

Grand Isle Select Board

Minutes of the Meeting

Monday, June 21st, 2021 6:00pm at Town Office and via Zoom

I. CALL TO ORDER

Board Members Present: Jeff Parizo – Chair, AnnaMarie DeMars – Vice chair; Diane Cota, Adam White, Eric Godin

Community Members Present: Rachael Griggs; Joe Longo; Randy Gover; Linda Effel; Mike Donoghue; Tonya Poutry; Mitchel Richardson; Bill Stone; Buddy Meilleur; Ron Bushway; Don Cota; Bill Baron; Mary Parizo; Emily Clark; Melissa Boutin; Lucille Campbell

Select Board Members to Amend Agenda for Matters Not Listed:

Garage Paving – Diane

Starting Pay for Road Crew – Diane

RFP Responses- Diane

Employment Ad – Diane

Historical Society Request Concerning Old Town Garage – Adam

II. GUESTS

Bill Baron – Emergency Management Plan: Bill Baron says that he is seeking the Select Board's approval for the town's Emergency Management Plan. Bill says that Diane Cota and Adam White suggested some changes that were made. Once the plan is signed by the Select Board Chair, Bill will send it to Shawn Coleman at Northwest Regional Planning. Adam White explains that the Emergency Management Plan has a directory of names and numbers for people to contact in case of emergency. Jeff asks if there is a template for this document now. Bill says that Shawn Coleman sends out a document and the town reacts and makes necessary changes for the new year. **Jeff Parizo moves to approve the local Emergency Management Plan for 2021. Diane Cota seconds. No discussion. Jeff calls the vote which passes unanimously.** Jeff asks when this is supposed to be in. Bill answers that it is usually requested in May, so the document is a little late.

III. GUEST OPEN COMMENT

IV. HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT UPDATE

Ron Bushway reports that Randy Gover finished the first pass of roadside mowing as of the end of last week. Ron says that the employment advertisement for the Highway Department position was sent to the Islander and sent to scribe Eric Godin to post on the town website and the VLTC newsletter. Ron goes on to say Michael Gover has been moving items into the new garage and disassembling, cleaning and painting lots of shelving. According to Ron there are still several items at the old Fire Station, including

signposts and metal items. Ron says he is also compiling a list of items to be sold from the old garage, including the wood/oil furnace, wood, fuel tanks with #2 fuel, as well as some kerosene. Ron says he believes there are some people who would be interested in buying the furnace. Ron says that paving has occurred on East Shore North from Nichols Bay to Horrigan's Bay, and the apron at the Annex, to comply with VTRANS conditions. Ron says the new Garage has been paved using money from the surplus as well as state aid, including some of the surplus from the \$48,000 that was returned to the highway fund by the Select Board. Ron says he was going to ask the Select Board to match \$14,000 that the previous board had taken from the general fund surplus, but says it appears we should wait on that for now. Diane Cota asks who had approved the paving for the town Garage, and that she was under the impression the Board had to approve those types of items. Ron answers that the Highway Department has never come to the Board before to authorize paving. Diane says she is concerned about money being spent without Board approval, and the pavement breaking down with heavy equipment running on it, as well as where monies to repair the pavement would come from. Diane cites the Fire Department having to come before the Board for approval for their paving. Ron explains that he doesn't think there will be a problem, as the paving company runs heavy equipment on the pavement as it is. Diane asks for the Board's opinion on whether approval should have been sought from the Board before paving was done at the Town Garage. AnnaMarie Demars says the Fire Department came before the Board for their paving because they didn't have enough money to pay for it, and the Highway Department used surplus money they had to pay for the paving. Adam White asks if there is still a bid policy in place. Jeff asks Ron what the bid process for paving is. Ron answers that they get three bids. Diane asks how much paving the Garage cost. Ron answers that he doesn't have the breakdown, as they paved in three different locations, and hasn't gotten the paperwork yet. Jeff asks if one company did all the paving. Ron answers that two companies were involved. Premier paved the town Garage and the Annex, and S.D. did East Shore North. Diane asks if this means that the Highway Department can do whatever they want with the Garage, as long as they're using their own funds, even though the building belongs to the town. Adam says he thinks the issue is that the town has no process on an amount that requires Board approval if it's within their own budget. Ron explains that the paving was done because in the winter, the trucks have to plow their way out of the Garage, and the ground will be soft, causing the trucks to dig into the gravel and tear it up. Ron also points out that if there is a gravel base, some of that could end up in with the salt, causing damage to the town plows and possibly to someone's vehicle on the road, as the gravel is large. Adam asks if Ron could include any upcoming large expenditures in his Highway Department Updates moving forward. Ron agrees. AnnaMarie asks how far we should go to micromanage the town's departments. Diane says that it is the Board's responsibility to have oversight of town monies spent. Anna says she feels that if the department has the money to do something within their budget, they should be trusted to do it. Joe Longo asks how much paving was done at the Annex. Ron answers that it was just the apron, and that was done because of concerns VTRANS had when the new town Garage was built. Ron says the driveway on the west side of the building

was paved, and a berm has to be put in on the other side. Diane reiterates that it is the Board's responsibility to have oversight of the Town's money.

