

Grand Isle Select Board
Grand Isle Town Office 9 Hyde Rd, Grand Isle VT
Minutes of the Meeting for Monday January 8, 2024

CALL TO ORDER: Selectboard Chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the meeting to order at 6pm.

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

Board Members via Zoom: Couper Shaw

Community Members Present: Ron Bushway, Trevor Boutin, Marie Prescott, Sue Lawrence, Colleen Bushway, Ted Kriss, Bonnie Kriss, Laura Heaberlin, Zak Kanouse, Addison Rounds, Amanda Rotunda, Nathan Mauser

Community Members via Zoom: Catherine Gjessing, Mitch Barchi, Esther Blow, Judy Dunn, Emily Clark, Sue Moquin, Lucille Campbell, Mitchel Richardson, Joe Longo, Edward Carroll, Jean Prouty, Susan Orr, David Rugh, Beriah Smith, Christina Barchi, Jessica Remmey

Add to Agenda: Jeff Parizo moves Executive Session below Guests.

Minor Amendment to the Existing Town Plan (adopted in Feb 2017): Emily Clark reads the following amendment:

Grand Isle intends to apply for Village Center Designation (VCD). The Village Designation boundaries will largely overlap with Village District zoning boundaries. Village Center Designation supports small town revitalization with a variety of tax credits to support improvements to historic properties and priority consideration for several State grants. The VCD program will help the Town of Grand Isle as it applies for various State Grants, including Vermont Community Development grants. Village Center designation is an important tool to further the Town of Grand Isle's goals for a vibrant village center.

There are no objections to the minor amendment.

Jeff Parizo makes a motion to approve the minor amendment to the existing town plan that Emily Clark just read. Josie Leavitt seconds. No further discussion. Selectboard chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.

Public Comment: Sue Lawrences comments that the timesheets are not working for them because they split their days sometimes. Ellen Howrigan proposes that they could add a line so they can keep their time on split days. Jeff Parizo asks Angie Low to work with Jen Morway on looking into a solution for that. Marie Prescott reads the following letter:

Dear Selectboard members,

It is our understanding that the selectboard has decided to replace the contract with Rural Solutions with another IT support company. Personally, we find it difficult to understand, since, as we understand it, no-one involved in using the service provided by Rural Solutions was consulted regarding the work and support provided. Also, it really seems a bit odd that an out of state company would be selected when Vermont choices are available at comparable prices.

You folks really missed an opportunity to work with people who show up every day to keep Grand Isle running smoothly for the residents and tax payers.

Signed: Suzanne Moquin, Marie Prescott, Susan Lawrence, Diane Cota, Scott Brown

Marie Prescott comments that she discovered that the IT company chosen is owned by Kevin (Kevin) Low who is married to one of the Selectboard's employees, Angela Low, and questions if this might be a conflict of interest. Josie Leavitt (Josie) explains that the Selectboard knows that it is owned by Kevin but that none of the Selectboard have met Kevin nor have communicated with him, that Kevin had no part in this matter and that Brad Mirza was the one to respond to the RFP. Josie explains that they moved away from Rural Solutions due to their lack of transparency, they overbilled the town for an entire year, and their inability to give straight answers. Ellen (Ellen) Howrigan comments that she would not know Kevin if he walked past her and that she only sees Angie during meetings, that she does not see a conflict of interest. Ellen explains that it boiled down to Rural Solutions not being honest or forthright and notes that after the Selectboard pointed out the billing errors the errors persisted. Jeff Parizo comments that the error in billing charges went beyond the error with the hourly rate, that the bulk of billing errors were not the hourly rate. Josie explains that they were double charged on items and that they were promised things that were never delivered. Josie explains that the computers that the town has been waiting for were supposed to be supplied by Rural Solutions but it never happened and they now have to deal with slow computers. Ellen comments that Rural Solutions charged the town for many password resets but did not take a moment to teach the people calling in for password resets how to do it themselves. Ellen says that SNS proposed Government Licensing for municipalities and thinks that is a very important protection for the town to have. Josie notes that Rural Solutions did not know about Government licensing. Jeff (Jeff) Parizo explains, in regards to wanting to hire a Vermont company, that the Selectboard put out an RFP and they had three responses and if a Vermont company was comparable to SNS they would take the location into account, but that out of those who responded, SNS was the best choice. Jeff says that they discussed this item for a long time and that they have been transparent about the deficiencies found with Rural Solutions in the meetings and minutes.

