station was replaced as well.

The Town Administrator reported that the Library director reached out about the bathroom door lock. There has been no response from the locksmith company about getting it fixed. They also wanted an update on when the small hole in the children’s room ceiling could be fixed. This was done from the leaking roof a couple months ago. Also, the quote for the post-office furnace from Mercy’s is void.

Water & Sewer Report - Chair Pond said he has nothing to report. Selectman Fletcher said the water and wastewater rules and regulations are completed. A final review will be done at the next water & sewer meeting before it comes to the Selectboard for their review. Selectman Fletcher explained the process on how to post it. There must be notification after adoption, and then there is a sixty-day waiting period. If there is no objection from the public, it will be enacted. Selectman Steinhour wondered about the effectiveness of posting in the newspaper? Selectman Fletcher said they can post in more places. This is the first update to the document in thirty years. The revisions will benefit the users of the system. Chair Pond added it will be a fair outcome for all. Selectman Fletcher said current selectboard issues for water and sewer will not be issues anymore under the new rules and regulations.

Selectman Fletcher reported the Dunlavey / Dewey water line is privately owned so the responsibility to replace the fire hydrants is on the owners. At the last water and sewer meeting, Selectman Fletcher said if the owners were willing to pay for the replacement, Jeremy could help them with what is needed. Selectman Steinhour said the owners need to know their responsibility for the lines as it can be a major liability. Selectman Fletcher agreed. Chair Pond said a letter should be sent to the owners about the situation.

Parks, Playgrounds, and Cemeteries Report – Selectwoman Sheperd had no updates.

Other Business – Chair Pond discussed with the board needing an updated agreement with Enosburg for paramedic intercept during ambulance calls. The current cost for assistance is $ 275, and the new agreement would raise it to $ 300 through 2025. Chair Pond said around 2 percent of their calls may require a paramedic intercept. The intercepts are rare, but it is a vital resource.

Selectman Steinhour made a motion to approve signing the agreement with Enosburg for an updated rate change to $ 300 for paramedic intercepts. Selectman Fletcher seconded. Motion passed 3-0 with Chair Pond abstaining.

Chair Pond also discussed a $ 1,050 AMCARE bill for a paramedic intercept. Chair Pond explained since he started, AMCARE charged $ 450 for an intercept, and there was no notification of the rate increase. Chair Pond does not want to see it paid due to the abrupt rate increase. Selectman Steinhour suggested negotiating for paying the old rate and to have notification in the future. Chair Pond agreed saying there is no issue to pay $ 450 and going forward paying full price. Chair Pond will work with the Town Clerk on it.

Selectman Steinhour motioned to enter executive session for personnel at 7:05 pm. Selectman Fletcher seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

Selectman Steinhour motioned to come out of executive session at 7:17 pm. Selectman Fletcher seconded. Motion passed 4-0. No decisions were made as a result of the executive session.

Meeting adjourned 7:18 pm

Submitted by

Michael Olio – Town Administrator

Attest: