

**Grand Isle Select Board**  
**Grand Isle Town Office 9 Hyde Rd, Grand Isle VT**  
**Minutes of the Meeting for Wednesday May 31, 2023**

**CALL TO ORDER:** Selectboard Chair, Couper Shaw, calls the meeting to order at 6:00pm

**Board Members Present:** Josie Leavitt, Jeff Parizo, Couper Shaw, Ellen Howrigan

**Community Members Present:** Jean Prouty, Rachael Griggs, Jen Morway, Linda Effel, Lucille Campbell, Colleen Bushway, Ronnie Bushway, Jonathan Debono, Mary Parizo, Esther Blow, Sue Lawrence, David Capen, Joe Longo, Mark Cobb, Marie Prescott, Mike Donoghue, Bianca Lafayette, Kristina Botala, Emily Clark, KC Fantoni, Glenda Leake, Randall Gover,

**Selectboard Open Position Candidate Discussion:** Couper Shaw says they have received 4 letters of interest for the open selectboard seat. Couper Shaw would like each selectboard member to take turns reading the letters of interest out loud. Ellen Howrigan begins by reading the letter written by Jennifer Morway, which goes over her background, skill set, and reasons why she is interested in the filling the selectboard seat. Couper Shaw reads Jonathan Debono's letter of interest, which details his background, skill set, and reasons why he is interested in filling the selectboard seat. Jeff Parizo reads Ronnie Bushway's letter of interest, which details his background, skill set, and reasons why he is interested in filling the selectboard seat. Josie Leavitt reads Linda Effel's letter of interest, which details her background, skill set, and reasons why she is interested in filling the selectboard seat. Couper Shaw says that each selectboard member will ask the candidates questions in which the candidates will have up to 3 minutes to respond. Josie Leavitt begins with the question:

*How do you deal with conflict among the board and with community members?*

Jen Morway is chosen to answer first. Jen Morway says that conflict among the board is not always a bad thing, that conflict often arises when there are many voices involved and that conflict should always be handled in a respectful manner. Jen Morway says that the same would apply to conflict with community members, that its important for all voices to be heard and to try and reach a middle ground. Jen Morway says that she feels one of her strongest attributes is to bring a sense of calm and uncover what everyone would like accomplished.

Linda Effel is chosen next. Linda Effel says that she believes that conflict can be a good thing as long as it does not get out of hand. Linda Effel explains that while board members may not agree with each other or that community members may not agree with each other, it is important to work towards resolving that conflict.

Ronnie Bushway is chosen next. Ronnie Bushway says that he has not had any conflict with any selectboard members, that he is not afraid to speak his mind, but would always do so in a respectful manner. Ronnie Bushway says that he believes it is ok to agree to disagree.

Jonathan Debono is chosen next. Jonathan Debono says he believes that the most important thing is to be calm and maintain a calm demeanor. Jonathan Debono says that it is important to take a step back, to take time to do research on issues that arise in order to gain a better understanding, and to listen to the community in order to understand their concerns. Jonathan Debono says that he would not have any self-interest and would represent the majority of the community.

Jeff Parizo asks the next question:

*Do you plan on attending the selectboard meetings in-person or via Zoom?*

Jonathan Debono is chosen first to answer this question. Jonathan Debono says that he would attend in-person. Ronnie Bushway is chosen next. Ronnie Bushway says that he would attend in-person, that he has attended every selectboard meeting for many years. Linda Effel says that she would attend in-person. Jen Morway says that she would attend in-person.

Couper Shaw asks the next question:

*What do you think is something, specifically, that either the current selectboard or the previous selectboard, could do better?*

Linda Effel is chosen to answer this question first. Linda Effel says that she cannot think of anything off the top of her head, that she thinks that the selectboard is doing as well as any other board. Jen Morway says that she feels that the selectboard has come a long way by hiring a scribe who is organized, that the selectboard should continue to work on being more organized, that there are many issues that get thrown back and need follow-up. Jonathan Debono is chosen next. Jonathan Debono says that he feels that there should be more community involvement, that there are only a small sample of community members that regularly attend the meetings and he would like to see more community members involved with selectboard meetings. Ronnie Bushway is chosen next. Ronnie Bushway says that agenda items often get kicked down the road, that perhaps more research could be done in order to address issues promptly.