Review and Approve Minutes: Ellen Howrigan makes a motion to approve the minutes of the December 18, 2023, with corrections. Jeff Parizo seconds. No further discussion. Selectboard chair, Jeff Parizo calls the vote which passes unanimously.

Guests:

Catherine Gjessing, Dept of Fish & Wildlife- Lease with Lake Champlain Transportation Company:

Catherin Gjessing (Catherine) explains that while not required by law, they like to contact towns that they are looking to having long-term leases in. Catherine explains that they are reentering a long-term lease that has expired with the Lake Champlain Transportation Company (LCTC). Catherine explains that the Department of Fish & Wildlife leases a portion of their parking lot to allow for public access for people to use to go fishing and in exchange LCTC leases a portion of property where the Grand Isle Fish

Hatchery to allow them to push snow when plowing. Catherine says that the Governor's office likes to know whether Towns have concerns and by statute Towns have a right to know if there are any tax consequences for these types of transactions and that in this case there are no tax consequences. Catherine says this is a 20-year lease with options to renew. Josie Leavitt asks how long the lease has been expired, Catherine says it has been lapsed for about two years, that she is not sure why it lapsed and thinks it may have been due to a change in personnel, that it was in effect for 30 years previously. Catherine says they would like to renew and update the lease.

Josie Leavitt makes a motion to approve the lease between the Department of Fish & Wildlife and the Lake Champlain Transportation Company as discussed in the meeting. Ellen Howrigan seconds. No further discussion. Selectboard chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.

Trever Boutin, Beriah Smith, David Rugh- Livestock Disturbance: Trever Boutin (Trever) gives a summary of a phone call he received on December 14th from the Town Office regarding wandering cattle that was reported on Mitch & Christina Barchi's property at 31 West Shore Road. Trever explains that he spoke with the Barchi's about the problem and they said they have been experiencing this problem for about 6 months. Trever explains that he spoke with the Sheriff's department about the issue, that the Sheriff's department had been responding to calls regarding the cattle once or twice a week to shoo the cows back into the pasture. Trever says he spoke with the Town of South Hero and that they are working on creating a Livestock Ordinance. Trever says he then spoke with Mitchel Richardson (Richardson) about the issue, that Richardson knew that the fence was down and the cows were getting out but that the cows were not his and most of the cows are owned by David Powell (Powell). Trever says Richardson explained that he was helping to care of Powell's cows while he is ill. Trever says that during that phone call, Richardson said he was aware that the fence had been down for a few months and that he was having trouble getting the fence fixed for a number of reasons, that within the next week or two he would be able to get the fence fixed, that the repair would be complete by January 5th. Trever says that on December 17th, it was reported that a vehicle hit one of the cows, that the driver was ok but that there was damage to the vehicle, that there was also damage to the Barchi property where the vehicle had the accident. Trever says that on December 19th, Deb Lang spotted two cows on Rt. 314 on her way home, that she shooed the cows back into the pasture. Trever says on December 20th he received a text from Zak Kanouse (Kanouse) reporting that there were two cows walking on the sides of their land at 4 Maynard Court. Trever says when we went to speak with Kanouse, he spotted 8 cows feeding on round bales across from their land who looked like they had been out there for a few days. Trever says that he received another call from Kanouse on December 24th, reporting that the cows were out again and on the property of their neighbors at 2 Maynard Court. Trever says that Amanda Rotunda (Rotunda) also called later on December 24th to report that the cows were working their way back to her property at 2 Maynard Court. Trever says that Rotunda called back on December 27th to inform Trever that Richardson was out fixing the fence. Trever says that on December 28th Rotunda called to report that the cows were out again and that later that day Richardson returned to fix more of the fence. Trever says that on December 29th Kanouse took a walk on the edge of his and Rotunda's property and called Richardson to tell him he had seen the 8 cows he was missing and that they were spotted walking out of the swamp. Trever says that on January 2nd, Rotunda called to report that 5 cows were out grazing on the round bails in front of her house again and that one of them was a bull. Trever says on January 4th Ron and Bobby Morway removed the round bails from the fields across from Maynard Court. Trever says on January 5th Richardson called to report a dog on his property, that while responding to

