



Town of Thetford Vermont

3910 Vermont Route 113 • P.O. Box 126 • Thetford Center, VT 05075
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Selectboard Regular Meeting Minutes Thetford Town Offices (w/Virtual Attendance Option) Monday, June 21, 2021 7:00pm

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

Selectboard members absent: Nick Clark

Members of the public on site: Ellis Paige, Joanne Kirsten, Stuart Rogers

Total Zoom attendees: 19

Sharon Harkay called the meeting to order at 7:01pm.

1) Agenda Review

No changes to agenda

2) Town Manager Report – Bryan Gazda

a) Treasure Island Update

i) Introduction of Manager, Brittany Burke

Brittany Burke joined the call and gave an overview of all the activity happening with Treasure Island.

ii) Floating Dock

The dock is still waiting on repairs.

iii) Hours of Operation

Treasure Island is now open 7 days a week, from 10 am until 7 pm. Training of lifeguards is still taking place, so there may be some alteration of hours or times when the beach is posted “swim at your own risk”.

iv) Swim Lessons

There will be six weeks of swim lessons this year to allow for children to take lessons while also giving flexibility to parents.

Brittany said they are still working on staffing, but one more lifeguard was just certified. She asks that the public understand that while they will be open from 10 until 7 every day, sometimes there might not be a guard on duty. Brittany said while it’s a little challenging now, by July the staffing will be in a better situation. Brittany noted that people are excited to see that we are fully open now.

Bryan said there is new signage that says you are swimming at your own risk if there is no lifeguard on duty. Bryan thanked Brittany for all her work during the past few weeks to get Treasure Island ready to open.

b) Town Hall Update

Bryan Gazda thanked the staff for making sure Town Hall was ready to open during his absence of the past few days. Town Hall is now open from 8 am until 4 pm, and individual office hours are posted on the website. If people are not fully vaccinated, please wear a mask in Town Hall or in any other town facility. Bryan recommended that people check the website for department hours before coming to Town Hall and reminded people that online services are still available.



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c) Status of Open Positions

The Listers Administrative Assistant position had been advertised, and while a few people did apply, they did not end up coming in for interviews. The Zoning Administrator submitted a letter of resignation last week, effective July 23rd. Bryan said his thought is to combine the two positions and an ad has been placed. The hope is to find one person for both positions which will help with office space, computer equipment and other expenses. Resumes will be accepted through July 5th with interviews being conducted after that date. Two individuals have been interviewed for the Department of Public Works and the plan is to extend offers within the next week. This will bring their staffing up to 5, with a goal of having these positions filled no later than the end of the month.

d) AT&T Tower Update

Bryan said AT&T is now requesting that the tower be moved 150 feet to the north to move it away from the vernal pool. The Agency of Natural Resources had requested that the tower not interfere with the vernal pool. He just received an email stating there are no rare or endangered species at the pool. Tomorrow Bryan will be attending a Zoom meeting with the Upper Valley Land Trust to start working on the conservation easement.

Sharon Harkay asked if the representative from the Upper Valley Land Trust was able to do the site visit this week. Bryan confirmed the visit but hasn't seen a report yet.

Other:

Bryan wanted to add that he reached out to Ben Rose from the public safety office at the state. They do acknowledge that they have all the paperwork and are processing it, but they can't give any indication of when they will make a decision on the funding for us. So, we are just waiting for them to go through their process.

3) **Public Comment**

Steve Tofel asked if there were any people in the meeting room. Sharon said there were three people in the room and introduced them.

Ellis Paige wanted to know what the town will be doing for paving other than Route 132. Bryan said as of this moment nothing else is planned. Ellis noted that the pedestals installed down Academy Road are close to the edge of the road, and he wanted to know who would be responsible when the town plow truck hits them, which is what he thinks will happen this winter. Sharon said she hasn't been down that road to see the work yet. Bryan said that was all a part of Green Mountain Power's underground cable system and it's our understanding that the pedestals are part of Consolidated Communications Inc. (CCI). Bryan said that he has noted to Green Mountain Power (GMP) that they need to rethink the placement, and GMP said that CCI wanted them there. It has been noted that come the first snow those pedestals may no longer be up. We let them know and that's all we can do. Li Shen asked what would happen if those were hit by a plow, would that end up electrocuting someone or would people lose their power? Bryan said that because they are phone lines, he didn't think electrocution was a problem, but people with landlines would lose their phones. Li asked if EC Fiber would go down, but Bryan said he was told it's just for Consolidated Communications. Sharon said she thought they were burying everything, so she is surprised to hear about these pedestals. Bryan said he thought they were junction boxes where the lines are splitting off to go to the different homes. Steve Tofel said he spoke with the engineer from GMP and basically what they are doing is trying to bury the lines



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that go up into the woods so when there is a problem, they don't have to get up there to try and fix them.

Sarah Martel asked if there were any documents relating to the American Rescue Act Plan funds? Sharon said there are no documents as it is just a discussion on whether or not the town will accept the money. Sharon said they wouldn't be making any quick decisions on how the money will be used.

4) Service Agreement Discussion with Intermunicipal Regional Energy Coordinator, Geoff Martin

Sharon Harkay introduced Geoff Martin and said she had invited him to the meeting to explain or answer any questions about the Intermunicipal Regional Energy Coordinator (IREC) Service Agreement.

