

## **Town of Vershire Selectboard Meeting Minutes**

**Tuesday, January 18, 2022 at 7:00pm.**

**Remote only: via Zoom or by phone**

**Attendance:** Vernal Stone-chair, Ken Bushey, Nicole White-Fogarty, Gene Craft-clerk/treasurer, Alan Lyford-highway foreman, Gretchen Harvey-secretary, Debra Kingsbury, Mike Gunn, Sande French-Stockwell, Karen Ward, Carl Demrow, Earl Robinson, Reva Seybolt, Justin Will and David Hooke.

**Call to Order:** V Stone called the meeting to order at 7:02pm. He noted the meeting would be recorded.

**Agenda Review & Modifications:** G. Craft suggested the SB could discuss the social media question during the Recreation Committee report.

**Public & Staff Comments:** None.

**Highway- Road Report/Truck #3 update:** A. Lyford reported that they got Truck #3's computer back and installed it. Although there were a few glitches, the truck performed well during the recent snowfall. He intends to return the borrowed state truck if truck #3 continues to perform well. The highway crew has been assessing their truck radios and will meet at 8am on Thursday to install new antennas, which should provide better coverage. A. Lyford also ordered new batteries today for the packer truck, which needed replacing. They are doing a quick check on this truck to prepare it for inspection next month. Warming the packer truck up (hydraulic fluids) during very cold days, however, is slow going. K. Bushey asked if a portable block heater might help. During snowstorms it is important for residents to know that it is against the law to plow snow across the roadways. This leads to frozen berms in the roadway and can cause vehicular crashes when traveling over them.

**Approval of Last Meeting Draft Minutes:** K. Bushey moved to accept the minutes of January 4, 2022. N. White-Fogarty seconded. V. Stone, K. Bushey, and N. White-Fogarty all voted yes.

**Current Period Warrants Approval:** V. Stone moved to approve the current period warrants. N. White Fogarty seconded. V. Stone, K. Bushey, and N. White-Fogarty all voted yes.

**Town Garage Update:** K. Bushey heard back from J. Coe and from the estimator. An updated estimate will be ready by the end of January. J. Coe pledged to have the updated architectural drawings by the end of the week. J. Coe's latest recommendation is not to adopt a radiant heating system but instead to install a hybrid system that includes heat pumps for the office portion of the garage and a fossil fuel system for the garage itself. Efficiency would take the form of a well insulated building and other measures to retain heat. V. Stone has reached out to FW Webb for another opinion on the best HVAC design to adopt.

**Town-wide re-appraisal in 2022:** D. Kingsbury researched the best options for getting a town-wide re-appraisal done, which has not been undertaken since 1999. She recommends going with NEMRC. They typically complete their work within 2 years. And, once NEMRC learned that Vershire has only 540 parcels to appraise, the company agreed to consider starting

in July of 2022 and finishing by 2024. This would provide the town with all new cost tables by 2024. D. Kingsbury noted also that other towns have used this firm and are pleased with the results. The program is well structured and the reports provide the Listers with all they need to do their work fairly and efficiently. Included in the agreement is the stipulation that the company works with the Listers, who set up the appointments and the schedule for this independent review. The proposal should not affect the Listers' budget, but if there are minor costs associated with additional Lister hours, the re-appraisal fund could cover those hours. The proposed estimate is approximately 50% of the balance of the re-appraisal fund, so the work will be fully paid for by that fund. V Stone moved to accept the bid for the reappraisal from NEMRC. N. White-Fogarty seconded. V. Stone, K. Bushey, and N. White-Fogarty all voted yes.

**Durgin Hill Marketing Update:** D. Kingsbury reported that she has 4 interested parties to date. She will keep the SB posted on developments.

**VT Redistricting Plan – Carl Demrow:** C. Demrow, SB member from Corinth wanted to share an update on the state-wide redistricting process, as well as the actions taken by the SB in Corinth. He wanted to make a plea that the Vershire Board of Civil Authority (BCA) take a position on this process that happens every 10 years. The alternative map for Vershire that is the starting point for discussion looks similar to the current map but no longer includes Orange. The goal is to have the final map ready in April. The opportunity for towns to submit comments will occur soon. Corinth's SB recently passed a resolution supporting single-seat districts. V. Stone asked that links to the proposals be shared for discussion at a future time.

**Town Meeting date change:** G. Craft noted that there is interest in moving Town Meeting to either the first week in May or the last week in April, which is school break week. The ideal setting would be holding it outside, but it could also be held inside the TC with the windows open. These dates would also allow for any modifications to occur, if necessary, to the town budget prior to the start of the new fiscal year. G. Craft will verify that town Meeting does not need to occur on a certain day of the week under the current 1-year statute. The warning would still need to be sent 30 days prior, and the informational meeting would need to occur within 10 days of the actual meeting. This topic will be revisited at the next SB meeting. V. Stone moved to set the Town Meeting to a date yet to be determined but not on March 1, 2022. N. White-Fogarty seconded. V. Stone, K. Bushey, and N. White-Fogarty all voted yes.