that call, Richardson explained that the fence was fixed, that all the cows have been accounted for, and that Richardson put down the bull which was the main issue, and that they have not any issues since. Jeff Parizo (Jeff) asks Richardson if he is in agreement that the fence has been fixed, all the cows have been accounted for, and that the bull was put down. Richardson says he agrees with that statement, but not with everything else that was said. Richardson explains that they worked on the fence for 2-3 weeks and that the cows are animals and that he cannot say that they will never get out again. Richardson clarifies that these are not just his animals, that they were David Powell's (Powell) animals and that he has been helping Powell while he deals with health issues, that the fence segments that he was fixing were not on his own land. Josie Leavitt (Josie) says it sounds like the main issue was the cows wandering out of their pasture and that has stopped since the fence has been fixed, she thanks Trever for all the work he has done for this. Richardson notes that the driver of the vehicle who hit the cow was impaired and driving illegally and that is why there was no police report for that accident. Judy Dunn (Dunn) explains that she is David Powell's sister, that Powell has not heard of a report for the vehicle accident. Dunn clarifies that of the cows that have been wandering, not all of them have been Powell's cows, that the cows had been getting out from a section of fence that is on Powell's property. Dunn explains that Powell's cows are black, and that a lot of the cows reported to be wandering were white. Dunn says she has not heard if the cow hit by the vehicle was a black, brown, or white cow. Trever asks Dunn who the brown cows belong to, Dunn says she is not sure. Ted Kriss asks what day the fence was finally fixed, that he found cow pies in his yard on January 3rd. Jeff Parizo says that it is his understanding that the fence repair was completed on January 5th, Richardson confirms that. Amanda Rotunda says that she had the damage in her yard assessed, that it will cost about \$400 to fix, that she does not have the money to fix that, that the damage has caused her young son to not be able to run around their yard. Dunn asks Rotunda sent her a copy of that invoice and she will make sure Rotunda is reimbursed, and that if anyone else has a problem to just let her know. Richardson tells Rotunda that he would be happy to help fix her yard. Ted Kriss says that there are some spots in their neighborhood that have hoof marks and some other damage and asks who to contact him about that, Richardson says they can contact him and he will help rectify the issues. Christina Barchi says that she had up to 30 cows walk through their property and has 1.3 acres of destroyed land, that the neighbors to each side of them- the Carroll's and the Orr's- also have damage, that the last time they called Richardson for help that it did not go well. Christina Barchi says that they do not want Richardson repairing their property, that they want it done professionally, that the repair is going to cost about \$1,000, that there should be a policy put into place where there are stricter fines for issues like these. Zak Kanouse says they also have a lot of damage to their mow-able lawn, that they had spent a few thousand dollars in August for landscaping and it is now destroyed, that they are waiting for the snow to melt in order to have someone come to assess the damage to see how much it will cost to repair. Zak Kanouse was concerned that when the damage was reported there was no sense of urgency from Richardson to address it and that has been very frustrating. Sue Lawrence asks if there is insurance on these cows. Dunn says she will talk to Powell to see about what insurance coverage he has. Bonnie Kriss notes that she is concerned for the safety of the people who use the ferry, that there is a lot of traffic that comes from the ferry. Nathan Mauser asks what the path forward for the ordinance is and how the town people can be involved with it. Jeff explains that they will be discussing the ordinance under new business and explains how the ordinance warning works. Dunn asks if there is anything in place for livestock. David Rugh explains there are some other state-level provisions for livestock running-at-large but those entail private remedies and do not deal with the town, that Beriah Smith will discuss those when they get to that agenda item. David Rugh

explains that until the town adopts an ordinance, the recourse would be dealt with privately and not with the town. Laura Heaberlin asks David Rugh if the only way forward for the neighbors with property damage is to request reimbursement from the owners of the cattle and that if they do not get reimbursed that they would need to sue them. David Rugh says that he is the Town's attorney and cannot provide her with legal advice for options under these circumstances. Nathan Mauser asks to clarify that those with property damage have no options through the Town, the Selectboard says that is correct. The selectboard explains that the ordinance will not be retroactive. Richardson comments that these issues did not arise out of neglect, but from the owner of the cows having health issues preventing him from dealing with the problems. Trever Boutin requests a work phone through the town as the Animal Control Officer, that having his personal phone number on the town website has caused some issues.

Jeff Parizo makes a motion to provide the animal control officer with a cell phone through the Town. Josie Leavitt asks if they should specify the amount to spend on a phone, Jeff Parizo says the price will be according to adding a line to the existing phone plan, the price will be the same of each user. Josie Leavitt seconds. No further discussion. Selectboard chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.

The selectboard discusses with David Rugh if an executive session is needed. Beriah Smith explains that there are Vermont statutes for livestock running-at-large, that they are very old, and that the statutes do not provide a clear path to financial reimbursement, that they are recommending the town put in place a livestock ordinance in order to create procedures that the Town can easily enforce themselves.

