

**Grand Isle Select Board**  
**Minutes of the Meeting for**

**Monday, November 1<sup>st</sup>, 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; Adam White; Ron Bushway; Eric Godin

**Community Members Present:** Susan Lawrence; Mike Stroz; Nancy Stroz; Melissa Boutin; Denise Abbott-Douglas; Lucille Campbell; Joe Longo; Jennifer Morway; Glenda Leake; David Leake; Jean Prouty; John Lafayette; Colleen Bushway; Mitchel Richardson; Emily Clark; Tonya Poutry; Bill Hall; Mike Donoghue; Kristina Botala; Michael Gordon; Amy Thompson

**Board Members to Amend Agenda for Matters Not Listed:**

Adam – National Opioid Settlements – Old Business

AnnaMarie – Update on Speed Limit – Old Business

Jeff – Mike and Nancy Stroz – New Business

Jeff – 2023 COLA raises – New Business

Jeff – Tree Law Seminar – New Business

Jeff – 11/8 Meeting with Rescue and Fire Department – New Business

**II. GUEST OPEN COMMENT**

**Mike and Nancy Stroz:** Mike Stroz says that he had heard about the discussion during the last meeting concerning the town beach, and as an abutting property owner, he wanted to update the Board on what he sees at the beach. Mike says that people are using the beach, including the section that is marked as private property. Mike says that there is still a lot of trash being left on the beach, and that signs that have been made to show where the town beach ends have been destroyed or stolen. Mike asks if there is anything further the town can do to make sure people are taking care of the property and cleaning up after themselves. Mike goes on to say that he has had his property surveyed, but his land markers were removed. Nancy Stroz asks if the town can put up more permanent signage at the beach. Adam White asks if the highway department could put signs in concrete blocks at the beach. Ron Bushway says that the highway department has problems with their signs being taken as well. Jeff Parizo suggests using steel and welding a sign to a post to prevent theft. Ron says that he will look into possibilities for more robust signage. Jeff asks Mr. and Mrs. Stroz if they would be willing to have a discussion with highway commissioner Ron Bushway about marking the town beach. The Stroz's agree.

**III. REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES FROM OCTOBER 4<sup>TH</sup> AND 18<sup>TH</sup> MEETINGS**

***Adam White moves to approve the October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021 Select Board Minutes. Ron Bushway seconds. No further discussion. Jeff calls the vote, which passes unanimously.***

It is decided to table the minutes from the October 18<sup>th</sup> meeting, as some people hadn't received them.

#### IV. **HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT / BUILDINGS FACILITIES UPDATE**

Ron Bushway says that the Highway Department has finished helping South Hero with all the dressing on their side roads. Ron says that South Hero then came up to Grand Isle and helped our Highway Department stone line roads, which was paid for by a grant from Vermont Local Roads. Ron says that the historical society has been completely winterized.