Ellen Howrigan asks the next question:

*Why are you interest in running for the selectboard seat?*

Ronnie Bushway is chosen to answer first. Ronnie Bushway says that he has enjoyed being on the selectboard in the past. Ronnie Bushway says that with his 11 ½ years of experience on the selectboard and experience with various jobs within the town, that he would be an asset to the selectboard. Linda Effel is chosen next. Linda Effel says she would like to help the selectboard and town move forward. Jen Morway says that she would like to serve on the selectboard to help her community, that she believes she is a good listener and a great voice of compromise. Jonathan Debono is chosen next. Jonathan Debono says that he really cares for this town, that he wants to help the town out, that he likes to learn and would like to learn more about town government in order to serve his community. Jonathan Debono says that he received overwhelming support from half the town last March.

Couper Shaw asks the next question:

*Last March there was an election for selectboard members and Jonathan Debono was the only one of the four candidates present that was on the ballot. Why did you or did you not run in front of the voters and why are you coming here today instead of running last march in front of the voters?*

Jen Morway is chosen first to answer. Jen Morway says that last March the Planning Commission was in the midst writing many grants and was concerned that she would not have the time to fully commit to both boards. Jen Morway says that her plan was to run for any available selectboard seat in March of 2024 now that she has the time to commit to the selectboard. Jen Morway says when this vacancy presented itself, she felt as though it was the right time to run. Ronnie Bushway is chosen next. Ronnie Bushway says that he did not run last March because he felt that those who were already running were very qualified for the position, that Jeff Parizo was running unopposed and that he felt as though Jeff Parizo is doing a good job and did not want to run against him, that Ellen Howrigan and Jonathan Debono were already running against each other and that either of them would be a good selectboard member, and that last March he had a health issue, which has since been resolved. Jonathan Debono is chosen next. Jonathan Debono says that he is still very interested in a selectboard seat, just as he was when he ran in March 2023, and that he believes that

he would find it fulfilling. Linda Effel is chosen next. Linda Effel says that she feels more comfortable running for a seat that is a 9-month term, that she can easily commit to a 9-month term.

Jeff Parizo asks the next question.

*Do you understand how much time the selectboard position takes, both during a meeting and outside of meetings, of your own personal time? Do you understand how much work it takes?*

Jen Morway is chosen first to answer. Jen Morway says that while she has not held that position in order to completely understand, she can apply her experience with working on the Planning Commission and correctly estimate how much time and work it takes. Linda Effel is chosen next. Linda Effel says she has experience in the Town Office and understands the amount of work that goes on behind the curtain. Linda Effel says that she has that time and energy to handle the work. Ronnie Bushway is chosen next. Ronnie Bushway says that after 11 ½ years on the selectboard that he knows that it takes a lot of work. Ronnie Bushway says he knows it takes a lot of time to keep up with the state statutes alone. Jonathan Debono is chosen next. Jonathan Debono says that he understands that there is more time spent than just attending the meetings. Jonathan Debono says that while he feels his plate is nearing capacity, but he has some room left. Jonathan Debono says that he would expect to dedicate at least 5 hours a week to the position and that he works from home and has a lot of flexibility.

Josie Leavitt asks the next question:

*If you could see one change in Grand Isle, what would it be? How do you think the selectboard could help get there?*

Ronnie Bushway is chosen to answer first.

Ronnie Bushway says that a challenge that is in the future for the selectboard will be the town office and library. Ronnie Bushway says that it has been discussed by many that there is no space left in the town office. Ronnie Bushway says that he feels it is time to aggressively look at expanding the town office and library. Jonathan Debono is chosen next. Jonathan Debono says he would like to see a senior/teen center. Jonathan Debono says that it would be great to see a dual-purpose building that serves both the town's seniors and youth. Jen Morway is chosen next. Jen Morway says that she would like to see more community space in general, whether it is an event space, or to serve different groups, that she would like to see more opportunities for people to come together as a community. Linda Effel is chosen next. Linda Effel says that she misses the barn dances the town used to have, that providing more of that type of gathering space would be wonderful and a benefit to the people of the town.

