

Grand Isle Select Board
Grand Isle Town Office 9 Hyde Rd, Grand Isle VT
Minutes of the Meeting for Monday January 6, 2025

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

Board Members Present: Jeff Parizo, Ron Bushway, Josie Leavitt, Ellen Howrigan, Jen Morway

Board Members via Zoom:

Community Members Present: Emily Clark, John Lafayette, Natalie Churchill, Colleen Bushway, Patrick Brennan, Melissa Boutin

Community Members via Zoom: Sue Lawrence, Ether Blow, Rick Brigham, Aimee Cochran

Add to Agenda: Jen Morway adds Selectboard Scribe to Old Business, Ellen Howrigan adds Ethics Commission under Old Business

Public Comment: Esther Blow updates on a dog incident she had in August. Sue Lawrence asks if Carol Egan will be attending a meeting to update the Selectboard regarding Turn to Joy. Jeff Parizo says she will be attending a future meeting. Josie Leavitt explains that Carol Egan reported that she could not attend this meeting due to a scheduling conflict. Jeff Parizo and Sue Lawrence discuss the COD percentage. Jeff Parizo reports that T-Mobile will be putting antennas on the Sheriff's tower to expand cell coverage on the Island.

Review and Approve Minutes:

Special Meeting December 13, 2024 with corrections: *Ron Bushway makes a motion to approve the December 13, 2024 special meeting minutes with corrections. Josie Leavitt seconds. No further discussion. Selectboard Chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.*

December 16, 2024: *Josie Leavitt makes a motion to approve the minutes of the December 16, 2024 meeting with corrections. Jen Morway seconds. No further discussion. Selectboard Chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.*

Guests

Patrick Brennan: Patrick Brennan introduces himself, gives an overview of his position, and lets people know how to contact him if they have any issues to discuss. Josie Leavitt mentions that Grand Isle County needs a pharmacy and explains the importance of having one and asks Patrick if he could work on that.

Correction noted at 01/20/2025 Selectboard Meeting: Ellen Howrigan notes that Kinney Drugs in Milton offers delivery services to the Islands twice a week.

Rick Brigham- Audit Discussion: Rick Brigham (Rick) goes over the Audit Summary. Rick notes that there is a qualification for the controls at the transfer station. Rick explains that he understands that the town has since rectified that control but that since it happened within the year the qualification is still listed.

Rick says that next year that won't be a qualification. Rick reviews the fund balance. Rick gives an overview of the notes to the financial statements. Rick explains his review of revenues and expenses, noting that he didn't see any issues. Rick reviews material weakness and deficiencies- the only one being the transfer station which has since been corrected. Rick says they included a management letter and recommendations, noting that budgeting for dog and marriage licenses, accounting for the cemetery & library funds, an accounting manual, and voter-approved appropriations on are some of the items included in the recommendations. Jen Morway (Jen) explains their plans to work with the library, cemetery, and the town treasurer to address the accounting for those funds. Jen reviews how the town handles voter-approved appropriations. Jen reads the following letter from the Town's attorney, David Rugh:

Hi Jennifer and Jeff,

Thank you for reaching out on these questions raised by the auditors. With respect to the latter two issues they raised pertaining to payment of cemetery expenses, handling cemetery funds, and with regard to the Library funds, we generally agree that all payments should be routed through the Treasurer and approved by warrants from Cemetery Commissioners or Library Trustees, as the case may be. Note that both Cemetery Commissioners and Library Trustees act independently of the Selectboard, except that the Selectboard establishes the total amount of money that may be used by each body annually. Other than the annual appropriation, the Cemetery Commissioners and Library Trustees have independent control of how their allocation and any revenue earned from perpetual care funds or similar endowments is spent, subject to any restrictions on use of such funds by the donor. As a result, we agree that the payment of all expenses should be routed through the Treasurer. We don't necessarily have a concern with the creation of a separate account or fund, as opposed to use of the general fund, for cemetery or library expenses, but we share the auditors' guidance that careful attention needs to be paid to what monies are perpetual care funds, the principal of which should not be spent but rather invested, and which portion of the cemetery's allocated funding are not subject to a restriction that only the income from such funds be used. The comingling of perpetual care funds and appropriated funds for cemetery purposes risks confusion and could lead to misuse of or mistaken use of the principal amounts for perpetual care funds, only the interest or income from which should be used to pay expenses.

