



# Town of Thetford Vermont

3910 Vermont Route 113 • P.O. Box 126 • Thetford Center, VT 05075  
802-785-2922 • thetfordvermont.us

## Selectboard Regular Meeting Minutes

– Online Only –

Monday, June 7, 2021 7:00pm

**Please note Section 6 of H.681, signed into law on March 30th, 2020, for the temporary suspension of designated physical meeting location requirements.**

Selectboard Members present: Sharon Harkay (Chair), Li Shen (Vice-Chair), Mary Bryant, Steve Tofel

Selectboard Members absent: Nick Clark

Others present: Bryan Gazda (Town Manager), Tracy Borst (Town Clerk/Treasurer), Martie Betts (Selectboard Assistant)

Total Zoom attendees: 25

Sharon Harkay called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

### 1. Agenda Review

No changes

### 2. Town Manager Report – Bryan Gazda

#### 1. Treasure Island Opening Update

Bryan said the plan is to open this Saturday, June 12<sup>th</sup>. A few lifeguards will need to wait until certification for a few weeks, so they may need to open with reduced hours. Recreation Coordinator Amy Fahey will update the Town and Recreation websites with the most current information. Amy has been getting a lot of requests to rent the facility, and they are working diligently to get it ready to open. It may be another week or so before operations are fully functional.

#### 2. Village Center Designation Public Meeting

There will be an informational meeting on Wednesday, June 9<sup>th</sup>, with Caitlin Cortland giving a presentation on the program. Letters have been mailed to businesses and non-profit groups within the designated areas. While the meeting is open to the public, the benefits of the designation really pertain to businesses and non-profits.

#### 3. Personnel Update – Open Positions

There will be interviews coming up for the Department of Public Works positions, and several applications have been received.

There will be an interview for the Lister Assistant position this coming Wednesday.

Diane Osgood has submitted a letter of resignation as the Zoning Administrator, effective July 23<sup>rd</sup>. Bryan said he wants to review the job description before posting the position.

#### 4. Unsafe Building – Route 113, Post Mills

Bryan said he, the Health Officer and Fire Chief looked at the parcel on Route 113 per the Unsafe Building Ordinance. The ordinance lays out those three positions as the people who



# Town of Thetford Vermont

3910 Vermont Route 113 • P.O. Box 126 • Thetford Center, VT 05075  
802-785-2922 • [thetfordvermont.us](http://thetfordvermont.us)

would respond to possible unsafe buildings. The Health Officer is also required by the ordinance, to submit a report, which has not been completed yet. Bryan did reach out to the property owner to let them know there was an external inspection. Bryan also wanted to see if the property owner would be willing to work with the town. Bryan will keep the Selectboard updated as they work through the process.

## 5. AT&T Cell Tower Update

Bryan heard late this afternoon from a preservation specialist with the Land Trust, Craig, who said he will be coming out on Thursday morning at 8:00 AM to look at the property. Bryan has reached out to if Officer Scruggs will inform the Fish & Game Club that someone will be there, and to walk the property with him. Attorneys Ed Adrian and Will Dodge are still waiting to hear back from the Agency of Natural Resources.

## 6. Other

Late Friday afternoon Bryan found out that we were awarded a VTrans grant for Stowell Bridge but not for the paving on Latham Road. Bryan spoke with Chris Bump who said Thetford will be top on the list next year to get the full funding amount for paving Latham Road. By waiting until next year there might be more opportunity to think about doing the other section of Latham Road that needs to be reclaimed and paved.

Li Shen asked if an engineering study would be needed if the discussion leaned toward paving the entire road. Bryan said a lot of that work has already been done, and he believes the Selectboard should consider full funding for that project.

Sharon Harkay asked if someone needed to go with Craig to visit the property at the town forest. Bryan said he did reach out to Officer Scruggs, but another person would be welcomed.

Concerning the reduced hours at Treasure Island, Sharon asked if they were going to open at nine and close earlier. Bryan said he and Amy have talked about opening at 10:00 AM and closing at 4:00 PM. Bryan said a former lifeguard recently reached out to see if there were still openings, and so the situation is fluid. Sharon asked if the fees have been made public and Bryan said they are on the recreation website, (<https://www.thetfordrec.com>).

Mary Bryant said she really appreciates the pace and thoroughness in details that Bryan has given to the many topics that have been covered since Bryan became Town Manager in February.

