

**Grand Isle Select Board**  
**Grand Isle Town Office 9 Hyde Rd, Grand Isle VT**  
**Minutes of the Special Meeting for Thursday October 24, 2024**

**CALL TO ORDER:** Jeff Parizo calls the meeting to order at 6pm.

**Board Members Present:** Ellen Howrigan, Ron Bushway, Jeff Parizo

**Board Members via Zoom:** Josie Leavitt

**Community Members Present:** Colleen Bushway, Glenda Leake, Melissa Boutin, Lucille Campbell, Ray Mitchell, Sue Lawrence, Marie Kilbride

**Community Members via Zoom:** Emily Clark

**Add to Agenda:**

**Public Comment:** Ron Bushway thanks Angie Low for helping him set-up his email on his phone. Sue Lawrence thanks the road crew for fixing East Shore South.

**Review and Approve Minutes:** *Ellen Howrigan makes a motion to approve the October 7, 2024 minutes. Ron Bushway seconds. No further Discussion. Selectboard chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.*

**Guests:**

**Colleen Bushway- Hyde Cabin Parking:** Colleen Bushway (Colleen) says the Historical Society requests two either “No Parking” signs or “Hyde Cabin Visitor Parking” at the Hyde Cabin. Colleen explains that they would like the town to purchase and install the signs and then bill the Historical Society for the cost of the signs once completed. Jeff Parizo (Jeff) asks Ron Bushway (Ron) if they have any “No Parking” signs available, Ron says they do not and will have to order new signs. Jeff asks Ron to estimate the cost of those signs, Ron says about \$300, with the posts.

**Jeff Parizo makes a motion to approve up to \$400 be spent to purchase two “No Parking” signs for the Historical Society buildings on Route 2. Ellen Howrigan seconds. No further Discussion. Selectboard chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.**

Colleen explains that the bench needs to be cleaned, checked to see if any repairs are needed, and then repainting. Colleen explains that this is the memorial bench for Glenda Leake’s parents, that it would be considered a town repair for this reason. Colleen says that she would like to ensure that the Historical Society Tour Guides get the COLA increase and to increase their hours to 24 hours a week, that the increase was approved in a prior selectboard meeting. Jeff asks Colleen if she could find the minutes of the meeting those hours were approved, Colleen says yes. Jeff asks Ron if the road crew could bring it in for the winter and take care of those requests, Ron says yes.

**Lucille Campbell- Cemetery Budget:** The Selectboard has reviewed the cemetery budget and finds no issues, the Cemetery Commission is asking for \$22,300.

***Jeff Parizo makes a motion to allocate \$22,300 to the Cemetery for the ensuing years of 2025-2026. Ellen Howrigan seconds. No further Discussion. Selectboard chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.***

Lucille Campbell reports that the inside of the cemetery vault has been repaired, that it cost \$2,700.

**Ray Mitchell- Rescue Budget:** The selectboard reviewed the Rescue budget and finds no issues, Rescue is requesting \$73,000. Ray Mitchell updates the Selectboard on Rescue equipment as well as grants and donations they have received. Ellen Howrigan asks if Rescue puts any of their funds into CDs. Ray Mitchell explains that they had several and have since consolidated into one CD with Rock Point.

***Jeff Parizo makes a motion to approve the Grand Isle Rescue Inc budget of \$73,000 for fiscal year 2025-2026. Josie Leavitt seconds. No further Discussion. Selectboard chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.***

**Review and Sign Warrants:** *Ellen Howrigan makes a motion that the chair review and sign the warrants. Ron Bushway seconds. No further Discussion. Selectboard chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.*

**Highway Department Update:** Ron Bushway (Ron) says that East Shore South has been paved, manually. Ron says John Heminway gave his notice and that this weekend will be his last weekend. Ron says that the grant for the generator was approved, that Jen Morway is the contact person for that grant. Ron says it is for \$33,472. Ron asks Jeff if he should go forward with ordering it. Jeff he would like to see a letter of acknowledgment from the bank, but that Ron should go forward with ordering since they received acknowledgment of the grant being approved. Ron explains that turn-around time will be about a year.

