

Select Board
Martin Memorial Hall
5259 Route 5, Ascutney VT
Monday, September 18, 2023
6:30 PM
REGULAR MEETING
Draft Minutes

Select Board Members Present: Michael Todd, David Fuller, Kelly O'Brien, Wendy Smith, August Murray

Select Board Members Absent:

Brandon Gulnick, Town Manager

Others Present:

August Murray	Olivia Savage	Ray Stapleton (remote)
Joseph Bublat	Lisa Slade	
Josh Compo	John Arrison	
Flo-Ann Dango	Annmarie Christianson	
Barbara Thomas	Andrea Murray (remote)	

1 Call to Order

Mr. Todd called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

2 Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Todd led the pledge of allegiance.

3 Agenda Review

No changes were made.

4 Comments from SB, TM, and Citizens on Topics not on the Agenda

The Select Board had a moment of silence for Edith Stillson, who was active in the Town and had passed away.

5 Approval of 8/21/23 Minutes

Additions/corrections/deletions:

a. None.

Motion: To approve.

Made by: Ms. O'Brien **Second:** Mr. Fuller

Vote: All in Favor

6 Select Board Appointment (1 Vacancy 2023-2026)

- a. August Murray
- b. Joseph Bublat
- c. Josh Compo
- d. Lisa Slade

The appointment is to fill the vacated seat of Paul Tillman, with the term ending at the next election in March of 2024.

Each candidate had the opportunity to expand beyond their letters of interest regarding who they were and their interest in joining the Select Board. The Select Board was in agreement that they had four great and qualified candidates that would serve the Town well.

The Select Board went into deliberative session at 6:24pm and came back at 7:19pm with the decision that August Murray would fill the vacancy on the Select Board.

Dr. Murray was sworn in by the Town Clerk.

7 Accept Paul Tillmans Planning Commission Resignation

Motion: To accept Paul Tillman's Planning Commission Resignation.

Made by: Mr. Fuller **Second:** Ms. O'Brien

Vote: All in Favor

Mr. Todd stated that this vacancy would be warned, with three weeks of notification, and will be appointed by the Select Board at the October 16, 2023 meeting.

8 Martin Memorial Hall Tree Removal

The Town has a tree in the Martin Memorial Hall parking lot that is a safety hazard and needs to be cut down. The Town received a verbal estimate of \$1,950.00.

Motion: To authorize the Town Manager and the Highway Superintendent to deal with the tree, with a cost not to exceed \$1,940.00 from the rainy day fund.

Made by: Mr. Fuller **Second:** Ms. O'Brien

Vote: All in Favor

9 Vote to Transfer \$10,000 to Police Cruiser Reserves

The Town received the SIU grant for \$60,000. This offsets the Special Investigators salary, allowing the transfer \$10,000 to Police Cruiser Reserves.

Motion: To transfer \$10,000 from the FY24 Police Department Budget to Police Cruiser Reserves.

Made by: Mr. Fuller **Second:** Ms. Smith

Vote: All in Favor

10 Reappraisal Discussion

The Town was ordered to do a reappraisal by the State of Vermont. The Town put out two RFPs and received two bids, one from NEMRC and the other from NEMC. The Select Board awarded the appraisal to NEMC and the contract was sent to Town counsel for review where it was found that there were some concerns.

NEMRC currently provides Assessor Services to Weathersfield. It was originally thought that since NEMC would be doing the Town reappraisal, that NEMRC had decided that they no longer would provide Assessor Services to Weathersfield and that NEMRC had agreed to continue to provide Assessor Services until the 2024 Grand List is lodged, and then after that, they would be voiding the Town's agreement with them.

It turns out that Assessor Services and Reappraisal Services overlap and therefore are not mutually exclusive, leaving competing businesses in conflict of their own needs.

In the case where the Town moves forward with the NEMC proposal, the Town would lose their assessor and have an office that doesn't have staff. There had been the resignations of two Listers, with 1 remaining, working 10 hours a week. NEMC has not committed to providing Assessor Services.

The Listers and Assessors office, and the Town Managers office are incompatible by statute, meaning that an internal control violation could be triggered if the Town Manger goes in to do any work.

There are savings in Assessor Services as NEMRC includes them in their Reappraisal Services. The Town pays \$24,000 a year for NEMRC's assessor services, meaning that in FY26 and FY27 budgets, with a total savings of \$48,000 for those two years.

The Town currently uses NEMRC software for all Town business, and with a change, the town would need to switch to Access Pro software, which would require the town to change all records and data held by the Town, which will require increased labor hours in the office.

The Select Board discussed how the Town has been using NEMRC as a service provider for a long time and how switching sounds like it would be a

challenge for the Town, particularly for the staff. The Select Board discussed the RFP process and how using NEMRC may postpone the reappraisal process.

Motion: To rescind the motion awarding reappraisal to NEMC for the amount of \$172,000 on August 7, 2023.

