

Town of Vershire Selectboard Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, January 17, 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, State Representative for Orange Cty 1 Carl Demrow, Mike Gunn, Tonya Gunn, Reva Seybolt, James Coe, Debra Kingsbury, Gregory Wilson, Mark Fogarty, David Hooke, and Justin Will.

Call to Order: V. Stone called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

Agenda Review & Modifications: V. Stone would like to allow Carl Demrow to speak prior to the garage update.

Highway: Road Report: A. Lyford reported on the challenging winter conditions, especially temperature fluctuations that shift from snow to rain and the impact on road maintenance. A hydraulic study has been done on the type of culvert recommended for Ayers road. He also reported on miscellaneous truck repairs and noted how the costs of new trucks have risen by approximately 50% in some cases. Even with trade-in benefits, the costs remain high. He and others will be looking into a Federal website/program that serves as a clearinghouse for used trucks at more affordable prices. He will pull some estimates together for budgeting purposes.

Approval of Last Meeting Minutes: V. Stone moved to approve the meeting minutes of 1/3/22 as amended. N. White-Fogarty seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Current Period Warrants Approval: N. White-Fogarty moved to approve the current period warrants. V. Stone seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Carlo Demrow: Rep Demrow wanted to stop in and listen to what issues are uppermost on the minds of the Vershire SB. He is aware of the need for a new town garage and the challenges Vershire faces funding this expense. He is having conversations with the director of planning at Vermont's AOT (Agency of Transportation) and others who might be able to help identify financing solutions for the garage project. Some officials will be traveling to Randolph and Bradford on Monday, 1/23 and will stop in Vershire at 11:15am along the way to discuss municipal needs here. He is also meeting with Katie Buckley at VLCT to try to find grant funding that might be applicable.

Rural Capacity Building: The Governor has included some 3M in his budget for rural capacity building based on the understanding that small towns do not have the staffing/human resources required to take advantage of federal or other funding streams, which require time to research, expertise to tap into, and compliance with reporting. Rep. Demrow is hopeful that some of the bills focusing on this equity issue for small towns will succeed in this biennium. Other issues facing small communities involve having the staff hours needed to keep up with new state legislation and federal mandates that require action and/or compliance from towns. Help with grant writing and compliance is a particular need given the financing made available in that format—but obstacles to applying for grants for the town garage have been significant because of the one-size-fits-all eligibility rules of grant applications.

Office Hours: Rep Demrow will be holding "office hours" in the towns he represents to hear concerns and try to help solve problems faced by local communities. He will be at the Church-Orr house on Saturday, 1/21/23 from 10am-Noon.

Act 172: David Hooke wanted to ask about where Act 172 stands on the issue of funding for energy resiliency. Vershire has incorporated features into the garage design that qualify but there is now a question about whether or not new construction is eligible to tap into these funds. Rep Demrow will contact the commissioner of BGS (Buildings and General Services) whose office will administer the grant funding to get an answer to this question.

Town Garage Update-James Coe: James Coe summarized the current status of the town garage project. He is putting together a new, fixed price bid to go out around Feb 1. He will include a proposal for his services going forward, one that dovetails with the bidding process. Once the fire marshal permit arrives, he will forward the e-version to the town. He is using the AIA-Vermont (American Institute of Architects) contract templates. He asked a few questions and will send the documents to the SB for their review and adoption at the next meeting on 1/31/23. J. Coe was asked some questions: does it improve the chances of getting multiple bids if the deadline is extended from 30 to 45 or 60 days. He did not think so. Good communication and flexibility on the part of the town can offer contractors a bit more leeway to get a proposal in by the deadline if needed. Also asked was the question about breaking the project into two bids: one for the site work and one for the building. Breaking up the project demands more time for project management but, again, the town has the flexibility to negotiate such an option if warranted. Where will the bid announcement be posted and is the SB doing everything it can to advertise it widely. Yes, J. Coe will send a list of where the notice will be posted. Some of the websites are: Think Vermont; Works in Progress-Vermont; and Construction Summary. These sites are where bids are aggregated and the Vershire Garage bid will be there and elsewhere and linked to Coe & Coe. The town will also include the relevant links on its website.

Recycling Center Report: M. Gunn wanted to thank John Smith for donating a scoop shovel to the site. The punch card system does not seem to be slowing down the flow of traffic/drop-off process. He tried to look into different trucking options to compare costs, but found that the current contractor is the only one serving this area and he recommends staying with them for another year. Getting the porta-potty serviced has been a challenge because of turnover of ownership, but it gets so little use that this poses no problem at this time. He requested if A. Lyford would pack the paper this week. It was agreed that a group will meet at the site to discuss the best location of the kiosk. N. White-Fogarty asked why the packer remains plugged in all the time and if it should be weekends only. A. Lyford will ask Craig to let him know when he drives it to Lebanon and/or look into a timer that will solve the problem.

Vershire Request to use TCB 1/27/23: Vershire requested the use of the TCB for their supper & annual meeting. **Action:** V. Stone moved to allow Vershire to use TCB for their annual meeting. N. White-Fogarty seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Committee Reports:

Recreation Committee: K. Bushey reported that all the skate rink lights are up and there are skates in the shed for people to use. The committee is considering building a little bench in the shed and wants to purchase a hotdog steamer (the money is in last year's budget) for future events. **Action:** V. Stone moved to authorize the recreation committee to purchase a hot dog

steamer and a 3-pack of plastic sleds with money from its budget. N. White-Fogarty seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Energy Committee: D. Hooke reported that when the committee meets this week they will talk about SB priorities and wondered if there are any last-minute suggestions for the EC to consider. There was some discussion about what is required (rules/upgrades) to turn the Sargent house into office space. D. Hooke will share what he has learned via email.

Town Center Building Committee: R. Seybolt recommends the final contract submitted by Timber Homes for building a pavilion at the TC. Construction is contingent on a successful fundraising campaign. It all goes as planned, it is hoped the pavilion will be completed by Vershire Day. **Action:** K. Bushey moved to sign the contract with Timber Homes for the Town Center pavilion. V. Stone seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

R. Seybolt provided a summary of the run up to the launch of the fundraising campaign and the current schedule of outreach and events. She is also hoping to budget for a porta potty in the TCB budget as it would be useful now during skating season but also year-round. She will coordinate with G. Craft for meeting the vendor and assessing the location options. **Action N.** White-Fogarty moved to authorize the installation of a porta potty at the TCB using funds from the TCB budget. V. Stone seconded. The motion passed unanimously. R. Seybolt also requested permission to purchase a coffee urn dedicated to hot chocolate only. She will make sure to mark it so that it does not get mis-used. **Action:** V. Stone moved to authorize R. Saybolt to purchase a 30-cup urn for hot chocolate from the TCB budget. N. White-Fogarty seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Action Items/Assignments:

G. Craft informed the SB of pending legislation that may allow Vermont towns to move its town meeting date for Covid & public health reasons. Last year Vershire's Town meeting was held on May 22nd. There were also questions about school budget meeting dates and the CLA for Vershire. G. Craft will try to arrange for a presentation on the school budget.

The next Vershire budget meeting will be on Tuesday, January 24th at 6pm in the TCB. Committees will be invited to discuss their budget proposals.

Adjourn: N. White-Fogarty moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:09pm. V. Stone seconded. The motion passed unanimously.