**Buildings Facilities Manager Update:** Ron says that fire extinguishers have been inspected in all town buildings. Ron says that the small sink in the Annex building was leaking and caused damage to the vanity, that the vanity was made of fiberboard, that they will need to replace that vanity. Ron says he meets with Hegman Electric, that they will be inspecting the fire panels in the town buildings.

**IT Update:** Jeff Parizo says that SNS will be at the Town Office on December 20<sup>th</sup> for on-site maintenance and training. Sue Lawrence says she worked with Stephen Benjamin to get her old files back on her computer.

#### **New Business:**

**Cost of Living Adjustment:** Ron says that social security announced that the cost of living adjustment (COLA) would be 2.5%. Ron says that past few years they have given their employees a flat rate of 3% for the COLA increase and requests that they do the same for this year.

***Ron Bushway moves that they give the Grand Isle town employees 3% cost of living adjustment increase. Jeff Parizo seconds. No further Discussion. Selectboard chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.***

**CD Discussion:** Melissa Boutin (Melissa) says there is one CD with North Country that will be maturing on October 22, 2024. Melissa says there was discussion about putting it into a 1-year CD with a 4.4% fixed rate. Jeff asks what fund this is, Melissa says it's one of the ARPA funds. Jeff asks how much it's for,

Melissa says that it's the smaller of the two, that the larger of the two is for about \$400,000, that the smaller one is \$215,701.71. Ellen Howrigan (Ellen) asks if the CDs at North Country, which total over \$1,000,000, are not insured due to being over the insured amount. Melissa says she doesn't know yet, that the bank said that they believe there other coverage protections, that she is waiting to hear from the bank on confirming that all of their funds there are insured. Jeff asks if FDIC covers per account, or by the total amount. Melissa says that is what she is investigating with the bank now, that she will send the Selectboard updates on that. Emily Clark (Emily) requests to know what the surrender fee is for the CDs, in case the town needs to draw from any of those funds early. Emily asks if there could be a master spreadsheets of all CDs that list maturity dates, surrender fees, etc so that the boards can schedule discussions to make sure that decisions are made on CDs that are reaching maturity dates within the deadlines. Jeff requests that Melissa create a spreadsheet and to update & send that regularly along with the financials she sends the selectboard.

***Jeff Parizo makes a motion to reinvest the ARPA funds of \$215,701.71 in a 12-month CD for 4.4% with North Country. Ron Bushway seconds. No further Discussion. Selectboard chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.***

***Jeff Parizo makes a motion to reinvest the Reappraisal funds of \$15,721.28 in a 12-month CD for 4.4% with North Country. Ellen Howrigan seconds. No further Discussion. Selectboard chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.***

**Library Grant Funding Bank:** Ellen Howrigan explains that they would like to have a grant anticipation note that is non-revolving that acts as a line of credit, to keep all the grant funds separate and they can draw from that as needed, that it would have a low interest rate, that as the grant funds become available or CDs mature, they can pay the line of credit down. Ellen explains that Jen Morway would do an RFP to find which bank would be best. Josie Leavitt says that wouldn't need an RFP, the selectboard agrees.

**Letter from State's Attorney:** Ellen Howrigan explains that Doug DiSabito has sent the Selectboard a letter and would like it read into record. Ellen reads the following letter addressed to Jeff Parizo, Grand Isle Selectboard from the State's Attorney Douglas DiSabito:

Dear Jeff: I am writing to you as Chair in relation to the Public Comment portion of your October 7, 2024 Selectboard Meeting. An individual named Eric1 made some comments and complaints regarding the Grand Isle County Sheriff's Department. In response, the Selectboard provided information to this individual "explain[ing] who is best to contact about the elected positions that Eric has issue with." This individual also addressed issues he was having obtaining information from the County Clerk related to bonds associated with the Sheriff. In response, the Selectboard provided this individual with my name and title, coupled with an assertion of what part of my job required of me. Very respectfully, I want to respond and correct the record to ensure this individual's expectations are not based on what was—in my opinion—inaccurately stated to him by members of the Grand Isle Selectboard.