Made by: Ms. O'Brien **Second:** Ms. Smith

Vote: All in Favor

Motion: To award reappraisal to NEMRC for the amount of \$174,000, with the inclusion of Annual Assessing Services as proposed in the June 2, 2023 document.

Made by: Ms. O'Brien **Second:** Ms. Smith

Vote: 4 yay, 1 abstention

11 Large Gathering Permit (Wedding Ceremony & Reception)

a. 1293 Bown Hill Road

Motion: To Approve the Large Gathering Permit at 1293 Bown Hill Road on October 7th, 2023 and wave the fee.

Made by: Mr. Fuller **Second:** Ms. O'Brien

Vote: All in Favor

12 ARPA Discussion

Motion: To move the ARPA discussion to the next meeting.

Made by: Ms. O'Brien **Second:** Ms. Smith

Vote: All in Favor

13 Martin Memorial Hall Generator Discussion

The Select Board discussed the location and size of the tank and agreed that a 500 gallon tank makes sense and that the current location is fine. The Town Manager is going to reach out to local businesses to install the propane tank and bring back information to the Select Board on how much was spent and how much should be transferred back to ARPA.

14 Solid Waste Fee Assessment Policy

Motion: To move the Solid Waste Fee Assessment Policy discussion to the next meeting.

Made by: Mr. Fuller **Second:** Ms. O'Brien

Vote: All in Favor

15 Town Manager Update

a. Storm Damage/ FEMA Funding

The Town has weekly FEMA meetings on Monday's at 1pm with the FEMA representative, Highway Superintendent and the Town Manager. There will need to be an agenda item to discuss the work that needs to be done, FEMA reimbursement, and how three (3) bridges will be covered.

With FEMA, however, there will be a process for doing the work (engineering & construction), and a loan process that may need to take place. The Town Manager has invited the Treasurer and Select Board Chair to an upcoming meeting to learn more about the process and prepare bringing a plan forward to the Board in October/ Early November.

b. FY23 Audit

The Town had the FY23 audit this week and expect the report in November/December.

c. WW Fire Department Roof

Connecticut River Roofing is still on track to complete the roofing project by the end of the month and that obtaining the warranties for the Town Garage (15-year warranty) and Martin Memorial Hall (25-year warranty) is in progress.

d. Vermont League of Cities & Towns - Town Fair

A reminder that Town staff will be attending the Town Fair on Wednesday, September 27th and the Town Office will close on this date.

e. Grant Opportunities

The Town is currently working on several grant opportunities and continues to pursue funding for the 1.2M Water District Project. It has been engineered and designed, so the Town application is considered shovel ready. The Town has an application that is being submitted in the upcoming weeks, in case the other application that was submitted is unsuccessful.

The Historic Preservation Grant is currently underway to restore the South Classroom at the 1879 Schoolhouse. The Town is also submitting an Energy Grant to conduct energy assessments of all our buildings.

f. FY25 Budget Process

The Town Manager is in the process of setting up meetings with all departments to discuss their FY25 Budgets. The Town Manager also anticipates receiving Healthcare information at the VLCT Town Fair, with more information coming soon.

16 Appointments

- a. Budget Committee (5 Vacancies)
- b. Conservation Commission (1 Vacancy)
 - i. Anna Vogell
- c. Energy Coordinator (1 Vacancy)
- d. Green Up Coordinator (1 Vacancy)
- e. Lister (2 Vacancies)
- f. Mount Ascutney Regional Commission (1 Vacancy)
 - i. Gary Graham
- g. Parks and Recreation (1 Vacancy)
- h. Planning Commission (1 Vacancy)
- i. Veterans Memorial Committee (2 Vacancies)
- j. Village Wastewater Committee (3 Vacancy)
 - i. Ann Marie Christensen
 - ii. John Arrison
 - iii. Mark Richardson
- k. Zoning Board of Adjustment (2 Vacancies)

Motion: To appoint Anna Vogell to the Conservation Commission.

Made by: Mr. Fuller **Second:** Ms. O'Brien

Vote: All in favor

Motion: To appoint Gary Graham to the Mount Ascutney Regional Commission.

Made by: Mr. Fuller **Second:** Ms. O'Brien

Vote: All in favor

The Select Board discussed the Village Wastewater Committee and how there is a feasibility study, and how there is not a mission statement, goals, committee size, and how the committee hasn't been created yet. The Select Board agreed it would be best to define the committee prior to making the appointments so that the committee knows what their responsibilities are and to consider expanding the size of the committee.

A committee is needed according to Otter Creek, as is getting public input. The Town Manager stated that he would be ready for this at the next meeting and that the Select Board would take on the responsibility in the meantime.

It was requested that a letter be shared with the public. The letter is from Andrea Murray. The Select Board requested that the letter be attached to the minutes. See letter next:

TO: Office of the Select Board and Town Manager

September 18, 2023

RE: Perkinsville Village Wastewater Project

Request: I request this statement be read aloud at the Sept. 18, 2023 Select Board meeting.

