

Grand Isle Select Board
Grand Isle Town Office 9 Hyde Rd, Grand Isle VT
SPECIAL MEETING
Minutes of the Meeting for Friday August 11, 2023

CALL TO ORDER: Vice Chair, Josie Leavitt calls the meeting to order at 6pm.

Board Members Present: Josie Leavitt, Jeff Parizo, Jennifer Morway, Ellen Howrigan

Community Members Present: Denise Abbott-Douglass, Lucille Campbell, Ron Bushway, Jean Prouty, Emily Clark, Charlotte Kennedy, Bianca Lafayette, John Lafayette, Esther Blow, Rachael Griggs, Myra Gordon, Mary Parizo, Karen Allen, Jonathan Debono, Mike Donoghue, Deb Lang, Linda Effel, Randy Gover, Brian Allen, Mark Cobb, Joe Longo, KC Fantoni, Tim Maxham, Kevin Low, Marcia Ryan, Patrick Prouty

Add to Agenda: Jeff Parizo adds Local Hazard Mitigation Plan under Old Business, Emily Clark adds Planning Commission Update to Old Business

Nominate & Elect Chair and Vice Chair: *Jen Morway nominates Josie Leavitt for Chair, Ellen Howrigan seconds.* Ellen Howrigan asks Josie Leavitt if she has the time and bandwidth to be chair. Josie Leavitt says she does and explains that she has spoken to others in the House that are also selectboard chairs and came up with a detailed way to manage time. Ellen Howrigan asks Josie Leavitt why it took 5 weeks for her to forward an email regarding the executive session item. Josie Leavitt explains that she thought Couper Shaw would be sending it and apologizes for that. Jeff Parizo adds that the town attorney sent out a notice 30 days ago to the selectboard to have the executive session added to the agenda and it never happened, that this felt personal. Josie Leavitt explains that she was not in charge of the agenda at that time and that as soon as she was notified that there was a slip in that communication, she sent out that email immediately. Josie Leavitt tells Jeff Parizo that this was not a personal attack against him and that it was due to poor communication. Josie Leavitt further explains that when an email is addressed to the chair and vice chair, it would be up to the chair to forward that information out, and she had assumed Couper Shaw would send it out. Josie Leavitt reiterates to Jeff Parizo that it was nothing personal, Jeff Parizo thanks her for that. Bianca Lafayette comments that in a past meeting, an item was tabled due to not having information and the information was found later in the meeting but the item was already tabled. Josie Leavitt says that having an administrative component to the agenda will allow the selectboard members to ensure things like that do not happen in the future. Jean Prouty comments that she does not like how Josie Leavitt sometimes talks over other people and takes over a conversation. Jean Prouty says she has an issue with how the minutes are taken, Josie Leavitt says they can add that as an agenda item to the next regular meeting. Jeff Parizo says that he feels they owe Brian Elbrader an apology for turning him away from the last meeting, that the item should not have been tabled so quickly. Jeff Parizo wants to say, on the record, that he apologizes to Brian Elbrader about that. Ellen Howrigan says that in the future, rather than table a guest who has not shown up yet, they should move that item down on the agenda rather than table it. Emily Clark comments that the Selectboard should consider creating a general selectboard distribution email, where an email can be sent and it auto-forwards to the whole selectboard. ***No further discussion. Ellen Howrigan nominates Jeff Parizo. Jen Morway seconds.*** Jen Morway asks Jeff Parizo if he has the time to be Chair, Jeff Parizo says yes.

Deb Lang comments that she is pleased to hear that the selectboard is looking toward moving things forward.

Roll Call for Josie Leavitt as Chair: Ellen Howrigan- no, Jen Morway- yes, Josie Leavitt- yes, Jeff Parizo- no.

Roll call for Jeff Parizo as Chair: Ellen Howrigan- yes, Jen Morway- yes, Josie Leavitt- no, Jeff Parizo- yes.

Motion carries for Jeff Parizo as Chair.

Jen Morway nominates Josie Leavitt for Vice Chair. Ellen Howrigan seconds. No further discussion.

Jen Morway nominates Ellen Howrigan for Vice Chair. Jeff Parizo seconds. No further discussion.

Roll Call for Josie Leavitt as Vice Chair: Ellen Howrigan- yes, Jen Morway- yes. Josie Leavitt- yes, Jeff Parizo- yes.

Roll call for Ellen Howrigan as Vice Chair: Josie Leavitt- no, Jeff Parizo- yes, Jen Morway- yes, Ellen Howrigan- yes.

Motion carries for Josie Leavitt as Vice Chair.

New Business:

Open Letter to the Selectboard- Couper Shaw: Josie Leavitt reads the letter Couper Shaw has written to the Selectboard:

To: Grand Isle Selectboard

It is widely recognized that the governance of Grand Isle has been deficient for quite some time. Missed deadlines, improperly warned meetings, and sometimes outright corruption have plagued this governing body for many years. After discussions with the Vermont League of Cities and Towns and the Secretary of State's office, it is evident that this town has gained notoriety for its dysfunction within the state. These issues predate my election to the selectboard and seem as if they are continuing into the future.

