

Grand Isle Select Board

Minutes of the Meeting

Monday, August 16th, 2021 at 6:00pm at Grand Isle Town Office and via Zoom

I. CALL TO ORDER

Select Board Members Present: Jeff Parizo – Chair; AnnaMarie Demars – Vice-Chair; Ron Bushway; Eric Godin

Community Members Present: Jean Prouty; Rachael Griggs; Sue Lawrence; Lucille Campbell; Mary Parizo; Mitchel Richardson; Court Perry; Joe Longo; Linda Effel; Randy Gover; Tonya Poutry; Denise Abbott-Douglas; Mike Donoghue; Josie Leavitt; Elise Whitmore; Melissa Boutin; Emily Clark; Ray Mitchell; Sue Moquin; Kristina Botala

Select Board to Amend Agenda for Matters Not Listed:

Letter from Ray Mitchell for Grand Isle Rescue – New Business – Jeff

Letter from Cheryl Titus – New Business – Jeff

Grand Isle Listers: Error and Omission for Sorrell – New Business

II. GUEST OPEN COMMENT

Jean Prouty asks about the edits to the August 2nd meeting she had requested. Eric Godin says that the final copy of the minutes will be added to the website after they are approved during this meeting. Jean then asks if the IT person reports to the Select Board. Jeff Parizo says that he does. Jean asks why the Board was not informed by the IT person about the removal of Diane’s name from the website, saying that there should have been something in writing given to the board. Jean then asks if the IT person is bonded or insured. Eric Godin says he isn’t sure if that position requires a bond or insurance, but he will look into the issue. Jean then asks if the IT position is salaried or hourly wage. Eric says that he believes that Charles Hollan is an hourly employee with the town. The town Treasurer confirms that Charles is an hourly employee being paid \$25 per hour. Jean says she feels that since the Listers are bonded, and the cleaning company has to have insurance, that the IT person should have insurance as well. Sue Lawrence asks if it makes a difference if you handle money, and says that the Listers are not bonded, as they do not handle money. Joe Longo says that he handles money at the transfer station, and asks if he should be bonded as well.

III. REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES OF JULY 19TH AND AUGUST 2ND

AnnaMarie Demars moves to accept the July 19th minutes with additions. Eric Godin seconds. Jeff calls the vote, which passes unanimously with Ron Bushway abstaining. Jeff Parizo moves to approve the August 2nd, 2021 minutes as written. AnnaMarie Demars seconds. No discussion. Jeff calls the vote, which passes unanimously with Ron Bushway abstaining.

IV. HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT UPDATE/ BUILDINGS/FACILITIES MANAGER

Ron Bushway says that the concrete slabs have been poured at both the new garage for

the fuel tank and at the transfer station for the new dumpster, stating that there were some issues with the cement at the transfer station as the driver was in a hurry and when he poured the concrete, it blew out one of the forms. Ron says that Randy and Michael Gover were able to get everything put back together. Ron says that the concrete at the new Garage had to be re-done because a rabbit ran across the wet cement. Ron says that the new container at the transfer station has been modified to cut the doors bigger, and says that it should be operational this week. Ron says he talked to Tyler Billingsly about the need for foundation coating at the salt shed, and Tyler recommended the town do it, because the salt will make its way through the concrete and start eating the rebar inside. Ron says that the coating has already been applied. Eric Godin asks if we know what the cost on the coating was. Ron says he does not know. Ron says that the guardrails at the Annex are on hold, as everyone is so busy there is no time to do them. This means that the VTRANS permit is on hold, as that is the last requirement. Ron says that DC Energy has started installing the lights at the new Garage, noting that a lift had to be rented, but the work should be done by noon on the 17th. Ron notes that work has continued on tearing down the old fire station. Free metal day got 2 full dumpsters of metal, noting that it was very busy, but that the rain may have kept some people away.

Generator Quotes: Ron says that he was unable to get any quotes for generators at this time. Item is tables and moved to the first meeting in September.

Denise Abbott-Douglas asks how the hiring is coming. Ron says that nobody has been interviewed yet, but the ads are still out there.

V. NEW BUSINESS

NSWD Rep: Adam White was not in attendance. Jeff Parizo says that Adam did send the proposed ad for the position to be posted. Jeff notes that the deadline for letters of interest for the position must be received at the town office no later than 4pm on Monday, September 20th, and will be opened at the Select Board Meeting that night. Denise Abbott-Douglas asks who is going to do the job if there are no applicants. There is no answer.