Building Facilities Manager Update: Ron says there isn't much to report, as the Highway Department has been very busy, but says that the Historical Society is getting ready to open the Hyde Log Cabin.

V. REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES FROM MEETING OF JUNE 7TH AND SPECIAL MEETING OF JUNE 14TH

Adam White moves to accept the minutes from the June 7th 2021 Select Board Meeting Minutes. AnnaMarie Demars seconds. No discussion. Jeff calls the vote, which passes unanimously.

Adam White moves to accept the June 14th Special Meeting minutes. AnnaMarie Demars seconds. No discussion. Jeff calls the vote, which passes unanimously.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

Permit for Laying of Pipes and Wires: Jeff Parizo says he had edited the permits, as had been mentioned at the previous Board meeting, and wanted to make sure that the Board was okay with the changes and if it could be passed out. Jeff says on the Highway Department form, he just fixed some clerical errors. Adam White says the changes were adding a section for use by the Road Foreman, and a statement saying the permit was subject to 30 day review by the Select Board. Jeff says he will give a copy to the Town Clerk and the Zoning Administrator.

AT&T Mobile Truck: Adam White says that AT&T wanted to put a mobile sales truck in Grand Isle to showcase their promotions for educators, first responders, veterans, doctors and nurses; and to promote AT&T products. Adam says that he thinks this offer should go to a local business, as the Town has no prominent place to let them park. Adam says he will reach out to **businesses**. Adam then mentions that he has spoken with Sheriff Ray Allen about the AT&T cell tower, and that it has been turned on, but is only picking up signals from directly north and south of the tower. Adam says that the sheriff has reached out to AT&T to address those concerns.

July 5th Meeting: Jeff Parizo asks if we should have the July 5th meeting as it is right after the holiday. Adam White says the meeting should probably be canceled. AnnaMarie **DeMars** points out that lots of people will be away. Adam suggests cancelling the meeting and seeing what issues come up, as a special meeting can be scheduled if warranted. *Jeff Parizo moves to cancel the July 5th, 2021 Select Board meeting. Diane Cota seconds. No discussion. Jeff calls the vote, which passes unanimously.*

Nepotism: Diane Cota expresses concern about hiring the sons of current members of the road crew, as she feels it constitutes nepotism. Diane notes that it is not illegal in Vermont. Diane says that when Brad Sheridan's son was hired in 2020, she doesn't feel that the Board **was** aware of it. Diane **says** she feels like things are getting out of control. Diane reads the definition of nepotism as: "A form of favoritism which is granted to relatives and friends in various fields without regard to their merit. It's patronage bestowed or favoritism shown on the basis of family relationships as in business or politics. Diane says that at the last meeting it was mentioned there were no

