

Town of Vershire Selectboard Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, January 3, 2023 at 7:00pm at the Vershire Town Center.
There will be a remote option for this meeting via Zoom or by phone.

Attendance: Vernal Stone-chair, Nicole White-Fogarty, Ken Bushey, Gene Craft-clerk/treasurer, Alan Lyford-highway foreman, Gretchen Harvey-secretary, Erica Thurston-animal control officer, Reva Seybolt, James Coe, Doug Stone, Debra Kingsbury, Michelle Massa, Mark Fogarty, David Hooke, Tonya Gunn, Jamie Schectman, and Mary Sarazin.

Call to Order: V. Stone called the meeting to order at 7:01pm.

Agenda Review & Modifications: V. Stone requested moving animal control and VASA reports ahead of the town garage update. He also requested an executive session to discuss the town's contract with James Coe.

Highway: Road Report: A. Lyford reported that the warm weather has wreaked havoc with the roads but he is hoping that colder temperatures will return and keep them from getting any worse. All the equipment is holding up well and he has started working on a new budget. Budgeting this year is a challenge because many of the supplies the highway crew relies upon have doubled in price. Not a lot of diesel fuel has been needed so far this winter and this will help with managing costs. The garage door is fixed and working well.

Approval of Last Meeting Minutes: N. White-Fogarty moved to approve the meeting minutes of 12/20/22 as amended. V. Stone seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Current Period Warrants Approval: V. Stone moved to approve the current period warrants. K. Bushey seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Animal Control Officer Report: Erica Thurston reported that all the animals in her care have been homed. She has not yet worked on a budget for the coming year. The SB will begin holding budget meetings this week. She intends to organize a rabies clinic for 2023. Ideally it will be arranged prior to town meeting when residents could be informed of the date. Also, she will begin notifying the owners of unlicensed dogs about the annual license renewal date.

VASA: Doug Stone, representing the Westshire ATV club, wanted to report on the work they and others have accomplished to improve a section of Chelsea road. A total of 312 yards of gravel were put on the road and it is holding up well. The Town of Vershire contributed 6 yards and used some of its equipment (with hours noted) to assist the repair effort. The road is much better now. The SB asked him if the Westshire club has any projects in mind for Vershire in 2023. D. Stone said there are a few small ones but because they also are associated with W. Fairlee, they hope to identify a project there for 2023.

Town Garage Update: K. Bushey summarized next steps for putting together another call for bids on the town garage. J. Coe will advise on the process once the SB decides what type of bid they want to advertise. The SB also discussed some of the pros and cons associated with altering the size of garage, including using the home at the site for office space, in order to save costs. The SB found that although cutting garage space would reduce costs in one area, retrofitting other spaces to make up for lost square footage would require investments of time and money, thus reducing overall savings. The SB concluded that changing the design and scope of the building would not be cost effective.

M. Sarazin was recognized and asked if the garage adjacent to the home at the site could be used for Animal Control space. V. Stone explained that the heater used in that space was deemed unsafe and currently it is an unheated space used for storage. She also asked about how to find draft minutes from SB meetings online. G. Craft noted that draft minutes are not posted on the website but are made available by request. She also wanted to thank the road crew for their service on VCR this past weekend.

J. Coe in responding to the question of next steps suggested the following: decide on which type of bid to advertise and then do everything possible to get the word out to as many contractors as possible. The main feedback from the recent process with townspeople is that they hope to see multiple bids. The town also may choose to word the advertisement in such a way as to give priority to bids utilizing local contractors. The following discussion focused on the processes that will adhere to open bidding rules for municipalities and to best practices for a successful bidding process. The SB debated the pros and cons of requesting a hard bid (traditional) this time or the cost-plus model, which was used last time.

T. Gunn asked if there was any benefit to breaking up the project into two bids: once for the site work and one for the building itself. J. Coe responded that this is a common strategy and projects have been broken apart but the process requires more of a time investment to manage and coordinate two contractors. To the question of liability, J. Coe replied that whoever did the work would be liable and would need to follow our clear set of documents. The mechanical engineer [Greg Dixon] would inspect and approve the work.

K. Bushey wants anyone who has questions to contact him or the other SB members if they wish to discuss the design want a copy of the drawings.

D. Kingsbury asked James Coe a hypothetical question: if someone could present a metal building with the same design and R factor, and this option could save between \$1-200,000.00, would that be an option to consider? J. Coe agreed that it definitely would be worth considering. But because a wood frame building costs are relatively low at 100K, there is not much room for cost savings on that aspect of the project.

Mary Sarazin asked to be recognized to thank the SB for putting the garage out to bid again.