## 3. **Public Comment**

No public comment

## 4. **Continuing Discussion on Shared Lane Markings (Sharrows) Grant**

Sharon Harkay said she wanted to return to a discussion of the grant that would enable us to paint sharrows on three town roads and add signage with the goal of making biking safer, encouraging people to bike for not only recreational purposes but also for commuting.

Steve Tofel started the discussion by saying he is not sure he can really see the value of doing it. To paint lines on roads that haven't been resurfaced yet seems like a waste of paint. Steve said he doesn't believe the sharrows will be effective, and they are not in character with the town. His experience when he goes for a walk every morning is that people go out into the other lane completely.



# Town of Thetford Vermont

3910 Vermont Route 113 • P.O. Box 126 • Thetford Center, VT 05075  
802-785-2922 • thetfordvermont.us

Li Shen said that road markings are valuable when a road goes down to a single lane, and near the covered bridges. It's important that people know a bicycle may have to pull out. Li used to bike on Tucker Hill Road when she commuted to work, and it is not a bike-friendly road. People were not always nice. In rush hour people would try to push you to the side of the road. Li said we don't have to paint as many as laid out in the grant proposal. People may not like the idea of painting things on the road, but it wouldn't hurt to have more biking signs or share the road signs. A 10-wheeler truck can be very frightening when it goes by someone on a bike, so it would be good to have those black and yellow signs saying share the road. VTrans said there was a minimum number of sharrows to get the funding and the rest of it could be spent on signage. Bryan Gazda said he didn't get a specific number, but if the decision was made to remove the sharrows we would have to submit a grant modification. He can get further clarification on the number of sharrows. Bryan reminded the Selectboard that there still needs to be an environmental review before any work can be done.

Mary Bryant said when they first talked about this, they didn't have the grant in front of them. She recalled Sharon reaching out to 21 people and believes only one person wanted the sharrows. Mary said she bikes on Tucker Hill and Academy Roads and feels that sharrows and signs are not going to make unthoughtful people who drive thoughtful, although she does believe the majority of drivers are thoughtful. Mary said it is more dangerous riding her bike down Tucker Hill Road trying to miss all the potholes and broken asphalt, so fixing the road would be the best thing to help with safety. Mary said if she understands the grant, it lists 25 signs, 11 sharrows, and then there is a statement in the letter of acceptance that we would be doing the ongoing maintenance. If the paint only lasts only 2 to 3 years, it could mean an expense of \$3000 every three years. Mary said that is a lot of upkeep and she doesn't think there will be a lot of benefit. Sharon said she is of the same opinion. She doesn't think this is wanted or necessary right now for Tucker Hill and Academy Roads. Sharon actually called 26 people and 25 were against it for various reasons - because of where they lived and where they biked. Some said it would not blend in with landscape and character of Academy Road. Tucker Hill Road surface is what is making that road difficult to bike on. Included in our packet are a number of photos that Sharon took of the road surface on Tucker Hill Road. The photos are representative of the entire length of the road. The side of road where a bike would normally be is completely gone, and the entire roadway is cracked. Her opinion is that we need to fix the road before we put anything on it in terms of paint. Sharon pointed out that Sayre Bridge on Tucker Hill Road already has six signs at each entrance, and it is sign overload. She still has drivers of oversized trucks say the town should post some height signs, when in fact there are some posted at either end. Drivers are just not seeing the signs. They just add to the sign pollution. Another major problem that makes these roads unsafe is people who are speeding. Sharon said she thinks they should repave the road and take care of speeding problems. Sharon said as she read the grant, she started thinking if we were going to put sharrows and signs anywhere it should be on the section of Route 132 which is being repaired. Route 132 is on the Vermont state bike map. Once the repaving is complete people are going to want to go even faster. At one time, a citizen wanted the town to put bike lanes on Route 132, but the town couldn't afford it and the road is not wide enough. Instead, we could put sharrows and signs.

Steve Tofel said he agrees with Li's point about bridges, but he didn't realize how many signs were in front of the Sayre bridge. He is opposed to painting but not opposed to signage.



# Town of Thetford Vermont

3910 Vermont Route 113 • P.O. Box 126 • Thetford Center, VT 05075  
802-785-2922 • thetfordvermont.us

Li said she wondered what Chief Evans would think about this as the police do have a say in road safety. She also wondered, since Bryan said that Chris Bump seemed to indicate that we could ask to change some of the details in the proposal, if it could be changed to Route 132. This could be a good compromise to focus the grant on Route 132.