other applicants, and that she is aware of at least one other applicant. Diane says she wants to get things back under control and make sure that everything is being done correctly. Diane says hiring Brad Jr. was done prior to the town having a pay scale, and says the board should have been notified. Randy Gover says the first time Brad Jr was hired was in the middle of the night during a snowstorm, and he was used to clear intersections and keep the roads open. Ron Bushway says he takes offense to it being said that things are out of control, as the Highway Department is doing all they can to get the job done. Ron says that he will take responsibility for hiring Brad Jr. Ron says he wasn't aware of Brad Jr being paid \$20 per hour, but says he thinks it comes from Merritt VanTine being hired at that rate, with no benefits involved. Ron admits this was a mistake. Ron says that with the help shortage the highway department has, they are trying to meet the needs of the town. Ron says he doesn't feel that they are abusing any hours, and that Michael Gover's starting salary was in line with what the Board had asked. Ron points out that Michael has a lot of experience with equipment, and that he has been getting the job done. Jeff asks who is giving the instructions. Ron says that he is there every day. Randy says that Michael works for the Highway Department, not him. AnnaMarie says she appreciates that things are being cleaned up before being moved to the new garage, as she would like to have an open house. Linda Effel points out the Select Board hired Michael, not Randy. Bill Stone says he feels that if there is an amount budgeted for labor for a department, it should fall under the purview of the manager of that department to make hiring decisions and shouldn't have to come before the Board. Bill further states that if you are hiring folks, the town has a salary policy, and says there should be a hiring policy to protect the interests of the Town. Diane says the hiring policy is part of the personnel policy that is currently under review by VLCT. Diane says the starting pay for the road crew was \$17 - \$19 per hour, with Michael Gover starting at \$19 because he knows a lot about equipment and was going to be testing for his CDL. Diane brings up the fact that the secretary for the DRB who was recently hired and is a professional with experience was hired at \$18 per hour, and says it doesn't seem very fair. Ron says that at the last regular Board meeting, he had brought up \$17 per hour as a starting rate, but the board had guided him to start Michael at the same rate that Brad Sheridan Jr had been making. Ron says he was instructed by Jeff to work with the town Treasurer to decide on a starting rate. Ron says he didn't start Michael at \$20 per hour because the pay scale topped out at \$19 per hour. Jeff points out that things have changed since the pay scale was implemented and feels it needs to be revisited, given the state of the labor environment, indicating the town may have to increase the rates to get the help. Ron points out that his son has a CDL and gets closer to \$30 per hour with a great benefit package. Diane says that we have to be fair in our hiring practices. Adam White says the pay rate is something we have to have a better handle on before we advertise for positions. Adam goes on to point out that the Recreation Department has a camp they run, and they've hired two people without coming to the Board. Adam says that even if someone's son is hired, if they are the best candidate, there shouldn't be a problem. Adam says we should look into this issue further, and figure out how we delegate responsibilities to boards. Eric Godin offers to reach out to VLCT to check the status of the town's personnel policy,

which the Board agrees to. Emily Clark says that we should worry about pay discrimination as well, pointing out that hiring a secretary with a lot of experience at a lower rate than a young man with less experience could be of concern. Emily says that she respects Diane's opinion regarding nepotism, but says that it isn't easy to find people to work within the town that aren't in some way connected to people currently involved in town business.

RFP Response: Diane Cota asks if there have been any responses to the audit RFP. Jeff Parizo says that he has not at this time. Adam White points out that July 2nd is the deadline, and Jeff says he thinks that may not be enough time.

Historical Society Request Concerning Old Town Garage: Adam White says the Board had received a request from the Historical Society for permission to go into the old Town Garage (AKA the Grange) to take pictures before the demolition was to begin. Ron Bushway says he received that email as well and would be willing to take them inside the building once the Board approved it.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

Town Signs/ARPA Funding/Municipal Grants: AnnaMarie Demars says she has measured the signs, and plans to reach out to some sign makers to get an idea of how much things will cost. Jeff brings up ARPA funding, which is the federal money the town could receive. Jeff says that he filled out the paperwork for these funds and submitted it. Jeff goes on to say that the Vermont congressional delegation is working to move money away from counties, and allocate it to towns, which could result in more federal money for the town. Jeff says the paperwork is done, and we are just waiting to hear back. Jeff says that any federal money would come in two installments, with half coming this year and the other half coming next year. Jeff then brings up the invitation to participate in VTRANS municipal road grants. The paperwork is due June 25th, 2021. Ron Bushway says this is a pre-existing grant that is now being administered under VTRANS. Jeff asks for a motion to approve. ***Adam White moves to approve and have Jeff sign the letter of intent to participate in the Municipal Roads Grants and Aid Program. Eric Godin seconds. No discussion. Jeff calls the vote, which passes unanimously.***

Personal Storage Policy: Jeff points out that there currently isn't a storage policy. Adam says that our current storage policy consists of one sentence, and says that it is too broad. AnnaMarie Demars asks if other towns have storage policies. Adam says he reached out to several towns and that none of them had a policy on file. AnnaMarie says she doesn't think there is really an issue with people storing things. Adam points out that the discussion was aimed at larger items like cars and boats. Eric Godin says he would be willing to craft a policy to bring to the Board at the next meeting. The Board concurs. Bill Stone says to consider the liability and where it is placed. Joe Longo asks if there was a time limit for a car parked on town property. AnnaMarie pointed out that some people park on town property to go biking. Eric says he feels it should be possible to take those issues into account while addressing the storage concerns.