Set Tax Rate: Town Treasurer Melissa Boutin says that she recommends the tax rate be 0.2939, which is lower than last year, which was 0.3026, a difference of 0.0087 less. Melissa says education is going up 0.0504 and non-residential will go up 0.0424. **Ron Bushway moves to accept the tax rate at 0.2939. Eric Godin seconds.** Emily Clark says there was a re-assessment in 2008 and thinking that the rates at the time were quite high compared to other towns. Emily asks if the rates now are comparable to the rates after the re-assessment, and how they compare to other towns. Jeff references the town report and says that the tax rate in 2008 was 0.5387 prior to the re-appraisal and the combined was 2.7. Denise Abbott-Douglas asks if the non-residential rate is higher than the residential rate. Melissa answers that the non-residential rate is 1.6896 for education, and the residential is 1.6717. **Jeff calls the vote, which passes unanimously.**

Yearly Audit – Tabled

Letter from Ray Mitchell, President of Grand Isle Rescue: Jeff reads the letter, which in summary says that Grand Isle Rescue has not been able to secure enough volunteer

staff to meet the needs of the service. Ray's email says that this year, Grand Isle rescue had tried to increase recruitment by adding a stipend that could be covered using Rescue's current and expected income, but this has not solved the problem. The next proposed solution is to hire part time employees to supplement the volunteers. This may double the annual operating costs of providing service to Grand Isle and North Hero. Recent years funding has been around \$33,500 combined between Grand Isle and North Hero. As a consequence, Grand Isle Rescue will be asking the taxpayers to approve funds totally \$118,000 combined between the two towns, an increase of \$76,000 from last year. Ray asks for a joint meeting of the Grand Isle and North Hero Select Boards at Grand Isle Rescue to address the issue and find a path forward. The meeting is to be scheduled in the second half of September, 2021. The email states that were Grand Isle Rescue to close, contracting with a nearby company for services could cost \$250,000 annually. Ray Mitchell, in attendance, says that Grand Isle Rescue does have the funds to last them for a year, but they are asking for money now to get ahead of the problem. Ray says that he will schedule a meeting and let the Board know a proposed date. Joe Longo asks Ray to thank the people volunteering currently. Mitchel Richardson asks about a specific individual. Ray says that he doesn't want to discuss personnel issues in a public forum. Denise Abbott-Douglas thanks Grand Isle Rescue for all the service they provide.

Cheryl Titus Letter: Jeff Parizo reads a letter from former Town Clerk Cheryl Titus, dated August 11th 2021. It reads as follows:

To the Select Board-

I would like to clarify the incorrect statements made by Rachael Griggs in an attempt to downplay and deflect 150 peoples request for a forensic audit to be done for the town of Grand Isle. Financial reports were distributed during my 12 years of service to the town of Grand Isle. The process was my assistant would print a report for revenues and expenses, and put the report in the Select Board's mailbox for review. Paul Russo and Rod Cameron would able to attest to that fact. Towards the end of my service to the town, it was becoming clear that we weren't giving the Select Board the financials, as we had in the past because the reconciliations were not being done in a timely manner, and enabling the reports to be accurate. David Angelano, the auditor who was well versed in municipalities and legalities involved made a note that was given to the Select Board that we DO need the reconciliations in a timely manner and give the financial reports to the Select Board for review. I copied this page of notes and handed it to the Select Board in March of 2017. There were several other issues that came up in 2014, which made me realize I did not feel comfortable with the way things were going. This is honestly why I decided not to run for Town Clerk and Town Treasurer again. For instance, a year end closing should happen by the end of August. It wasn't done until late September, which resulted in glitch in the computer doubling up two years of information in the Highway Department financials. The system was designed to have one year closed before going on to the next. Ron Bushway noticed the highway numbers being way off while my assistant was on vacation. He also came to me at the same time with an error of \$10,000 in a 1099 for himself. I tried to get into the system to figure out what going on, but couldn't get in the system because the password had changed. This was probably a