The selectboard decides to table the Executive Session, that they will work with the town attorneys and Trever Boutin on refining a Livestock Ordinance for Grand Isle and discuss it at the January 29th meeting.

Highway Department Update: Ron Bushway (Ron) asks if any bids for the sander have been received, Melissa Boutin says they received one bid and hands the envelope to Ron. Ron says the new truck has arrived, that he is reviewing extended warranty options for the truck with Sandy from Charlebois, that he will be working with Brad Sheridan on that, that there are several options that may need an extended warranty such as the filters for the diesel exhaust, which would cost about \$6,000 if it were to malfunction. Ron says that most of the extended warranty options are for 7 years. Jeff Parizo (Jeff) asks how long the warranty on the truck is for now, Ron says it is for 1 year. Ron says that the estimate for the culvert on East Shore South that was approved is \$15,000. Jeff explains that cost is for just the culvert, that it is a specialized culvert and gives some details on how it is specialized. Ron says it is a corrugated poly culvert that is 50 foot in length, 73 inches wide, and 55 inches tall. Ron asks about what budget that should come out of, Ron asks Melissa Boutin. Melissa Boutin (Melissa) explains that the Highway Department has a fund balance that will cover that. Ellen Howrigan asks Melissa how much is in the Highway Department's fund balance, Melissa says she will look for that. Jeff clarifies that the town will be paying for materials and doing the work ourselves, Ron says yes.

Jeff Parizo makes a motion that they order the culvert. Josie Leavitt seconds. No further discussion. Selectboard chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.

Melissa says that going from last year the Highway Department has \$237,000 in their fund balance. Jeff says they paid about \$100,000 for the new truck and thus leaving the fund with about \$130,000. Ron says that the culvert at Mary Crest have had some issues with stone getting in them and water splashing

over the road. Jeff explains that when the town has high water and the wind blows from the South, it pushes stone into the culvert preventing water from running out of the swampy areas. Ron opens the bid received for the old sander that was at the transfer station. Ron says the bid is from Penske Enterprise and is for \$200.

Jeff Parizo makes a motion to accept the bid for \$200 from Carl Panske Enterprises. Josie Leavitt seconds. No further discussion. Selectboard chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.

Buildings Facilities Manager Update: Ron Bushway (Ron) says the boilers at the town garage and fire station were serviced on Friday January 5th. Ron says one of the boilers at the new garage was malfunctioning and it took them most of the day to fix it. Jeff Parizo (Jeff) asks if those boilers have a warranty, Ron says he believes so. Jeff asks what was malfunctioning, Ron says it was the intake filters. Ron says the boilers are all set now.

IT Update: Josie Leavitt says that SNS sent an updated contract, Jeff Parizo says he sent it to the town attorneys.

Josie Leavitt makes a motion to authorize Jeff Parizo to approve and sign the contract subject to final approval by the town attorney for SNS to be our IT provider for the next year. Ellen Howrigan seconds. No further discussion. Selectboard chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.

New Business:

Request for Appointments to Development Review Board (Marie Prescott): *Jeff Parizo makes a motion that the Selectboard approve Joe Steffen as a board member for a 2-year term, Panos Lekkas as a board member for a 3-year term, and Deb Lang as an alternate for a 1-year term. Josie Leavitt seconds.* Ellen Howrigan asks Marie Prescott if she is not listed because she is the clerk and not on the board, Marie Prescott says that is correct. ***No further discussion. Selectboard chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.***

Livestock Ordinance Discussion: Tabled to January 29th, 2024.

Town of Grand Isle Records Management Policy & Procedure- Ready for Motion: *Ellen Howrigan makes a motion to approve the Town of Grand Isle records Management Policy & Procedure. Josie Leavitt seconds. No further discussion. Selectboard chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.*

Town of Grand Isle - Accounting, Auditing, and Financial Reporting Policy- Ready for Motion: *Ellen Howrigan makes a motion to approve the town of Grand Isle Accounting, Auditing, and Financial Reporting Policy. Josie Leavitt seconds. No further discussion. Selectboard chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.*

Fraud Risk Assessment Meeting Update: Angie Low gives an update on the Fraud Risk Assessment Meeting, stating that it will be held on Monday February 12th at 4pm at the Town Office and via Zoom. Jeff Parizo asks who will be attending the meeting, Angie Low says that it will be Melissa Boutin, Brad Sheridan and Ron Bushway of the highway department, Ron Waller and Don Hugues of the Transfer Station, Ellen Howrigan, Jen Morway, and either Jordon Plummer or Rick Brigham of Sullivan & Powers, and that Emily Clark will join to speak about the Square system.