Donation Policy: Adam White says that the donation policy is very broad, and reads from the policy (verbiage below). Adam says he feels the idea was for the policy to

apply to anything that would alter town property. AnnaMarie says she doesn't think people should have to come to the Board to donate money to the town. Joe Longo says that people should be able to donate money to projects approved by the Select Board. Eric Godin says he feels the easiest way to deal with this issue is to say people can donate money to the town as they wish, but if that money is going to be used for any projects or changes that would normally fall under the purview of the Select Board, Board approval would still be required before any work could be done. Bill Stone agrees and says the town should have a limit, that if exceeded, would have to come to the Board for approval to avoid any accusations of impropriety. Rachael Griggs says this issue came about because of the heated apron issue at the new Town Garage, and it went ahead anyways after money was donated, and points out that there will be extra costs incurred if the other change orders in that projects are approved. Adam White says that Eric will work on editing the wording of the donations policy. AnnaMarie asks if Adam found any other towns with a policy regarding storage of personal items. Adam says he has not. Joe Longo asks if these donations should be public. Jeff says that some people who donate don't want their names recognized.

Transfer Station Certification Update: Jeff Parizo says he sent out a letter to the board, indicating that the Grand Isle Transfer Station has come off of public comment, and is ready to move forward. Jeff asks Ron Bushway if he has gotten a copy of the document to the operators at the Transfer Station. Ron says he has not, but he will. Diane asks that since it was so hard to find the documentation when the recertification process started, if these documents would be saved in the vault. Jeff agrees. Diane tells Joe Longo that a copy needs to be in his binder at the Transfer Station as well. Ron says that he doesn't have the original document showing all the changes that were made. Jeff says that he will give copies of everything he has to Ron and to the Town Clerk to store in the vault. Jeff says that the Transfer Station is now certified and good for another ten years.

Webcam Purchase: Eric Godin says he has done research into the best ways to continue to broadcast the Board meetings on Zoom so the community can still participate from home. Eric says would like to purchase: three omnidirectional tabletop microphones at \$26.99 a piece, with a 3 year protection plan; A USB hub to allow for plugging in the cameras and microphones. 2 Webcams at \$18.39 each, one to point at the Board members and one to show community members who come in person to the meetings. Eric goes on to say that in addition to this, Zoom would have to be upgraded to Zoom Rooms to handle the multiple audio streams, and this would cost the town \$49.99 per month. Eric says that currently, we are running on the first subscription plan for Zoom, which costs the town \$149.90 per year, which works out to \$12.50 per month. Adam White asks if each municipal board with have it's own Zoom. Eric says he believes all boards are running off of the Grand Isle IT Zoom account as of right now. Eric then says that there could be one computer in the town office designated to run the Zoom meetings and all boards could use it as needed. Diane Cota asks if the town IT officer has been setting up the Zoom meetings. Eric answers that he has been doing the setup for the last several meetings. AnnaMarie Demars says she likes the idea of having a large display so board members can see the people attending via Zoom. Eric says that a

display would be part of a further discussion, as what he has priced out is just a base level package of items to get functionality for broadcasting meetings on Zoom. Eric says that Zoom Rooms does offer a 30-day free trial, so we could test out how well this works before putting any more taxpayer money towards equipment. Diane Cota asks if there are enough people that can't attend in person meetings to justify the expenditure. Adam White points out that part of the open meeting law states there must be a way for people to call into the meetings, and the town has had difficulty with that in the past. Adam says that broadcasting over Zoom would actually make the town more compliant with Vermont's Open Meeting Law. Diane asks if the town has money to pay for this. Eric points out that there is the 30-day free trial of Zoom Rooms, so the town would not have to start paying before the program was tested out. He goes on to say that the total amount of the equipment he is proposing to buy is less than \$200, and says the Town Treasurer confirmed there was grant money available to pay for the equipment. Bill Stone asks if speakers will be needed. Eric says there were several sets of unused computer speakers in the listers office that could be used for that purpose. Bianca Adams asks if money from the American Rescue Plan could be used to help fund this effort. Jeff agrees and explains that there is still grant money available from a previous grant. Adam White says he thinks it is a good idea to purchase the equipment. ***Jeff Parizo moves to authorize Eric to spend \$250 to purchase webcams and upgrade to Zoom Rooms. AnnaMarie Demars seconds.*** Rachael Griggs asks if this would be usable by other boards. Eric says they will. ***Jeff calls the vote which passes unanimously.***

VIII. REVIEW AND SIGN WARRANTS

Adam White moves to have Jeff Parizo sign the warrants presented at the meeting. Eric Godin seconds. No discussion. Jeff calls the vote, which passes unanimously.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

AnnaMarie Demars moves to adjourn the meeting at 7:32pm. Diane Cota seconds. Mitchel Richardson asks if the board has received updated reports. Jeff says that we have gotten the reports the board had requested, but nothing after that. ***Jeff calls the vote, which passes unanimously.***

Select Board Scribe: _____
Eric P Godin

Select Board Chair: _____
Jeff Parizo