Dear Select Board Members and Town Manager,

I am writing in regards to the 'Perkinsville Village Wastewater Project.' I am a resident of the Perkinsville community and I am very concerned about this project being fast-tracked without community input or understanding. The Vermont Village Wastewater Initiative has extensive recommendations on how this process should be established and it doesn't seem to have been followed.

There is a Feasibility Study that has been contracted and subsidized by grant funding for a Perkinsville wastewater project (Kickoff Presentation 7/18/23). From my understanding, a feasibility study is an analysis of the critical aspects of a "proposed project" to determine the likelihood of it's success. There is also a small mention of a Village Wastewater Committee posted on 8/21/23 meeting minutes (item #11.g) for 3 members that will work with Otter Creek Engineering as they develop the Wastewater Feasibility Study. It appears this was immediately stacked with 3 applications from advocates for the project.

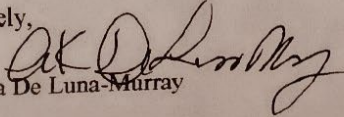
This aggressive fact-tracking of this project poses some serious questions that must be evaluated regarding this Village Wastewater Project:

1. What are the defined Problem and Impact Statements for the Village Wastewater Project?
2. What is the level of public interest or support for this project? What initial research, outreach, surveys, community meetings, Public Comment events, etc. have been completed to identify if there is an overall wastewater system need for Perkinsville residents or is this just a desire for a few property owners who want a different form of septic system?
3. Who is impacted and who benefits from the proposed solution that the Feasibility Study is evaluating? Who will it serve and will system connection potentially be mandatory? How does this fit with the Town Plan for the future of Perkinsville?
4. What are the initial cost projections and ancillary costs - both short and long term? And who will be paying for it -- the connected residents or the whole town?
5. Who will run it? Will they be town employees with benefits - medical and retirement plans? Attracting and keeping qualified employees is a real problem for town services in this region.
6. The final question, which is actually the first question we need to ask: Why is there already a contracted Feasibility Study on a wastewater project that does not have a properly established Committee, input from the community impacted, a defined problem statement, and most importantly, does not have the required support which a project of this size demands.

I ask the Select Board to place a hold on this Feasibility Study immediately until the research, input and support from our community is received. The availability of grant money is enticing but does not negate the massive financial impact these projects will have for Perkinsville and our town as a whole.

I trust you to take the time to consider all aspects of this project and take the steps now to mitigate the future consequences of uninformed decision-making that will irreversibly impact us all.

Sincerely,


Andrea De Luna-Murray

17 Approve Warrant

To approve the warrants for 9/5/2023 as followed:

General Funds
Operating Expenses: \$48,018.29
Payroll: \$16,412.32

Library
Operating Expenses: \$.00
Payroll: \$2,361.42

Highway Fund
Operating Expenses: \$22,231.03
Payroll: \$9,250.54

Gulden Ridge Culvert: \$9,239.10
WW Feasibility Study:\$7,506.00

Solid Waste Management Fund
Operating Expenses: \$846.75
Payroll: \$1,761.36

Grand Totals:
Operating Expenses: \$87,841.17
Payroll: \$29,785.64

Made by: Mr. Fuller
Vote: All in favor

Second: Ms. O'Brien

To approve the warrants for 9/18/2023 as followed:

General Funds
Operating Expenses: \$37,702.65
Payroll: \$16,080.49

Library
Operating Expenses: \$.00
Payroll: \$2,361.42

Highway Fund
Operating Expenses: \$36,399.31
Payroll: \$9,112.25

Gulden Ridge Culvert
\$32,800.00
Library Summer Program
\$167.87

Solid Waste Management Fund
Operating Expenses: \$3,265.38
Payroll: \$1,791.87

Grand Totals:
Operating Expenses:\$110,335.21
Payroll: \$29,346.03

Made by: Mr. Fuller
Vote: All in favor

Second: Ms. O'Brien

18 Any Other Business

The Ascutney Fire Department is hosting a car show on September 30th at the Weathersfield School.

19 Executive Session 313 Personnel

Motion: To go into Executive Session 313 Personnel, including the Town Manager.

Made by: Mr. Fuller

Second: Ms. O'Brien

The Select Board entered Executive Session at 8:52pm

The Select Board came out of Executive Session at 9:08pm. No action was taken.

20 Adjourn

Motion: To adjourn the meeting.

Made by: Ms. Smith

Second: Dr. Murray

Vote: All in favor

The meeting adjourned at 9:09 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Nichole Gagnon

WEATHERSFIELD SELECT BOARD

Michael Todd, Chairperson

David Fuller, Selector

Wendy Smith, Selector

August Murray, Selector

Kelly O'Brien, Clerk