According to VLCT and the SOS office, there were no explicit prohibitions against electing a new chair and vice chair partway through the year. However, it was deemed highly unusual. Kail from VLCT recommended following our agreed-upon rules of procedure as the state statute is unclear. These rules dictate that these elections should occur annually. However, there seems to be confusion among the rest of the selectboard about the term "annually" and its timing within the year. "Annually" means once per year, every year. Since we've already voted in March, and it happens every year at the same time, the phrase "The body shall annually elect a chair and a vice-chair is very clear. This is why the organizational meeting was removed from the agenda at the last regularly scheduled meeting. In the past, the only time a new chair or vice-chair has been elected after a special election was when one of those positions needed to be filled.

The recent election was expected to bring a welcomed balance to the selectboard. Unfortunately, that is not the case. It appears the board is facing the same problem as in the past: a long-time member colludes privately with two others to advance their own interests. Electing fresh faces to the selectboard has very little effect when they are part of the same group and collaborate to vote in unison. These individuals seem to prioritize their own agendas, often conflicting with other elected officials, with little regard for the town's welfare. This is widening the divide in Grand Isle and making it difficult to address important issues. I believe that, especially for elected officials, all communications should be as public as possible. With twice-monthly meetings, there's plenty of time for anyone in the town to voice their opinion. There are ample channels to add items to the agenda, and each agenda item is open for at least ten minutes of public comment. The extent of closed-door communications by public officials is unsettling.

This is not a letter of resignation. I will continue to serve the town of Grand Isle to the best of my ability by calling out corruption where I see it. I believe that it is important for elected officials to be transparent and accountable to the public, and I will not shy away from speaking out against corruption, even if it means making myself unpopular. Please attach this letter to the minutes of the meeting. Signed, Couper Shaw

Review Rules & Procedures: The selectboard decides to take out “A member may speak or make a motion only after being recognized by the chair.” from item 6 under section C- Organization of the Rules and Procedures for Town of Grand Isle Selectboard. The selectboard decides to change “The chair shall determine the final content of the agenda.” to “The board shall determine the final content of the agenda.” under item 1 of section D- Agendas. Jeff Parizo says that they can work out the logistics of finalizing the agenda as a board through creating Standard Operating Procedures. The selectboard agrees. The selectboard changes “Grand Isle Post Office” to “Grand Isle Library” under item 2 of section D- Agendas. The selectboard takes out “When a fifth Monday occurs, meetings will take place at 6pm at the Grand Isle Town Office” from item 1 under section E- Meetings. The selectboard changes “Grand Isle Post Office” to “Grand Isle Library” under item 2 of section E- Meetings. The selectboard removes “Order the constable to remove disorderly person(s) from the meeting” from item 7d under section F- Public Participation. The selectboard removes “but may bypass any or all steps when he or she determines in his or her sole discretion that deviation from the process is warranted.” From item 7 under section F- Public Participation. The selectboard changes “The Chair should adhere to the following process..” to “The Board should adhere to the following process..” in item 9 under section F- Public Participation. ***Jeff Parizo makes a motion to accept the Rules and Procedures for the Town of Grand Isle. Ellen Howrigan seconds. No further discussion. Jeff Parizo calls the vote which passes unanimously.***

Review Conflict of Interest Policy: The Selectboard reviews the Conflict of Interest Policy and decide to keep it as is. ***Josie Leavitt makes a motion to accept the Conflict of Interest Policy. Jen Morway seconds. No further discussion. Jeff Parizo calls the vote which passes unanimously.***

Platinum Property Payment: ***Josie Leavitt makes a motion to allow Jeff Parizo to sign the warrant for the Platinum Property invoice #1269 for the amount of \$1,577.50. Jen Morway seconds. No further discussion. Jeff Parizo calls the vote which passes unanimously.***

Old Business:

Local Hazard Mitigation Plan: Jeff Parizo explains that they are past due to create a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, that in the event of a FEMA emergency having the plan will lower our cost. Jeff Parizo says they need to sign it in order to move the grant forward. Jen Morway says that the actual grant application is not included, making it difficult to know what the grant is for specifically. Jeff Parizo says he understands that it is for a plan, not for anything specific. Jen Morway says that this was due in June. Josie Leavitt says she has emailed Adam White asking for any clarity he may be able to give.

Josie Leavitt makes a motion to sign the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. Jen Morway seconds. Jen Morway asks if anyone would be opposed to her creating a living document on how to handle grants the town applies for, that she will give the document to Angela Low to save in the selectboard's shared drive. Josie Leavitt offers that they may also want add to the shared calendar as well. Jen Morway says that is a good idea, as long as they make the due dates clear so that Angela Low does not have to read through an entire grant to find the due dates. **No further discussion. Jeff Parizo calls the vote which passes unanimously.**

Planning Commission Update: Emily Clark gives an update on the Planning Commission meeting that was held on August 8, 2023. Emily Clark says that it was a huge success with a great turn out, that they sourced a lot of ideas. Charlotte Kennedy comments that the septic of the current library needs to be considered when thinking about repurposing the library building.

Executive Session: Tabled until 8/21/2023 Meeting

Adjournment: *Josie Leavitt makes a motion to adjourn at 7pm. Jen Morway seconds. No further discussion. Jeff Parizo calls the vote which passes unanimously.*