miscommunication. We are supposed to change passwords regularly. Ron was very concerned when the numbers were off with the highway and the 1099. So, he and I went to the auditor. I wanted to make Ron feel more at ease, and protect my assistant because these were red flags. Ultimately, we were responsible for making sure the financials for the town were okay. We both felt better after talking it through with the auditor. We surmised there had been a glitch and we made some checks and balances so the 1099 type error wouldn't happen again. As far as the CD statement Rachael made, I'm not sure what was happening, since I left in March 2015. I am attaching a page from the audit from the year ending June 30th, 2014, which shows any CD's we opened during my service were transferred as per articles approved by the voters from the general fund anytime we paid off a loan. When I started in 2003 we had a \$250,000 debt, and every time we paid off a loan we would go to the voters and ask to set up a reserve (for instance: the salt shed) with an annual contribution of what the loan payment had been. This was a great strategy I was proud of. I think I should mention that there was an annuity for the cemetery in the amount of \$30,000 which was very lucrative. It had a high interest rate of return. The auditor flagged it as not what the town should have been doing. He was concerned that my heirs would be able to cash out if I had died. We spoke to Key Bank and found that the town of Grand Isle was the beneficiary. I presented the documents from Key Bank to the Select Board proving I was not the beneficiary of the annuity in March of 2017, when I was falsely accused of wrongdoing by a town resident and the town treasurer. I was grateful the auditor alerted us that the town needs an auditor who understands the laws and statutes for municipalities. Any auditor the town contracts should have this knowledge, in my opinion. Regards, Cheryl Titus.

Joe Longo asks if there is any truth to the letter. Jeff says it's two peoples opinions. Sue Lawrence says she can speak to the \$30,000 annuity for the cemetery, saying that the money was moved into the annuity by Cheryl on advice from Key Bank and that it had Cheryl's social security number on it, with the town being the beneficiary. Susan says that the money belonged to the cemetery, not the town or Cheryl Titus. Susan goes on to say that it took a lot of work to get the CD issue rectified, including writing a resolution at a warned meaning saying that the money did belong to the Cemetery Commission, and that it did not belong to Cheryl Titus or the town of Grand Isle.

Mitchel Richardson addresses Joe Longo's question as the truth of the statements made by Cheryl Titus and says a lot of the information was backed up in meeting minutes going back to 2012. Joe Longo agrees with Susan Lawrence about the cemetery annuity.

Listers – Error and Omissions for Sorrell: Sue Lawrence says what had happened is that the Sorrells had refurbished an old house and the listers failed to take off the depreciation, as the house was uninhabitable early in the year. The report is to correct the file. Jeff Parizo asks what the address is. Sue answers that it is 13 Passage View Lane. The change would be to \$431,800 from \$543,200, a difference of \$111,400. **Jeff Parizo moves to approve the errors and omissions certificate from the Grand Isle Listers. It's Vermont form PRV4261E. The change is \$111,400. AnnaMarie Demars seconds. No discussion. Jeff calls the vote, which passes unanimously.**

VI. OLD BUSINESS

Donation and Storage Policy: Tabled until next regular meeting.

Open House Garage – Reminder: Open house is Sunday, August 22nd, 2021, from 1 - 3pm.

Town Signs Update: Jeff Parizo notes that there is an ad for the town sign project on the website, and that we will add this to the September 6th Agenda.

Garage Bond Update: Melissa says that the town needs to extend the note with Peoples for another six months at a rate of 1.5%, and then that will get the town into the winter pool with Vermont Municipal Bond bank, and we need to fill out that application in December. ***Jeff Parizo moves to approve the 1.5% for 6 months to move the bond, so it can be taken care of in the winter pool, and asking the town Treasurer to move forward with the process. Eric Godin seconds. No further discussion. Jeff calls the vote, which passes unanimously.***