Bryan said that might be something we could have the contractor do. They are going to be striping Route 132 anyway, so we could probably build that into the contract with Northwoods. We could tag it along with the project next year when they come back and repave.

Li asked if the grant money expires after a certain amount of time or if can we defer.

Bryan said the grant is good until the end of 2022.

Mary Bryant questioned the expense of the sharrow maintenance again.

Steve Tofel reiterated the critical need to have caution signs at the bridges to be aware of bicyclists and pedestrians. He is still not sure about painting the roads.

Sharon noted that Route 132 was part of the original grant proposal. The signs on Sayre Bridge include the stop sign, one lane bridge, pedestrian, height, and maybe one other.

Li said she didn't know but she is not sure that the white lines at stop signs needs to be painted every three years, as its heavy-duty paint. If they were just put by the bridges that would already be 4 sharrows, which might go a long way to satisfying the grant.

Sharon said the lines painted last fall near the Sayre Bridge are already gone, and it's not been even a full year.

Mary Bryant made a motion that we negate or not follow through with the grant to put in sharrows and signs in town for pedestrian and bicycle safety. Steve thought they should not make a decision now but wait to get more information first. Sharon said she wouldn't mind finding out if we could just concentrate on Route 132, and Li agreed that it needs further exploration.

Mary withdrew her motion.

**Motion** by Sharon Harkay for the Town Manager to investigate whether or not we can concentrate the projects on Route 132, and whether or not we can stack the signs on existing signposts. **VOTE unanimous (4-0-0)**

## 5. Discussion of Speeding on Thetford Roads

Sharon Harkay said she wanted to open a discussion about speeding on Thetford Roads. She is hoping to hear from people on where the speeding takes place. One idea is the purchase of the driver feedback signs that would go on trailers that tell drivers how fast they are going. They are a good physical incentive to slow down, and Sharon would like to see the town purchase two of them, and said they are about \$3000 each.

Steve Tofel said in speaking with Chief Evans, one of the complaints the department gets is speeding. We may be able to judge by the number of complaints where it is a problem. The signs are a very effective way of slowing people down. Some people say they are the most effective thing other than a policeman on sight, so they can go a long way toward solving the problem.

Mary Bryant said she would like to get the opinions of Chief Evans or Officer Scruggs. Mary thinks that the signs are very effective and that they would be a good thing to look into.

Li said she saw pricing for the speed signs for about \$3,000, but they don't seem to come with a trailer, which would add some expense and we haven't budgeted for these, so where would the money come from. It would seem like the police department. Apart from that we'll just have to



# Town of Thetford Vermont

3910 Vermont Route 113 • P.O. Box 126 • Thetford Center, VT 05075  
802-785-2922 • thetfordvermont.us

put it in next year's budget. Li said she is not objecting, that she thinks it's a good idea, but the expense would need to be run by Chief Evans.

Steve Tofel said he just went online and came up with a much higher number, but he also thinks that Chief Evans can get the signs through a government site.

Bryan Gazda said he has had on and off conversations with Chief Evans about this. Let us get back to you on this with some price quotes and then you can take it up again.

**Motion** by Sharon Harkay for the Town Manager and Chief Evans to investigate the cost of driver feedback signs and trailers, and report back to the Selectboard in 2 to 4 weeks. **VOTE unanimous (4-0-0)**

## 6. Discussion and Possible Approval of Intermunicipal Regional Energy Coordinator (IREC) Service Agreement.

Sharon Harkay said the current contract for the Intermunicipal Regional Energy Coordinator will expire at the end of June, so they need to decide if they are going to continue to support the position. The contract in the packet has information on the new cost and what he will do for us.

Mary Bryant asked what the cost was before and why it's changed. Some towns have stayed the same, but there was no indication about changes other than they are in red.

Li Shen said during the first round Norwich dropped out, so the cost was divided between fewer towns. The cost was divided between towns according to population.

Steve Tofel said it is curious that the cost to some towns didn't change.

Mary commented that over the last year, Jeff Martin (IREC), has been very hard working, and brought some interesting and helpful programs to our town that we never would have found or known about. The first year was really a startup year and Mary would like to support this for a second year.

Sharon said she did some quick math which amounts to a payrate of \$68 an hour; \$15,540 divided by 280 hours of service. Sharon thought that was good for all the work he does.

Li thought it should be looked at in another way. The overall need to address energy is quite urgent, as is reducing carbon pollution. Li noted a news article about the draught in California.

We all need to support and promote new things for him to help us with.

The Selectboard Assistant noted that the cost of \$15,540 was already in the Town Report.