**Mike Gover Start Date:** Ron says that there is a question about Mike Gover's start date. Ron says that the Board recommended that Mike be hired sometime in September. Ron asks that, since Mike was initially hired in June, if that date could be used as his start date in relation to his insurance start date and his probationary period. Ron says he doesn't have a problem with it, but he wanted to get the opinion of the Board. Jeff Parizo says he feels that the town technically hired Mike in June initially, and then brought him on full time later on, giving him a significant raise. Joe Longo asks if the Select Board is ready to make a new precedent on probationary periods, saying that he thinks the Board is waiving a probationary period. Adam White says that the position he was hired for initially was separate from the full time position he now occupies. Adam asks if Mike would retroactively be paid his full-time rate. Ron answers in the negative. Adam says he doesn't think it would have a big impact, and asks how Brad Sheridan feels about it. Ron says that Brad feels that Mike was hired for a part time position initially, which is different than the full-time position. Eric Godin asks the Town Clerk if there are any logistical issues with modifying the hire date. Melissa answers that she feels the Board is setting policies and then modifying them depending on who is in the position, and warns that the Board has to be careful. Eric agrees with Melissa and says that the town's pay scale will have to be re-addressed soon anyways. Joe Longo says that if the Board is going to waive one probationary period, they should do the same for another town employee who was recently hired. AnnaMarie DeMars says she doesn't feel that the Board would be removing the probationary period. Eric says that making this decision would go contrary to a previously made decision. Adam says that Mike was initially hired as a part time laborer, and now is a CDL licensed laborer, and says there is enough difference to consider them two different positions. Eric says that his opinion the Board should not change the start date. Eric says he feels that this would set poor precedent, and that the Board should be following policies the same in all situations. Jeff says that Mike was hired with the intention for him to get his CDL license, and that the town would likely hire him on full time. Melissa points out that knowing who would be placed in a position prior to the position being posted would be a violation of policy. Adam concurs. Eric says that the town was initially in a rough spot, and Mike Gover stepped up when there wasn't anyone else to do the work, and that was greatly appreciated, but he didn't feel the Board could waive the probationary period despite this, as it could be considered a quid pro quo. Jeff says that he is very thankful that Mike stepped up, given the unique employment challenges the town has been facing. Adam points out that neither of the part time positions had been advertised and were

given to children of town employees. Eric points out that the town was in an emergency situation, with road work that needed to get done and nobody to do it. Eric says that even given that information, officially, the Board should stand with Mike's hire date remaining as is, and says he feels the Board needs to take care when dealing with personnel hiring issues. Eric says that changing policy situationally weakens the policy. It is determined that as it stands, Mike's probationary period would be up around December 20<sup>th</sup>. The Board decides to leave the hire date at September 20<sup>th</sup>, to stay compliant with policy.

**V. NEW BUSINESS**

**Correct Due to/Due From account:** Jeff Parizo says that it was brought up during the NEMRC training that there a few small items that should be corrected. Adam White asks what the reason was for the \$121 from the fire station. Melissa Boutin says that when the fundraising for the fire station was going on, there was advertising in the Islander that got paid out of the general fund and charged to the project, instead of being paid for out of the checking account for that project. Melissa says that the salt shed overspent by \$2700 from the special reserve fund. Melissa says to clear them up, the Board should move the funds from the general fund, or the highway fund for the salt shed. ***Jeff Parizo moves to transfer from the general fund \$121.12 to zero out the due to/from on the summary report. AnnaMarie Demars seconds. No discussion. Jeff calls the vote, which passes unanimously. Jeff Parizo then moves to take \$2,700.18 from the Highway Department fund for the balance of the salt shed that was left. Eric Godin seconds. Jeff calls the vote, which passes unanimously.***

**2023 COLA Raise:** Jeff Parizo says that he wanted to remind all departments about the COLA raise for budget season. Jeff says that the Sheriff is asking for a 2% raise, while he thinks social security did a 5.9% raise. Jeff says that at the next meeting, there might be some budgets to look at, so the COLA rate for the town needs to be set.

**Tree Law Seminar:** Jeff Parizo says that he wanted to let everyone know that there would be a tree law seminar held by VLCT on November 4<sup>th</sup>, from 10-11am. Jeff says that he will be attending.

**Recreation Committee – FPF and Facebook posts:** Jeff Parizo says that he had asked for this issue to be discussed because he had seen some social media posts from the town recreation department on Front Porch Forum and Facebook. Amy Thompson, chair of the recreation committee says that former Recreation Committee Board member David Graham had asked for some brush to be removed along the front of Donaldson Park. Amy says that the brush was cleared, except for five piles that she was told were going to be burned or chipped. Amy says that the piles were still there in December for the Light up the Park event. Amy says that the piles were there through all of 2020. Amy says that she spoke with Brad Sheridan about the work at the park, and Brad suggested Island Tree Service. Amy says that Island Tree Service agreed to take care of the brush, but the piles remained throughout the season. There is discussion about the agreement