Old Business:

Accounting & Procedures Manual Update- Town Treasurer: Melissa Boutin explains that she has a binder that has many of the procedures and that they have been and will continue to work on it. Melissa Boutin shows the Selectboard the binder. Josie Leavitt asks where that is stored, Melissa Boutin says they keep it in the vault.

Town General Budget: Melissa Boutin says she entered the DRB and Rec numbers into the spreadsheet. Melissa Boutin explains that she is waiting to hear back from the County for the Town's tax liability with the County, that she is also waiting to hear back about the insurance numbers. Ellen Howrigan asks Melissa Boutin to send the Selectboard the breakdown for the insurance after the meeting. Jeff Parizo says that last year the Actual for Insurance was \$49,000, Melissa Boutin says she feels that to be safe she would say this year would be \$52,000. Jeff Parizo says they should go with that number. Melissa Boutin says for County tax, last year's Actual was \$138,000 and the proposed number was for \$143,000 which was the number given to them after the Preliminary Hearing and was what they anticipated to spend in FY24. Melissa Boutin says she thinks this year's will be around \$147,000 but has not heard back from the County yet to confirm. Melissa Boutin says Petitions are not due until January 18th. Jeff Parizo says they can approve that at the January 29th meeting.

Town of Grand Isle Credit Card Policy- Ready for Motion: *Ellen Howrigan makes a motion to approve the Town of Grand Isle Credit Card Policy, as written, with the Appendix. Josie Leavitt seconds. No further discussion. Selectboard chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.*

Melissa Boutin gives a quick update to note that Recreation has received the credit card with Roth Perry's name on it. Ellen Howrigan asks if Roth Perry has received the card, Melissa Boutin says he was notified and he dropped off the old credit to Melissa Boutin and that she is not sure if they gave the new card to Roth Perry yet or not.

Internal Controls- Ready for Motion: *Ellen Howrigan makes a motion to approve the Internal Controls for the Town of Grand Isle. Josie Leavitt seconds. No further discussion. Selectboard chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.*

Town of Grand Isle Purchasing & Procurement Policy- Ready for Motion: Jeff Parizo explains that they are taking the Cemetery Commission out of this and will have a discussion at a future date with the Cemetery Commission to see if they want to adopt that. Sue Lawrence says they have it on their agenda to discuss it.

Josie Leavitt makes a motion to adopt the Town of Grand Isle Purchasing & Procurement Policy with the following change of taking out the Cemetery Commissioners. Ellen Howrigan seconds. No further Discussion. Selectboard chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.

Town of Grand Isle Uniform Guidance Policy- Ready for Motion: Jeff Parizo explains that they also need to remove the Cemetery Commission out of this as well.

Josie Leavitt makes a motion to approve the Town of Grand Isle Uniform Guidance Policy with the change of removing the Cemetery Commission. Ellen Howrigan seconds. No further Discussion. Selectboard chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.

Administrative Check-In:

Josie: Schedule a walk-thru of the audit with Jordon Plummer at a Selectboard meeting in February

Jeff: Work on the Livestock Ordinance with the Town Attorneys and Trever Boutin

Angie: Work with Ellen Howrigan about editing the timecards to work for the Listers, send Sue Lawrence the Purchasing & Procurement Policy

Melissa Boutin (Melissa) goes over the North Country CD rates that she was asked to look into by the Selectboard. Melissa says the CD renews on January 22nd which is before the next Selectboard meeting. Melissa says she suggests staying with North Country and explains that they have a Sapling Certificate that is good for 24 months for 5.175%

Jeff Parizo makes a motion to transfer the CD to the Sapling CD for 5.1% for 2 years. Josie Leavitt seconds. No further discussion. Selectboard chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.

Review and Sign Warrants: Josie Leavitt makes a motion to authorize the Chair review and sign the warrants. Ellen Howrigan seconds. Ellen Howrigan asks Ron Bushway about Brad Sheridan's overtime. Ron Bushway says that there was one day where he had to sand due to the wind. No further discussion. Selectboard chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.

Adjournment: Josie Leavitt makes a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:40pm. Ellen Howrigan seconds. No further discussion. Selectboard chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.