Ellen Howrigan asks the next question:

*Say there is a proposal to build a facility to implement any of those ideas, how will you manage the cost of that when many are living paycheck to paycheck?*

Jen Morway is chosen to answer first. Jen Morway says it comes down to a planning process, that projects take years to plan for, and that they could plan to save money towards projects. Jen Morway says that she is a huge proponent for grant writing. Jen Morway says that it could be a 10-year plan to save, that nothing would be rushed. Linda Effel is chosen to answer next. Linda Effel says that she believes that there are opportunities for donations in the town that could help. Ronnie Bushway says that he knows that it is not in the immediate future, that it is still in a planning process, that there's ARPA money that could help, and that the library trustees have been saving money to build a library. Jonathan Debono is chosen to answer next. Jonathan Debono says that he agrees with Jen Morway's response, that taking a slow and thoughtful approach in the planning will be beneficial, that there are many grants available out there, and that they could do some fundraising.

Couper Shaw asks the next question:

*Do you think the town needs more businesses?*

Jonathan Debono is chosen to answer first. Jonathan Debono says he does not feel that they are lacking businesses. Jonathan Debono is concerned with the speed that South Hero is growing and does not want to see that in Grand Isle. Jonathan Debono knows they need some growth, but it should be within the character of the town such as agricultural businesses. Jonathan Debono reiterates that he thinks the town should take a slow and thoughtful approach. Ronnie Bushway is chosen to answer next. Ronnie Bushway says that he would welcome any small business that could be helpful to the town but that the issue seems to be that there is not any available land to build on. Linda Effel is chosen to answer next. Linda Effel says that the idea of creating a building district has been looked at in the past and that she believes the issue is how to reconcile taking land away from the farm community in order to build a business district. Linda Effel says that she thinks that the town would have to look at what land is available before thinking about inviting more businesses to the town. Jen Morway is chosen to answer next. Jen Morway says that she feels that it comes down to what fits in the vision for the town. Jen Morway says that while she does not think having many businesses in town does not fit Grand Isle, she does think having services like a hairdresser and a dentist in town would benefit the town by providing the community with necessary services that they now have to leave the island for.

***Josie Leavitt makes a motion to nominate Jonathan Debono to be on the selectboard. Couper Shaw seconds. Roll call vote: Josie Leavitt- yes. Jeff Parizo- no. Couper Shaw- yes. Ellen Howrigan- no. Vote is tied 2-2.***

***Jeff Parizo makes a motion to appoint Ron Bushway for the open position. Ellen Howrigan seconds. Roll call vote: Josie Leavitt- no. Jeff Parizo- yes. Couper Shaw- no. Ellen Howrigan- yes. Vote is tied 2-2.***

***Jeff Parizo makes a motion to appoint Linda Effel for the open position. Ellen Howrigan seconds. Roll call vote: Josie Leavitt- no. Jeff Parizo- yes. Couper Shaw- no. Ellen Howrigan- yes. Vote is tied 2-2.***

***Ellen Howrigan makes a motion for Jennifer Morway to serve on the selectboard. Jeff Parizo seconds. Roll call vote: Josie Leavitt- no. Jeff Parizo- yes. Couper Shaw- no. Ellen Howrigan- yes. Vote is tied 2-2.***

***Josie Leavitt makes a motion to nominate Jonathan Debono to be on the selectboard. Couper Shaw seconds. Roll call vote: Josie Leavitt- yes. Jeff Parizo- no. Couper Shaw- yes. Ellen Howrigan- no. Vote is tied 2-2.***

***Jeff Parizo makes a motion to appoint Ron Bushway for the open position. Ellen Howrigan seconds. Roll call vote: Josie Leavitt- no. Jeff Parizo- yes. Couper Shaw- no. Ellen Howrigan- yes. Vote is tied 2-2.***

***Jeff Parizo makes a motion to appoint Linda Effel for the open position. Ellen Howrigan seconds. Roll call vote: Josie Leavitt- no. Jeff Parizo- yes. Couper Shaw- no. Ellen Howrigan- yes. Vote is tied 2-2.***