D Hooke wanted to share that he was the one who proposed reducing the scale of the building and using the home as office space for the Listers, Animal Control, and the highway crew. He also wanted to suggest a different approach to recruiting potential contractors sometimes referred to as a construction management style process. This approach would require more interpersonal relations including discussions with interested contractors, making phone calls, setting up meetings, and generally moving through a slower process of generating interest and building relationships with potential GCs to get them to offer an agreed-upon square footage estimate/budget. The argument for this "construction management contract" approach is that putting together full-blown bids takes a lot of hours and many contractors in the current market have been less willing to make this effort because they have plenty of work. J. Coe thought this suggestion had merit but admitted that bidding a project this way might be less feasible for a municipality. Also, adopting a construction management style process would require significant outreach time investment and would not provide the comparative framework townspeople have requested. M. Fogarty wanted to point out that the volunteer time, dollars, and effort already put into this process has been significant. M. Massa wanted to offer her assistance and skills in digital marketing to help the SB advertise the bidding process when they are ready.

Executive Session: Action: V. Stone moved to enter an executive session to discuss the town's contract terms with James Coe of Coe & Coe, Inc. due to a finding that premature general public knowledge would place the public body or a person involved at a substantial disadvantage 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(A). Further, he invited Gene Craft and Gretchen Harvey into the session. N. White-Fogarty seconded. The motion passed unanimously. **Action:** V. Stone moved to exit the executive session with the finding that James Coe will prepare a proposal to extend his contract with the town of Vershire and send it to the selectboard. K. Bushey seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Committee Reports:

Recreation Committee: K. Bushey noted that the skating rink will be filled on Saturday and they will also put up the rest of the lighting. D. Hooke has spoken with the coordinator for the Cross Rivendell trail association. A discussion followed about the process Vershire uses (collecting signatures 40 days prior to town meeting) to include an annual donation of \$500 for trail maintenance. He noted that some towns include the donation as a line item. It was noted that the trail association has been hard to reach, their PO Box has closed, and there is some concern about the state of the organization's capacity to update its donors or receive donations. D. Hooke will bring this feedback back to the coordinator and for this year, at least, Vershire will continue to collect signatures to facilitate an annual donation to the organization. Streamlining the policy using a line item in the budget can be considered at a future date.

Energy Committee: D. Hooke reported that the committee will meet again in 2 weeks. He inquired if there is anything in particular that the SB would like the committee to work on in 2023. Some suggestions included: holding another sustainable energy fair, seeking out clean energy promotions residents might benefit from, and finding an e-bike provider who would stage a "try-out an e-bike" event for Vershire residents, perhaps on Vershire Day. D. Hook also reported that the kiosk for the recycling station is finished and he will talk to A. Lyford about the best time to install it.

Town Center Building Committee: R. Seybolt reported that progress on the pavilion effort is happening quickly now with many things falling into place. She handed out copies of some paperwork that needs review and filing and noted that she has worked with Tilden Electric to create a plan for power at the pavilion, which can be turned off from inside the TCB when not in use. They will use steel plates to protect sewer lines when supplies are delivered to the site. V. Stone thinks he might be able to arrange a donation of the use of some plates to avoid rental costs. Included in the paperwork she handed out is a form required by Vermont's *Division of Historic Preservation* because of the pavilion's proximity to a historic building. R. Seybolt needs to know who would like to sign/submit the form. **Action:** N. White-Fogarty moved to allow Reva Seybold to sign off on and submit the "preservation project review" form to Vermont's *Division for Historic Preservation*. K. Bushey seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

R. Seybolt also needs to secure a building permit from Vershire's Development Administrator. G. Craft responded that she will need a site plan and a drawing but that the form is straightforward and available on the town's website. Her proposed dates for kicking off the Better Places fundraising campaign are January 18 - March 18, 2023. She intends to set up a Google

calendar that can be shared so that the SB can know what events are planned and how the fundraising is progressing. She also proposed that kickoff-event be held at the TC on Saturday, January 21 if it is available. The Mountain school has decided to donate the money for the timbers instead of working through the logistics of harvesting and moving the timbers from the land. This will also allow the effort to receive a match from Better Places. A system is being set up whereby all donations will go directly to the Town Office. A discussion followed about fundraising strategy, the PR campaign effort, and best practices generally. She will be preparing an appeal letter that will be sent out to residents, as well as a press release. She will send them to SB for their review before they get sent.

Action Items/Assignments: None at this time.

Adjourn: N. White-Fogarty moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:50pm. V. Stone seconded. The motion passed unanimously.