*J. Leavitt: There is a way for a citizen to complain about the sheriff's behavior . . . That's your recourse. Because those are the people who technically supervise the sheriffs and the state's attorneys.*

The Vermont Department of State's Attorneys and Sheriffs ("SAS") do not supervise us. The SAS "consist[s] of the 14 State's Attorneys and 14 Sheriffs". 24 V.S.A. § 367(a). In other words, we are the department. The Executive Director and staff work for us. To say the SAS "supervise" us suggests that they are in charge of us, direct how we perform our duties, and can discipline us. None of this is accurate.

An appropriate option (or "way") for seeking recourse when one alleges ethical misconduct on the part of an elected official is to file a complaint with the Vermont State Ethics Commission. 3 V.S.A. § 1221. Anyone can file a complaint with the Ethics Commission regarding ethical conduct in any of the three branches of State government. Complaints submitted to the Ethics Commission are confidential. Once received, the Executive Director (presently Christina Sivret) conducts a preliminary review of each complaint and decides whether the complaint should be referred for further action. The Commission, however, does not have enforcement or investigatory powers. Here's their website: <https://ethicscommission.vermont.gov/>

Eric [Gravel]: I'm receiving lots of kickback from the County Clerk at the courthouse. Apparently, she's only there once a week for two hours, but in her emails to me she says that they have multiple part-time staff for fiscal responsibility reasons, and I have to set up an appointment . . . It seems like she's just trying to delay and then tells me that I need to provide in advance the authority that I have to go there and review public records.

*J. Parizo: Again, I hate to sound like a broken record, but she's an elected official.*

The County Clerk is not an elected official. She serves at the pleasure of the Assistant Judges of the County. "The assistant judges shall appoint a county clerk who shall be sworn and hold his or her office during the pleasure of such judges and until his or her successor is appointed and has qualified." 24 V.S.A. § 171. The Assistant Judges, however, are elected. VT Const. CH II, § 53.

*J. Leavitt: I don't even know where you'd go look. You know what . . . this also feels like something Doug DiSabito, our State's Attorney, cause he works hand in hand with the Sheriff, and this is part of his job, is you could set up an appointment with him, or even just email him, and say 'how do I do this', and that's part of his job is to help a citizen do exactly this. (emphasis added).*

It is not part of the job as State's Attorney to help a citizen access public records from the County Clerk or the Sheriff. Here is the statutory mandate related to a State's Attorney's duties:

A State's Attorney shall prosecute for offenses committed within his or her county, and all matters and causes cognizable by the Supreme and Superior Courts on behalf of the State, file informations and prepare bills of indictment, deliver executions in favor of the State to an officer for collection immediately after final judgment, taking duplicate receipts therefor, one of which shall be sent to the Commissioner of Finance and Management, and take measures to collect fines and other demands or sums of money due to the State or county.

24 V.S.A. § 361. In other words, a State's Attorney is a public official responsible for representing the state in criminal cases, juvenile cases, post-conviction petitions, and upholding justice. Our duties also include providing legal advice to law enforcement and working to protect the public. We work closely with law enforcement agencies to gather evidence and build strong cases for prosecution. That being said, whenever a resident of Grand Isle County reaches out seeking help with maneuvering through any department of the State or its bureaucracy, I absolutely try and assist them. I recognize how frustrating it can be, especially when one is unfamiliar with the complex structure and roles of our government and its officials. For instance, during COVID, I assisted numerous residents file unemployment claims with Vermont Dept. of Labor, when that department was overburdened with requests. I assisted another resident two weeks ago with how to file a request for alternate service in a civil stalking case. I wholeheartedly enjoy assisting constituents in this way. I do appreciate the Selectboard citing me as a resource option for this individual, but to represent that it is "part of [my] job is to help a citizen do exactly this" is incorrect and would likely confuse an individual as to what my role is here in the islands.