As o the auditor's first concern noted in their report, we do not share the same concerns regarding voter- approved appropriations. The auditors' comment is based on the premise that Town appropriations to certain departments are not approved annually by the voters. This is not the case. Each year, the Town presents a budget for approval containing appropriations to line items or to various departments. If the appropriation has not changed from the prior year, then the appropriation is not voted in a separately warned article, but the appropriation is still approved by the voters' approval of the budget. For almost two decades (and maybe more), the Town has had the practice of voting changed appropriations by separate articles on its annual meeting warning. While the Town could simply move all appropriations, including increased or decreased

appropriations from the prior year, into the budget for voter approval, the Town has decided to call out those appropriations that are proposed to change by separate articles. While this is not the typical practice since most municipalities have just one “yes” or “no” vote on a budget that contains all proposed expenses for the year (except for new reserve funds), it is acceptable and legal to seek voter approval for changed expenditures.

It is worth noting that the Town does not need to separately vote allocations, whether changed in an upcoming fiscal year or not, to previously established reserve funds. Voter approval is needed to create a reserve fund and to use reserve fund monies for a different purpose than the purpose for which the fund was established, 24 V.S.A. § 2408, the voters do not need to separately approve the allocation of a certain amount from the general fund to a reserve fund, provided that such allocation to the reserve fund is contained in the budget presented to the voters for approval. Lastly, we want to be clear that the auditors’ concern about voter-approved appropriations does not apply to articles warned for aid to social service organizations. This includes all non-municipal entities and groups providing services to Town residents, including the Visiting Nurses Association, Island Arts, Grand Isle Rescue and Grand Isle Volunteer Fire Department. The appropriations to these entities should be voted on every year as separate articles in the Warning.

Thanks, Dave

Rick explains that the recommendations are not due to concern, that they are methods that are used successfully by other towns. Ellen Howrigan will send the letter from the lawyer to Rick for review. Jen explains that Melissa is adding to the manual she has created, that is at least 80% completed. Rick asks for that to be sent to them so they can have it for next year. Rick states they encountered no difficulties with staff or management during this audit, that they had no disagreements with staff or management, there were no consultations with other auditors, and all entries proposed were posted

Cathy Croteau, Island Arts: Natalie Churchill is subbing for Cathy. Natalie explains she is there to answer questions to their earlier request. Jen explains what the town attorney has recommended on how to handle to-be-voted appropriations. It is discussed that 100 signatures (5% of the voters) are required by January 16th. Josie Leavitt gives Natalie some ideas on how to obtain signatures, such as posting to Front Porch Forum.

Review and Sign Warrants: The Selectboard discusses an error that needs to be corrected with highway payroll. They discuss how it should be corrected and how the error was made. Jeff discusses what is in the personnel policy and notes that this wasn’t done maliciously but instead was a misunderstanding due to Holiday pay not being stated in the personnel policy when speaking of full-time hours. The Selectboard discusses having those employees pay back that money. The Selectboard discusses timecards and modifications that could be made to clarify for issues like this. The Selectboard decides that the timecards need to be corrected.

Jen Morway makes a motion to have the Chair review and sign the warrants with corrections including the discrepancy on the timecards and make adjustments over of the next two pay periods if there is a reimbursement to be made. Josie Leavitt seconds. No further discussion. Selectboard Chair, Jeff Parizo,

calls the vote which passes. Roll call: Josie Leavitt, Ellen Howrigan, Jen Morway vote yay. Ron Bushway, Jeff Parizo vote nay.

Financials: The selectboard review the financials. Jen asks if the internet bill has been fixed. Melissa Boutin explains that she has been given conflicting information from the company and is working on resolving that and should see it fixed in period 6.

Highway Department Update: Ron states that they completed the test pits for the new library and removed 11 trees at the Rec Park. Ron says that Emily Clark updated the Square Point of Sale system.

Buildings Facilities Manager Update: Ron says that he addressed an issue at the Annex on Christmas Eve.