between Island Tree Service and the recreation department. Ron Bushway points out that David Graham had been allowing residents to dump brush in the Donaldson Park, and that practice continued after David had left, contributing to the growth of the brush piles. Ron says that he went over to the park and put a stop to the practice, as he didn't feel people should be bringing outside brush and dumping it on town property. Jeff asks if Island Tree Service made the piles. It is determined that they did not. Adam asks if the Highway Department had clear cut some of the brush on Donaldson. Rob Nolan from Island Tree Service says all that had been chipped. Denise Abbott-Douglas says that residents brought a lot of brush into the park, causing those piles to grow. Adam White asks Rob what he was contracted to do for the recreation department. Rob says that he was to clear behind the tennis court, behind the softball field, and to clear the brush piles. Rob says that he had quoted a price for the brush piles, and when he came back, the piles had grown immensely. Ron says that he had no idea about the recreation departments budget was, and he sent in the first invoice prior to the brush piles being cleared, and was already over budget. Rob says that he can't work for free, but he offered to take care of the piles if he could burn them at the park at no charge. Rob says that he moved the piles and burned them. Ron Bushway says that Rob had called for a fire permit the previous Thursday. Rob says that the brush piles were moved away from any trees to prevent any damage. Rob says he is frustrated and feels like his business is getting blasted on social media due to the posts from the recreation committee account. Rob says that he feels that all he did was be honest about everything for the get go, and that he doesn't think he deserves the negative attention. Denise Abbott-Douglas says that she can attest to how hard Island Tree Service worked at the park. Ron Bushway says he thinks there must be a lack of communication. Ron says that once a town department runs out of money in the budget, work has to stop. Amy says that she had mentioned the \$10,000 budget. Rob says he must not have heard that, as he would not have gone over that amount if he had known. Jeff says that his problem with this issue is the social media posts. Jeff asks why nobody came to the Select Board to say there was a problem before posting negative comments about a local business on social media, noting that the Facebook post says 'Grand Isle Vermont Recreation Committee'. Jeff says that this represents the town, and nobody contacted the Select Board prior to the posts being made. Jeff says that had the Board known, it is possible that monies could be allocated to take care of any urgent issues beyond the initial amount. Ron says that the Highway Department had talked to Emily Rich with Rec about moving the brush piles using the town equipment. Ron said he was unaware of the urgency to take care of them for Trunk or Treat. Rob says that he is upset and doesn't deserve the negative press. Ron Bushway says that he had spoken with Rob prior to tonight's meeting and heard that Rob was considering consulting a lawyer. Ron suggesting Rob attend the meeting tonight, and suggested that Recreation could put out a public statement saying that Rob had done the work he was paid for. Ron goes on to say that he doesn't feel Rob's name or his business name should have been out there. Amy agrees with Ron. Amy agrees to meet with Emily and issue a public statement and to make sure the situation is handled to satisfaction. Eric Godin says as a rule of thumb, no town linked social media account should engage in disparagement of business.

Adam asks who is responsible for signing contracts for committees within the town. Eric suggests the chairs of the various committees would hold that power. AnnaMarie DeMars said she thought the town's policy was any expenditures over a certain amount had to be approved by the Select Board. Joe Longo says he feels it is important for the minutes of the meetings to be posted online to keep people updated. Mitchel Richardson says that he thinks that set amounts need to be approved by the Select Board. There is discussion regarding town boards spending large amounts of money. It is agreed to discuss this issue at the next meeting. Colleen Bushway asks if the Recreation Committee has to take minutes and publish them online. Adam White says that Rec does post their agendas and minutes on the town website.