I respectfully request this be read into the record of your next Selectboard meeting. I appreciate your thoughtful consideration and understanding of all the above.

With sincere regards,  
Douglas E. DiSabito, Esq.

**Internal Controls Update:** The selectboard discusses the Internal Controls document and the edits made to Transfer Station on page 6 to specify that it should be the town treasurer and the road foreman that review invoices for trash disposal, and an edit on cash receipts on page 7, and to take out fire warden out as a stipend employee.

***Jeff Parizo makes a motion to approve the Internal Controls for the Town of Grand Isle with corrections. Ron Bushway seconds. No further Discussion. Selectboard chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.***

Jeff asks Ellen to bring the corrected document to the November 4<sup>th</sup> meeting to be signed by the board.

**Loss Control Report:** Jeff explains the Loss Control report that came back on the town beach. Ron notes that they had agreed to wait until spring to address the beach. Jeff goes over the report. Ron says he will keep the selectboard updated on the progress to address that report.

**Transfer Station Stickers:** The Selectboard discusses transfer stickers and whether to continue charging surrounding towns for stickers. Ron explains that this has been an on-going discussion and he feels they need to make a decision on it. Ron explains that he and Emily Clark will be analyzing the volume at the Transfer Station and whether they need to consider changing the disposal charges in the future. Jeff says that he feels opening it up to everyone would lead to an increase in revenue. Ron notes that South Hero doesn't have a transfer station, they only have curbside, that North Hero has their own transfer station. Ron feels that it would help South Hero residents the most.

***Ron Bushway makes a motion to eliminate the Transfer Station stickers immediately. Ellen Howrigan seconds.*** Emily Clark asks if the stickers expire. Melissa Boutin says they are good for one year, that the

date is written on the stickers. Emily Clark explains that she will work with Ron to analyze the Transfer Station's revenue and costs. ***No further Discussion. Selectboard chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.***

**Transfer Station Applicant:** The selectboard discusses the position and the applicant. Ron explains that he approached this applicant because he has a lot of experience and would be great on the team, noting that this applicant does not want to work every Thursday or every Saturday, so they will need to keep looking for another person to fill in the gaps. The Selectboard discusses a starting pay. They decide to start the new applicant at \$15.45 an hour.

***Jeff Parizo makes a motion to hire Kevin Gardiner at \$15.50 an hour. Ellen Howrigan seconds. No further Discussion. Selectboard chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.***

**Bullis Savage View Farm Notice:** The selectboard discusses the notice regarding the digester.

**Town Website:** Angie Low (Angie) explains that they had discussed a few months back whether they wanted her to train all board scribes on posting to the town website and create new users for each to do so, or if they wanted her to be the solo point person for all postings on the town website. Angie says she has had requests in recent weeks to set up users and train people. The selectboard discusses the pros and cons of having Angie do all postings. The Selectboard decides that each board scribe should be responsible for posting their own agendas and minutes, that Angie can set-up new users to do so and can train the scribes on the process of posting to the website, that Angie will continue to be the person to contact to make any content changes to any of the pages or to post new content to any of the pages. Angie goes on to explain some nuances of the current website and the limitations that she is running into because of them and says they may want to consider having a new website created on a better platform. The selectboard agrees and asks Angie to get some quotes.

#### **Old Business:**

**Audit Discussion:** Tabled until 11/4/2024 meeting

#### **Administrative Check-In:**

**Jeff:** Email PACIF re: Loss Control

**Ron:** Order "No parking" signs for Historical Society.

**Ellen:** Bring the final version on the Internal Controls to the next meeting for signing. Contact someone she knows about building a website.

**Josie:**

**Adjournment:** *Ron Bushway makes a motion to adjourn at 7:35pm. Jeff Parizo seconds. No further Discussion. Selectboard chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.*