

Town of Vershire Selectboard Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, December 3, 2024 at 7:00pm, Vershire Town Center.

There will be a remote option for this meeting via Zoom or by phone.

Video: <https://youtu.be/4aKUN9q9AYk>

Attendance: Nicole White-Fogarty-chair, Vern Stone, Amy Record, Doug Stone-Road Supt., Gretchen Harvey-Admin. Asst., Ken Bushy, Mark Fogarty, Pat Barnes, Richard Jayne, Kevin McCollister, Billy Anderson, Jeremiah LaFlamme, Gene Craft, Debra Kingsbury, Gregory Wilson and Helen Wilson.

Call to Order: N. White-Fogarty called the meeting to order at 7:02pm.

Agenda Review & Modifications: None at this time.

Public and Staff Comments: Debra Kingsbury noted that this evening's special meeting of the Rivendell School Board postponed the discussion of the Australian ballot topic until more public input is gathered.

Highway: Road Report: D. Stone reported that all 3 trucks now have wings on them, he has done some welding, and everything is working well at this time. Plowing during the 1st storm of the season went smoothly and he intends to do more sanding in key areas tomorrow. There was a discussion about adequate turnaround spots and a need to notify residents not to plow across roads or park in areas that block plowing. Some signage and reflectors have been added to the newly opened section of Eastman Cross Road. **Garage Report:** No report.

Recycle Coordinator: Billy Anderson reported on his work at the transfer station. The walkway was sanded on Saturday, the heaters are appreciated, and he discussed returnables with a representative from VF&R, who collects them for a fundraiser. He agreed to be more careful not to break glass returnables and plans to pack up the batteries this week. Gene Craft explained the process of dropping them off at the Town Office for shipping via FedEx. He has no documentation regarding the battery training he took via video link from VT-ANR. He said that they put the old covers on the bins and they did not leak. He was encouraged to use the new covers. Craig requested the bins be emptied and this was done on Friday 12/6. The SB noted this was cutting it very close. The SB also noted that a recent request (11/29) by Billy to find a substitute for 11/30 was also cutting it close and this is the 2nd time he has made a last-minute request for a sub. He was urged to follow the process spelled out on the Contact Sheet posted in the shed and to contact (at a minimum) all members of the SB via email as soon as he knows he will not be able to come into work on a particular day.

Allen's Salvage Yard: Jeremiah LaFlamme explained the steps he has taken to meet the Town requests since their site visit on 11/8. All cars are

off VT 113 except for two and they are parked well out of the ROW. One of these is his personal vehicle. He is working to get the gates repaired and closed. He will work with Allen to submit the necessary permit paperwork to the state. Once these steps are complete, the Town will provide a one-year COAL for approval of all parties. One option for the Town to solve the signature problem is to have Jeremiah request Allen send an email message authorizing Jeremiah to sign on behalf of both of them. The State permit likewise requires the signatures of both owners/operators.

Approval of Last Meeting Minutes: V. Stone moved to approve the regular meeting minutes of 11/19/24. A. Record seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Current Period Warrants Approval: N. White-Fogarty moved to approve the current period warrants which includes authorizing G. Craft to pay the balance due Northwoods by the agreed upon deadline next week. A. Record seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Local Hazard Mitigation Plan: Kyle Katz, planner with TRORC, has been assisting the Town with its required plan update. All agree that the polished draft looks good and is ready to submit to the state's VEM board for review and approval. Once approved, the Selectboard can move forward and formally adopt the Plan.

Planning Commission: G. and H. Wilson handed out copies of a presentation summary made by Holly Groschner - Chair of the Corinth Selectboard, to the Planning Commission on Nov. 13th. Also distributed were the Planning Commission minutes from that same meeting. The purpose of the presentation was to share the research and planning for public safety concerns accomplished for Corinth. H. Groschner noted that surrounding towns are devising different options (and negotiating contracts with different entities) to meet their particular needs. Corinth has negotiated a contract with VSP for a certain # of hours per week for patrolling. The research done and the terms and costs of this contractual relationship were shared in some detail. The recommendation is for Vershire to host a public safety discussion with residents to determine how they think about public safety in their town and what services they might want from a contract. G. Craft noted that now is the time to consider putting some funds aside for public safety. If the funds are not used for this purpose, they can always be redirected. M. Fogarty suggested that for the purposes of discussion, it would be helpful to develop a list of concerns and problem areas so that contracted services could be applied strategically.