**11/8 Meeting with Rescue and Fire:** Jeff Parizo says that a Blake Lahue, a training officer from the Vermont Air Guard reached out to him, and he had some ideas for rescue and fire to recruit and retain some volunteers. Jeff says he reached out to Ray Mitchell with Rescue and Todd Boutin with the Fire Department. Jeff asks about the possibility of a special Select Board meeting to get them together. Eric Godin asks if that requires a special meeting, rather than just having the Fire Department and Rescue meet with the gentleman. AnnaMarie Demars says she things keeping recruits is a town wide issue and it would be good to have a discussion. Ron Bushway asks if this meeting will address any of the questions brought up at the recent meeting held at Grand Isle Rescue. There is discussion about whether or not the Select Board needed to be involved in a meeting between Fire, Rescue, and Mr. Lahue. Adam White says that Grand Isle Volunteer Fire Department and Grand Isle Rescue are independent organizations, and it should be between those organizations and Mr. Lahue. David Leake from Grand Isle Rescue says that he feels that the Select Board does not need to be involved in scheduling a meeting between the organization and Mr. Lahue. The Board comes to the decision to leave the organization of any meetings to the departments involved.

## **VI. OLD BUSINESS**

**6 Sloop Road Update:** Michael Gordon, the property owner at 6 Sloop Road says that the Islander said that at the November 1<sup>st</sup> meeting, the zoning officer was to give an update on the issue. Eric Godin points out that Zoning Administrator Scott Brown is not present at the meeting. Mr. Gordon says it is not true that an agreement was signed between himself in the town, as reported in the Islander. Mr. Gordon goes on to say that nowhere in the notice of the violation is a fine mentioned, as also mentioned in the Islander. Mr. Gordon says that he feels that the problems with his property were rectified within seven days, as stipulated in the notice of violation, and is upset the Board voted to have Scott Brown work with the town attorney to escalate this issue to the state level. Jeff Parizo says that the Board doesn't control what is printed in the Islander, and that he should take issues with reporting up with them. Adam White asks Mr. Gordon to confirm that he feels the issues on his property have been rectified, which Mr. Gordon does. Adam says that the settlement agreement was supposed to be effective September 1<sup>st</sup>, and asks what the hold up was. Mr. Gordon says that his

attorney had some issues with how the agreement was written, and time was needed to negotiate the issues. Bill Hall identifies himself as a neighbor of 6 Sloop Road, and he says that the tenant is still using his over loud leaf blower, causing disturbances and still operating as a junkyard. Bill goes on to say that the issues have just gotten worse at the property. Mike Donoghue says that the Islander did not report that Scott Brown was going to have an update at tonight's meeting, and that there was a lot of misrepresentation in Mr. Gordon's statement. Mr. Gordon says that we will have to see if the Zoning Officer feels the property is in compliance. Ron Bushway asks when the 7 day period to make the property compliant began. Mr. Gordon answers that the notice of violation was dated September 27<sup>th</sup>. Ron points out that it is now November 1<sup>st</sup>, and this is likely why the issue was escalated to the town attorney. Adam White asks Mr. Gordon if he has any documentation from the ZAO showing he was compliant within the 7 day period starting September 27<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Gordon does not. AnnaMarie DeMars points out that this issue has been ongoing since April of this year. Mr. Gordon says that a lot of work has been done on the property. Jeff says that he feels the next step should be for Mr. Gordon to get in touch with the Zoning Administrator to set up a meeting and talk about the issue.

**Water Bills for Old Garage and Fire Station:** Ron Bushway says that he called Warren Steadman and was told that the Debt Retirement Fees will be discontinued moving forward. Denise Abbott-Douglas asks if that will be applied retroactively. Melissa says that it will be applied in the current billing cycle. Ron Bushway says that the town wasn't going to push for it to be retroactive as the continued billing was not the fault of the water district.

**Ballot Items Process:** Adam White says that this item was put on the agenda to decide the process for organizations to request funding via ballot item this year, given the changes in the process that were made due to COVID in the last election cycle. Jeff Parizo asks if there will be in person voting this year, or if the town will be sending out mail in ballots to each resident. Town Clerk Melissa Boutin says that in person voting will proceed as usual, and that no guidance has been given from VLCT or the secretary of state. It is determined that organizations wishing to request funds via ballot have to get petitions signed to get on the ballot, as was done prior to 2020. Colleen Bushway says she hopes that the Board will tell organizations to clearly spell out who they are on the ballot, so people know what they are voting for.