IT Update: Jen talks about AI companion software for zoom meetings and asks the Selectboard if the town boards could be allowed to use AI summaries for meeting minutes. Jen explains that there is a an AI companion that comes with their Zoom account and that there is another AI program called Otter AI. Jen explains that Zoom AI can only be sent to one email, but that Otter AI can be sent to others as well. Jen explains that they may want to budget for Otter Ai so that all the boards can use it. Emily Clark notes that she has compared Zoom Ai and Otter Ai and believes Otter Ai is superior, noting that Otter Ai can be set to send the summaries to all participants and can follow a user to every zoom meeting they attend.

Jen Morway makes a motion to approve up to \$500 to be spent on Otter Ai. Ellen Howrigan seconds. No further discussion. Selectboard Chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.

New Business:

DRB- Approve Lucas Campbell for a 2-year term: *Jeff Parizo makes a motion to approve Lucas Campbell for a two-year term. Josie Leavitt seconds. No further discussion. Selectboard Chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.*

Waiver of DRB applications fees for library project: Jeff explains that this is for the Library/Community Room. Jeff says so far its \$250 for an initial sketch but there will be more in the future. Jeff asks for permission to waive all fees for the DRB for this project.

Jeff Parizo makes a motion to waive all DRB fees going forward for the Town Community Room Library project. Ron Bushway seconds. No further discussion. Selectboard Chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.

Lawn Care RFP: Jeff explains that they need to put out a new request-for-proposal (RFP) for lawn care for the town. Ron asks if they can make it a one year term this time, Jeff says yes.

Homeland Security Progress Report: Jeff explains that this is for the generator for the town garage.

Ellen Howrigan makes a motion that the Selectboard Chair sign the generator paperwork with corrections. Ron Bushway seconds. No further discussion. Selectboard Chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.

Recommendation to reappoint Zoning Administrator: Emily Clark explains that the Planning Commission recommends that Scot Brown, the Zoning Administrator, be reappointed. Emily says that they would like to allow Scott to be reappointed for one more year rather than three years upon his request and allowing the position to be hybrid.

Jeff Parizo makes a motion to reappoint the Zoning Administrator, Scott Brown, to a one-year term. Josie Leavitt seconds. No further discussion. Selectboard Chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.

Draft Town Plan Submitted by Planning Commission: Emily Clark asks the Selectboard to review the draft. Emily explains the process and timeline of submitting the town plan.

Jeff Parizo makes a motion to accept the Grand Isle Vermont Town Plan 2025-2033 Draft. Jen Morway seconds. No further discussion. Selectboard Chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.

Jen Morway motions to hold a public hearing on February 17, 2025 at 6pm regarding the current town plan 2025-2033 draft. Jeff Parizo seconds. No further discussion. Selectboard Chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.

Jen Morway motions for permission to submit the required advertainment to The Islander by January 27th as dictated by Greta for legal requirements. Jeff Parizo seconds. No further discussion. Selectboard Chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.

Employee Raises: Ron Bushway explains that John Lafayette has completed his 90 day probationary period and they would like to increase his pay by \$1/hour. Jen says they approved the \$1/hr raise after the 90 days when they initially discussed hiring John. Melissa Boutin asks if that would be retroactive to when his 90 days was completed, Jeff says yes

Old Business:

Remote Check Deposit: Melissa Boutin says that it is now up and running.

Highway Budget: Ron explains that this no longer needs discussion.

2026 Town Budget Approval: The Selectboard discusses the town budget and identify discrepancies with Melissa. The Selectboard agree to update the budget to reflect the correct amounts they discussed, such as the highway wage and transfer station budget. The Selectboard agrees to review the budget at the next meeting to finalize any changes.

Selectboard Administrator: Jen explains that the Selectboard Administrator position will be open beginning on January 17th. The Selectboard discusses advertising the position in The Islander and beyond if needed. The Selectboard discusses an hourly rate.

Jeff Parizo makes a motion to have Jen Morway put an ad in The Islander for the position. Ellen Howrigan seconds. No further discussion. Selectboard Chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously.

Administrative Check-In:

Josie:

Jeff: Numerous items

Ron: Work on Transfer Station

Jen: Numerous items

Ellen: Numerous items

Adjournment: *Josie Leavitt makes a motion to adjourn. Jeff Parizo seconds. No further discussion. Selectboard Chair, Jeff Parizo, calls the vote which passes unanimously*