ARPA Funding Update: Town treasurer Melissa Boutin says that \$111,806.52 has been deposited in the town accounts from the American Rescue Act. Jeff Parizo says we will get the same amount next year, but this is not including the county funds. Melissa says that this money should be segregated out of the regular operating accounts. Melissa says that with Peoples the interest rates on a regular checking account would be 0.05%, a money market account would be 0.10%, and a savings account would be 0.01%. Eric Godin asks if there are stipulations on how the money is used or stored. Melissa says there are no restrictions on how the money is stored, but there are on how it's used. Jeff agrees with Melissa, and asks how easy it would be to close a separate account. Melissa says that there would be fines or penalties if the money for early withdrawal from a CD, and that a money market account is limited to six transactions per month. A checking account there would be no restrictions or penalties. Eric asks Melissa which option she recommends. Melissa says the money market account is the best option because none of it will be spent initially and the transaction limit won't pose a problem. ***Jeff Parizo moves to approve allowing the town treasurer to move the \$111,806.52 of the ARPA money to a money market account from Peoples United Bank. AnnaMarie Demars seconds. No discussion. Jeff calls the vote, which passes unanimously.*** Josie Leavitt asks if there had been any discussions about how the money would be spent and if there will be any community involvement. Eric Godin says that the Select Board had received a list of projects from two of the water boards, but this was a discussion that would be taken up in the future to give time to find out what projects people wanted to see that money used for. Eric points out that there are limits on what the ARA funds could be spent on. Jeff says that the Planning Commission is working on the issue as well.

Courthouse Issue (off topic): Denise Abbott-Douglas asks about the ongoing issue with the Grand Isle County Courthouse being closed three days a week. Eric Godin says that this issue is to be broached at the August 30th special meeting, and that he is reaching out to States Attorney Doug DiSabito to request his attendance. Jeff Parizo says we need to invite the two Representative Morgans and Senator Mazza. Denise asks about the financial aspect of the issue. Eric says that Selectman Adam White was looking into the issue and speaking to the Sheriff's department about the lack of staffing and making

sure Grand Isle Residents were still receiving the services they had paid for. Jeff says he will contact Doug and ask if the states attorney can coordinate a meeting for the Select Boards of the five towns at the Sheriff's options.

Library Questions: AnnaMarie Demars says that she attended the last Library Trustees meeting and suggested the possibility of the library moving into the Annex temporarily if the town could not find a day care center to occupy the building. AnnaMarie notes that it is a larger space for a few years until a new building can be built. AnnaMarie says that an engineer should check the building. Jeff Parizo concurs. Jeff asks if we are at this point in the discussion yet, and says that a time frame should be set to make this decision by. AnnaMarie asks about what would happen if the library occupied the Annex, and then a daycare was found to move in. Emily Clark says that once the library has been moved in, the decision is made and no move would be necessary. Jeff says that there would be an MOU between the town and Library that laid out what each entity was responsible for and set for a defined period of time. Jeff says the Planning Commission will discuss it at their next meeting Wednesday, August 17th. Colleen Bushway and Eric Godin discuss setting up a Zoom microphone and camera for their Library meetings, saying there have been issues with people attending via Zoom not being able to hear. Jeff says at the next meeting, there will be a discussion about buying a monitor and an extension cord for use with Zoom. There is more general discussion about the use of Zoom and having a dedicated laptop in the Town Office to broadcast meetings that take place. Jean Prouty asks if the Planning Commission has to set a timeline, and if they intend to sell. Jeff says that sale is not being considered, and that the PC is actively looking to see if they can find a daycare to move in. Emily asks Colleen if the library trustees were excited about the prospect of moving into the Annex. AnnaMarie says she thinks the biggest concern of the trustees was that if they moved into the Annex, they would never move out. Library trustee Colleen Bushway agrees and says if there was a guarantee that a new library would be built, the trustees would be on board with the plan. Colleen says that the other big concern is safety, as there are multiple rooms that the librarian would have to keep track of. Colleen says shelving would have to be obtained or built, as the space is larger. Jeff says that the Board cannot make any guarantees, as this issue would have to be bonded and approved by the voters. Emily Clark mentions that South Burlington just separated their public library and school library because of concerns of stranger danger. Josie Leavitt asks via chat if there are any fundraising plans as of yet. Colleen says that there has been a mailing to all property owners in Grand Isle requesting donations, and that people don't want to donate without a timeline in place. Colleen also mentions the Friends of the Library will also engage in fundraising for the project. AnnaMarie points out that the proposed building is multi-use and may draw donors beyond just people interested in the Library.

VII. REVIEW AND SIGN WARRANTS

Eric Godin moves to have Select Board Chair Jeff Parizo sign the warrants for this week. Ron Bushway seconds. No relevant discussion. Jeff calls the vote, which passes

unanimously.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

AnnaMarie Demars moves to adjourn the meeting at 7:28pm. Ron Bushway seconds. No discussion. Jeff calls the vote, which passes unanimously.

Select Board Scribe: _____
Eric Godin

Select Board Chair: _____
Jeff Parizo