**Update – Round Barn:** Ron Bushway says that apartment 13A has had all the interior work done. Ron says that there are still other areas in the building that have mold and need work. Ron says that apartment 18 was a mess. Ron said that the resident is working on moving to an assisted living facility. Ron goes on to say that he spoke to a HUD official last week, and they are upset that Ron keeps going back and writing up work that hasn't been done. Ron says that due to the violations, HUD will be contacting Vermont Housing Authority and there 'will be some unhappy people'.

**Update – BCA Hearing on Redistricting:** Jeff Parizo says he wants to clarify that the BCA hearing had been called because the Vermont Legislature is planning to split the town of Grand Isle into two legislative districts. The Grand Isle Select Board has nothing to do with this decision. Jeff says that he has heard some people saying that the Select Board is taking this action, and that is not true. Jeff goes on to say that the person to contact about this issue would be [Tom.Little@partner.vermont.gov](mailto:Tom.Little@partner.vermont.gov) with the Legislative Apportionment Board. Jeff points out that this issue still needs to be decided by the state legislature, so there is still plenty of time for there to be public comment on the issue. The website for the Vermont Legislative Apportionment Board contains the contact information for every member of the Board. The website is: <https://sos.vermont.gov/apportionment-board/> Emily Clark asks if there has been any communication with the other towns in Grand Isle County about the possible division. Jeff says that he thinks the chair of the BCA, Mike Inners was going to reach out to the other BCA's and bring what information he got back to the upcoming BCA meeting on November 9<sup>th</sup> at 6:00pm. Denise Abbott-Douglas mentioned that at the BCA meeting it was said that the chances of this happening were quite small.

**National Opioid Settlement:** Adam White says that he has registered the town to get funding from the national opioid settlement, and he will update the town when information comes back.

**Speed Limit Discussion:** AnnaMarie DeMars says she got in contact with Bethany at Northwest Regional Planning, and they will do the traffic survey for the town at no cost, so long as the town has a speed limit ordinance in place, which Grand Isle does. AnnaMarie says the ordinance would have to be amended once the survey is complete. AnnaMarie asks if Ron and Brad could go around and survey where all the stop signs and yield signs are. Joe Longo asks which roads will be affected. AnnaMarie says that the roads with proposed speed limit changes will be surveyed. Lucille Campbell asks if West Shore Rd could be added to the list, which AnnaMarie does. It is pointed out that any town road that has a speed limit above 35 miles per hour were going to be targeted to lower to 35 miles per hour. Adam White brings up the expense of replacing speed limit signs and the time involved in replacing them. Sue Lawrence asks if the Select Board will put an ordinance on the state roads to collect part of the traffic fines for tickets issued on those roads for the town of Grand Isle. Sue says that Sheriff Ray Allen would know about this issue. The Board thanks Susan for bringing that issue up and AnnaMarie Demars says she will talk to Sheriff Allen about it. Glenda Leake says that people ignore the current speed limit signs, and wonders if the new signs will do anything to deter speeding. Adam White says that he thinks that people knowing that every road off of route 2 is 35 miles per hour will help keep things in check.

## **VII. REVIEW AND APPROVE WARRANTS**

***Ron Bushway moves to have the Select Board Chair sign the warrants. Eric Godin seconds. No discussion. Jeff calls the vote, which passes unanimously.***

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

*AnnaMarie DeMars moves to adjourn the meeting at 7:55pm. Adam White seconds. No discussion. Jeff calls the vote, which passes unanimously.*

Select Board Scribe: \_\_\_\_\_  
Eric Godin

Select Board Chair: \_\_\_\_\_  
Jeff Parizo