Committee Reports:

Recreation Committee: K. Bushey summarized the Committee's discussion about placing a new kiosk near the Flag Pole Hill access trail. The Committee received an AARP grant that will cover the materials for a kiosk. The ensuing discussion revolved around whether or not the structure should be movable or permanent and to consider land owner's preference. The SB favors a smaller sized kiosk that is movable structure at this time. The SB recommendations to the Rec Committee are: speak to the landowner about these options, discuss the merits of a movable structure more fully, and, if possible, secure a 2nd estimate/ This is not required but would comply with the typical protocol established by the Town's Purchasing Policy. Additional grant funds will be used for classes to be held in the TCB. Calendar and insurance questions will be worked out with G. Craft. Santa is scheduled to make an appearance on Saturday 7th and scheduling to fill the ice rink is in progress.

Energy Committee: P. Barnes introduced Kevin McCollister, owner of Catamount Solar, one of the 3 companies invited to bid on the Garage solar installation project. He explained the terms of his contract and that he was happy to accommodate the Town's concerns for uncertainty by including a paragraph that allows the Town to decide if/when to move forward by sending a Notice to Proceed. This safeguards the town in the unlikely event that either MERP funding or the net metering application should fall through. Mr. McCollister did explain that signing the contract now allows him to reserve the modules for this project. Although he has modules in his warehouse, there is a lot of uncertainty in the market because of possible tariffs and price increases. The 30% federal incentive being offered under the Inflation Reduction Act appears to be more stable and if this is eliminated by the new Administration, it is unlikely that it will happen right away giving Vershire time to finish its installation project. He also explained the cost/benefit calculations with the garage meter being satisfied first before sharing energy with other buildings. Grant reimbursement occurs after construction. The federal credit comes as a tax incentive the following year. The Town's FY25-26 budget will need to take upfront costs into consideration, but the final cost of the entire project is estimated to be approximately \$8,000.00 which will pay for itself with energy savings in a short time frame. Mark F. asked about module recycling. Mr. McCollister explained that the panels can last between 24-40 years, whereas inverters last about 12 years. He expects the nascent recycling program that exists now will become a fully developed industry by that time. The current cost of recycling is \$25 per panel. But if that stays constant, the cost (for 84 modules) would be offset by the estimated minimum of \$7,000 saved in energy costs annually for 25 years. It was agreed that setting aside funds to pay for potential recycling costs would be a prudent budgeting choice. D. Stone asked about the system he uses to attach modules to the roof.

McCollister explained that they are screwed through the roof, the brackets are rubber, and there is a sealant placed on top. There is no maintenance plan included, but they provide a 5-year warranty. The panels do hold snow but this depends a lot on conditions. When there is 4-8 inches of snow, production plummets to near zero. The panel warranty is for 12 years. Installation would take about one week and no scaffolding is used. Care would be taken to provide regular access to the garage. The final topic discussed was the net metering application. K. McCollister has begun the application process, which first goes to WEC. Once he gets a response, he will immediately apply for the Certificate of Public Good (CPG) to the Public Utilities Commission. Both entities can take up to 30 days to respond. The final question involved how the solar would behave during a power outage. McCollister noted that the generator remains isolated from the solar and that the solar will not operate during a power outage. **Action:** N. White-Fogarty moved to sign the MERP grant award letter. V. Stone seconded. The motion passed unanimously. **Action:** N. White-Fogarty moved to sign the contract with Catamount Solar. A. Record seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

P. Barnes concluded by saying that two Town Park and Ride signs have been installed at the TC. The Committee will refrain from installing road signs for the time being.

VTC Committee: No report. G. Harvey will forward the VTCC budget draft to the SB in PDF format.

Action Items/Assignments:

Administrative Assistant: Correspondence & Report: G. Harvey asked about the end of December SB meeting scheduled for 12/31. She will find out about the budget meeting dates and ask about the schedule for warrants. A decision about purchasing a fuel tank for the new garage was discussed. **Action:** N. White-Fogarty moved to authorize the purchase of a fuel tank utilizing funds from the FY24 Budget Adjustment Act. V. Stone seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Adjourn: N. White-Fogarty moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:20pm. A. Record seconded. The motion passed unanimously.