***Ellen Howrigan makes a motion for Jennifer Morway to serve on the selectboard. Jeff Parizo seconds. Roll call vote: Josie Leavitt- no. Jeff Parizo- yes. Couper Shaw- no. Ellen Howrigan- yes. Vote is tied 2-2.***

***Ellen Howrigan makes a motion for Jennifer Morway to serve on the selectboard. Jeff Parizo seconds. Roll call vote: Josie Leavitt- no. Jeff Parizo- yes. Couper Shaw- no. Ellen Howrigan- yes. Vote is tied 2-2.***

***Jeff Parizo makes a motion to appoint Linda Effel for the open position. Ellen Howrigan seconds. Roll call vote: Josie Leavitt- no. Jeff Parizo- yes. Couper Shaw- no. Ellen Howrigan- yes. Vote is tied 2-2.***

***Jeff Parizo makes a motion to appoint Ron Bushway for the open position. Ellen Howrigan seconds. Roll call vote: Josie Leavitt- no. Jeff Parizo- yes. Couper Shaw- no. Ellen Howrigan- yes. Vote is tied 2-2.***

***Couper Shaw makes a motion to nominate Jonathan Debono to be on the selectboard. Josie Leavitt seconds. Roll call vote: Josie Leavitt- yes. Jeff Parizo- no. Couper Shaw- yes. Ellen Howrigan- no. Vote is tied 2-2.***

Jeff Parizo tells Couper Shaw that he should speak to the town attorney to find out what a special election will entail. Couper Shaw says he looked up what would be needed. Couper Shaw explains that a special election needs to be warned for 6 Mondays in advance, that it must be printed in The Islander for 6 Mondays before an election can take place. Couper Shaw says that if they get it in the next edition of The Islander, the earliest the election could be held is July 18<sup>th</sup>. Jeff Parizo asks for the source of the information Couper Shaw is reading from. Josie Leavitt says she reached out to J.P. Isabelle and sent information from him to Couper Shaw. Jeff Parizo says he has not seen that information yet. Ellen Howrigan says she has not seen that information yet. Jeff Parizo asks if the four candidates must put petitions. Couper Shaw says that he was told that they must put petitions in. Ellen Howrigan asks why that email was not forwarded to the whole selectboard. Josie Leavitt says that it was her mistake and that she will forward it right now. Jeff Parizo says that he would feel more comfortable if Couper Shaw contacted the town attorney and find out exactly how we should proceed. Couper Shaw says that they would have to see if The Islander would allow a late submission on Monday (June 5<sup>th</sup>) night in order to contact the town attorney and get an answer and discuss it at the June 5<sup>th</sup> selectboard meeting. Jeff Parizo says that it is very important that we get the warning correct and that he would like Angie Low to handle the warnings. Couper Shaw agrees. Josie Leavitt says she is going to email JP Isabelle again with more questions. Emily Clark asks if the names of the candidates need to be on the warning. Josie Leavitt says she will add that to the questions she will ask J.P. Isabelle. Couper Shaw says that he will contact the town attorney about what is needed for the warning. Couper Shaw asks Mike Donoghue if they would be able to send a late submission on Monday for the next edition of The Islander. Mike Donoghue says that he will talk to Tonya Poutry, but they would most likely be able to lock in a submission for the next edition as long as it gets sent by Tuesday morning. Kristina Botala says that she contacted Tonya Poutry and that The Islander can save space for the legal notice until noon on Tuesday (June 6<sup>th</sup>).

***Parizo DRB Appeal: Couper Shaw makes a motion to authorize David Rugh of Stitzel, Page & Fletcher to enter his appearance on the town's behalf in the Parizo subdivision appeal. Josie Leavitt seconds. Jeff Parizo recuses himself from the vote. Couper Shaw calls the vote of which passes with yes votes from Josie Leavitt, Couper Shaw, and Ellen Howrigan.***

***Adjournment: Jeff Parizo makes a motion to adjourn at 6:50pm. Ellen Howrigan seconds. No discussion. Couper Shaw calls the vote, which passes unanimously.***