Steve asked why our pro-rated share stays the same with Norwich now jointing. Li said that Norwich dropped out before at the last minute and a fundraising effort had to happen to fill the gap that they had left in the budget. Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) has a non-profit sister organization that people can donate through and that's how some of the funds were raised.

Sharon said the contract states there will be no refunds of payments unless the town or TRORC finds somebody else to take their place. If we agree and then drop out, we won't get the money back.

Mary said it would be easy enough to find out how that money was filled in. I recollect that another town joined.

Li remembered that Fairlee joined, and Norwich dropped out. Fairlee's population is lower than Norwich. The amount of money a town owes is according to the population. They also received some of the money from the Byrne foundation.

Steve noted that Fairlee is not listed in the current contract.



# Town of Thetford Vermont

3910 Vermont Route 113 • P.O. Box 126 • Thetford Center, VT 05075  
802-785-2922 • thetfordvermont.us

Mary said Fairlee is not continuing.

Steve said he would like to get a little more information.

Tracy Borst said the \$15,540 amount is what we budgeted for in 2021, so that's not a new number to us. We had that number in January and it's in the Town Report for 2021.

Steve asked if the Selectboard had to vote this time?

Sharon said the current contract runs out at the end of this month, but they do have another meeting in June.

Bryan and Mary agree to find out what changes are made in the current contract. Mary said she would get information on what was done this year as well.

Tracy pointed out that this was warned at a Town Meeting and as a Town we voted to participate. If you vote at a Town Meeting to participate, can you just decide not to participate?

Li said she didn't understand why there are so many concerns on something this important. She agrees with Tracy that something voted on at Town Meeting can't be changed without voter approval.

The Selectboard assistant clarified that in the first year the amount paid was \$14,838. The amount for 2021 is an increase of 4.73%.

**Motion** by Sharon Harkay to table this discussion until the Selectboard meeting on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021. **VOTE unanimous (4-0-0)**

## 7. Continuing Discussion of Subdivision Regulations

**Motion** by Li Shen to approve the Subdivision Regulations as revised. **VOTE by roll call; Steve Tofel – in favor, Li Shen – in favor, Mary Bryant – in favor, Sharon Harkay – in favor**

## 8. Approval of Financing for Department of Public Works Front End Loader

**Motion** by Sharon Harkay that we approve the terms that Mascoma Bank has set out for the loan for our purchase of the front-end loader, and to approve the Town Manager as signer of loan documents. **VOTE unanimous (4-0-0)**

## 9. Discussion of Possible Movement Toward Hybrid Selectboard Meeting

Sharon Harkay said since Governor Scott is anticipating opening everything because enough people have been vaccinated, we should soon be able to open Town Hall at least part time. In that case we should consider having hybrid Selectboard meetings because some people have encouraged us to continue having Zoom meetings. Sharon said she did a test run of the equipment using a new idea. She attended from home on Zoom, with Tracy and Martie in the meeting room on Zoom but using the speaker phone instead of the computer audio. Sharon said they were able to hear each other very clearly. Tracy moved around the room speaking in a normal voice to see if Sharon would be able to hear people in the audience. Everywhere in the room Sharon said she could hear her. Sharon's proposal is that beginning with the next meeting on June 21<sup>st</sup>, the Selectboard, Town Manager, Town clerk, and Selectboard clerk meet in Town Hall with the public participating by Zoom to make absolutely sure the process works. Then in July we could begin to open up the building for people to be able to attend in person if they wanted to.



# Town of Thetford Vermont

3910 Vermont Route 113 • P.O. Box 126 • Thetford Center, VT 05075  
802-785-2922 • [thetfordvermont.us](http://thetfordvermont.us)

Li said the July option will depend on Vermont attaining 80% of the population being vaccinated. Sharon agreed, saying she read today that the Governor is still anticipating making the announcement this week.

Mary Bryan suggested a “plan b” where the Selectboard meets in person, but they continue to have the public attend by Zoom should the 80% vaccination rate not be met.

Sharon said she is proposing that the Selectboard meet in person starting on the 21<sup>st</sup>, but we can continue doing that until such time as we could allow residents in.

Steve asked if the Selectboard would be on camera, and Sharon explained how the equipment works. When members of the public are in attendance, they can either come to the front to speak, or the camera can pan over.

Steve wondered what rules there would be for the Selectboard, as he is going to be out of town on 21<sup>st</sup>. The Selectboard assistant said there is an allowance for Selectboard members to attend virtually in the Selectboard 2021 Rules of Procedure. Sharon felt if the Selectboard members are in town and healthy enough, they should be in Town Hall.