**Transfer Station - Recycling:** G. Craft noted that the timing of trash removal from the transfer station has become more complicated. The issue will be taken up in an executive session.

**Taylor Valley Development Issue:** G. Craft drafted a letter that will be sent to both the landowner and to Green Mountain Power (GMP). In accordance with the ordinance, the letter needs to be sent by certified mail and it requires a response within 7 days of receipt. A copy of the letter will also be hand delivered to the land owner. The fine as per the existing ordinance is \$100. There is a process to follow outlined by the ordinance for next steps if non-compliance is an issue. N. White-Fogarty moved to prepare and send the letter to the landowner in violation

of the ordinance and to GMP who installed the light in violation of the ordinance. K. Bushey seconded. V. Stone, K. Bushey, and N. White-Fogarty all voted yes.

**Old/Unfinished Business:**

**Committee Reports: Town Center Building Committee:** R. Seybolt reported that the committee met last evening and discussed various repair needs for the building: upstairs flooring, stage area carpeting, and downstairs carpet. Valley flooring has provided one estimate for improvements: sanding and finishing the wood floor, replacing stage carpeting and adding a pad for wear and sound abatement, and a deep cleaning of the downstairs carpeting, which they determined was in good shape. The committee will continue to seek additional bids for floor refinishing and carpet cleaning and bring more information back to the SB at its next meeting. The foundation skirting is another area experiencing wear and tear and the committee proposes that the gravel border around the building needs refreshing. They will research what has been done in the past and report back on possible solutions and estimates for this project as well. Any items added to the town budget would be voted on at Town Meeting and go into effect July 1, 2022. K. Bushey asked if grants might fund some of this TCB rehabilitation. Also, he suggested that fundraising and seeking donations should be explored. There is a lot of interest in leveraging ARPA funds in ways that support town-wide investments. R. Seybolt noted that the committee has not gotten any strong responses to the query about what the TCB priorities should be; she will work with K. Ward on seeking input from families via the Westshire newsletter, which has community sections. V. Stone requested the discussion be tabled and taken back up at the next SB meeting.

**Recreation Committee;** K. Bushey reported that the ice rink open house had a good turnout. He estimates somewhere between 60-65 people attended. Local news organizations were also there and he anticipates articles with photos to be published this week.

K. Ward, a member of the Recreation committee, is here tonight to ask if approval of a town Facebook page is possible. She notes that a lot more people see FB posts than Listserv announcements and social media is a better means of communication about town-wide events. Currently, she uses her personal FB page to promote events like the ice rink open house, but this is not a long-term solution. G. Craft noted that the town lawyer and the VLCT express reservations about having towns adopt social media mechanisms unless they are well prepared to maintain and monitor the site(s). G. Craft will do more research on what the guidelines are for best practices and asked K. Ward to reach out to other town rec committees to see if their FB pages are truly linked to official town governments. Adopting a social media policy would be a first step if the SB decides to go forward with establishing a social media presence. This topic will be picked back up at the next SB after more research is compiled.

**Energy Committee:** D. Hooke requests that the SB appoint Pete Logan to serve on the committee. He is knowledgeable about energy issues and would be an asset to the committee. There are currently 6 members on the committee as one had to drop out. V. Stone moved to nominate Pete Logan to the energy committee. K. Bushey seconded. V. Stone, K. Bushey, and N. White-Fogarty all voted yes.

D. Hooke also requests that the town move ahead and authorize the energy audits of town buildings by Efficiency Vermont. The Fire Department might also be included in this investment in creating a thorough planning document that provides the baseline needed for future energy efficiency investments. All agree that ARPA funds would be appropriate to use for this purpose, however, the discussion involved which process the town should follow to determine the best use of ARPA funds. The first tranche of ARPA funds has been sent to the town. The second (and final) tranche is expected later in 2022. The SB supports the idea of talking to community members about these funds as the first step. The EC makes the argument that having a good planning document in hand for the public discussions focuses attention on actual projects.. The SB agreed that more information needs to be gathered to make this decision including: how best can ARPA funds be leveraged for town building projects, what is the history of any energy audits done in the past, would the town benefit from having all buildings that serve municipal functions (VVFR) conduct audits, and what is the status on using or leveraging ARPA money to finance a town solar array for the new garage, which would then be a benefit to all taxpayers. V. Stone suggested the SB revisit the topic of energy audits at the next SB meeting.

The Energy Committee continues to work on an energy fair concept as their contribution to Vershire Day and will continue to brainstorm how weatherization initiatives might best attract the interest of residents who would most benefit from them.

**Action Items/Assignments:** None at this time.

**Executive session:** V. Stone moved to enter executive session at 9:30pm to discuss operations at the Vershire transfer station. The SB made a specific finding that “premature general public knowledge would clearly place the state, municipality, other public body, or a person involved at a substantial disadvantage.” 1 V.S.A. §§ 313(a)(1). K. Bushey seconded, The motion passed unanimously. The SB exited the executive session at 9:42pm. No decisions were made at this time.

**Adjourn:** V. Stone moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:43pm. N. White-Fogarty seconded. V. Stone, K. Bushey, and N. White-Fogarty all voted yes.