Tracy Borst said before Town Hall is open for meetings, the emergency order needs to be vacated by the Governor. Tracy said they haven’t explored rules with the Emergency Management Director and Bryan as far as opening Town Hall and how we’re handling vaccinated and unvaccinated people. Once we unlock the door, all of the COVID screening goes away. Before that happens, Tracy would like to know that the executive order has expired, and that we’ve addressed how we’re handling vaccinated and unvaccinated people and whether they will be masked or unmasked.

Sharon thought at the very least a sign could be on the front door stating if a person is unvaccinated, please wear a mask. No one would have to stand at the door and police them. Sharon said she is concerned about unvaccinated people entering without a mask and infecting each other. She wondered if there was any way to find out from the state how we should be wording a sign.

Mary said they should start with Mariah and get her opinion.

Bryan said we have discussed this quite in depth at the office. He spoke with Mariah on Friday. The sticking point is you have to go by trust. Nobody wants to be the person that asks if someone is vaccinated. We will get some guidance but until the emergency order is lifted, we will have to play it by ear and be ready to open up as soon as possible.

Li said she doesn’t want people in the building without masks, presumable some that are not vaccinated, and possibly contagious. We don’t want contagions spreading in Town Hall which is a big problem. Even if a person is vaccinated, are we completely immune or are we just going to get a bit of the virus? There are gradations of gray that we don’t know how to deal with.

Steve said he is not sure if he is in favor of it or not. Once the mandate is lifted, does the town have the authority to require masks in Town Hall?

Bryan said it is his understanding from conversations with Mariah, that the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) recommends following state guidelines versus having our own policies.

Steve said the City Council in Burlington has set up their own protocols and the mayor is against them, saying they don’t have their own health department. Steve wondered if it’s within our authority to do it.



# Town of Thetford Vermont

3910 Vermont Route 113 • P.O. Box 126 • Thetford Center, VT 05075  
802-785-2922 • thetfordvermont.us

Tracy said what's tricky about the order is what will happen when it expires. The current regulation is one unvaccinated person within Town Hall. Who is unvaccinated and how are we asking? Once the executive order expires, I would certainly expect that there will be some other guidelines.

Sharon heard that health places may continue to have people masked.

Tracy said what's different about Town Hall is there are only so many people in Town Hall doing our work. Unlike retail or health facilities, there is not a line of people who can do it. The Selectboard needs to keep in mind the continuation of governance. Last year we scheduled ourselves in the office every other day so as not to cross each other, and then we wiped our way out of the building, making it so the continuation of governance could take place. Tracy said she would like to make sure the hard work we've done to this point sustains us as we reopen as well. Li thanked Tracy for putting that perspective on things.

Sharon asked if we, as a Selectboard, with the Town Manager, shall meet in person on the 21<sup>st</sup>. Then we wait to hear what the directives are from the state level and change into a hybrid when we can.

Steve asked if they are all in agreement that they would like Zoom to continue indefinitely.

Li said she was, and she is not sure she is in favor of getting Town Hall open as soon as possible. Sharon has heard from many people who said they would like to participate in person, but she wants it to be a wise decision.

Motion by Sharon Harkay that beginning on June 21, 2021, the Selectboard, Town Manager, and Selectboard assistant will begin meeting at Town Hall whenever physically possible. Li Shen said a motion was not needed, just an agreement that we will start meeting there. Sharon withdrew her motion.

Sharon said she was supposed to announce something during public comment but forgot. The other Selectboard members agreed that she could make the announcement now.

Sharon said most people are aware of the new signs made for the Sayre Covered Bridge on Tucker Hill Road, and we've decided to have a dedication ceremony on Thursday, June 17<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 PM. Daniels's Construction Company will install the signs. Selectboard, Town Manager, donators, and any members of the public are invited to attend. Chief Evans will decide how to deal with traffic. The Journal Opinion will be there and probably the Valley News.

## 10. Warrants and Minutes

**Motion** by Li Shen to accept the regular Selectboard meeting minutes of May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021, as edited. **VOTE unanimous (4-0-0)**

**Motion** by Mary Bryant to accept the warrants as presented. **VOTE unanimous (4-0-0)**

## 11. Adjourn

**Motion** by Steve Tofel to adjourn the regular Selectboard meeting at 8:42 PM. **VOTE unanimous (4-0-0)**