Geoff gave an overview of an email that had been sent to the Selectboard. The first question was whether the Thetford contribution had changed, and the answer is yes, there was a 5% increase in funding. All towns that are rejoining have that 5% increase as outlined in an email sent on November 10, 2020. The second question is why didn't the contribution decrease with the addition of Norwich and Bradford? Geoff said a significant part of his time last year was dedicated to work outside of the IREC program. With the addition of Norwich and Bradford, this will allow Geoff to work exclusively with the IREC towns. Fairlee will not be participating again this year, and their hours are comparable to Bradford, so it's really just the addition of one town, Norwich. Fairlee is not rejoining due to lack of funds in their budget. They joined late last year and were able to get a grant to cover the cost. Geoff said the program ran for only 11 months instead of 12, which is another reason for the change in cost.

Li said in the draft of the agreement, some of the figures are in red and some are not. Are these edits to the original? Geoff said that the changes are marked in red. Li said the dollar amounts seemed confusing because Thetford's amount was as budgeted but marked in red. Geoff said that was because it is a change from the original agreement.

Sharon said in the next steps Geoff mentioned that he could develop a greenhouse gas emissions inventory for the whole community if we so desired, and she wondered how it would work.

Geoff said it wouldn't be very accurate, but he could use data he already has, as well as from the recent census. He would know the number of residents, the types of heat systems that residents have, and could estimate the fuel consumption from heating and vehicle use. Geoff said he can get very accurate information from Green Mountain Power Corporation. Li said she thought some of that data was in the town plan. Geoff confirmed that it is.

Mary Bryant asked if he would go back every year or every few years to see if the inventory changes. Geoff said it would make sense to look at the numbers every few years.

Sharon said that in the first 11 months Geoff has laid a lot of good groundwork, inventory and figures and statistics, and now we can take that information and talk about how to actually use it. Sharon said she supports continuing with the program.

Mary Bryant agreed, saying Geoff has introduced different opportunities for us to tap into, as well as a lot of good programs that we never would have heard about if we weren't part of this program.

Steve Tofel said his only problem was the way it was presented. He is more than happy to continue with the program.



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Li said she is on board with the program. Every level of organizations, from the federal government all the way down, needs to think about serious issues surrounding climate change. **Motion** by Sharon Harkay to approve the new IREC Service Agreement that will run from July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022, in the amount of \$15,540.00 for 228 hours' worth of Geoff's time. **VOTE unanimous (4-0-0)**

5) Possible Acceptance of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Fund

Bryan Gazda said he was unable to attend a webinar about the funds, but the last amount he had was approximately \$250,000.00. Bryan said he is a little disappointed considering what was initially discussed. When Bryan attended a webinar with Senator Sanders, there was indication that we would have a greater use for the funds. We are going to have to give a lot of thought into the process. Bryan felt the Selectboard should accept the funds but put more thought into what portions of the program they want to be a part of. Bryan thought the dollar amount was based on per capita.

Tracy Borst said she had attended the webinar and the first step is acceptance of the money, which is \$264,965.00. The first half of that amount will be dispersed in June of 2021, and the last half will be dispersed in June of 2022. There will be more money designated to counties, and the federal government has asked that the money be spread among communities so there may be more funds coming. We have until December 31, 2024 to obligate the money, and then until December 31, 2026 to actually spend the money. There is a lot of guidance on where we can spend the money - pandemic response, workforce and personnel, and lost revenue. A lot of towns are focusing on water, sewer or broadband infrastructure, but there will be other money coming into the state for some of those projects and while we should be thinking of them, we should also be patient because it's likely there will be more grant money available. Housing and housing assistance is on that list, and broadband includes digital inclusion. The town will be able to give subgrants to organizations that help in those areas, such as behavioral and health care, and health and safety, to name a few. There is a lot to think about in terms of how we could spend this money, including the digitization of land records. Tracy said the Selectboard needs to vote on whether to accept or not, and they also need to appoint an authorized representative to be the contact person in the portal. Typically, this would be the finance director, town administrator, Selectboard chair, or town manager. That person would be formally accepting on the municipality's behalf. If we don't use the money, it goes back to the state and eventually those funds will be reallocated. Tracy said her recommendation is to accept it and see where we go with planning.

Sharon said she wanted to make sure that everyone understands this money cannot be used for rebuilding or paving roads, but there are a lot of other good programs we could use it for. Steve wanted to know if accepting the funds would obligate us to matching funds. Bryan Gazda said no matching funds were needed. Bryan asked if the payments would be half of \$264,965 this June and the remainder next year. Tracy confirmed.

Motion by Sharon Harkay that we accept the American Rescue Plan Act Funds and that we appoint Town Manager, Bryan Gazda as the authorized representative. **VOTE unanimous (4-0-0)**

6) Possible Amendment to the Selectboard 2021 Rules of Procedure, Section E – Meetings



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Sharon Harkay said the Rules of Procedures states that the Selectboard will meet every 1st and 3rd Monday of the month, but they didn't put into rules what happens if those meetings fall on a holiday, either itself or the day people have off. Sharon suggested moving the meetings to the following Tuesday.

Mary Bryan said she would be in favor of that.

The Selectboard assistant asked if Sharon meant the very next day, and Sharon confirmed.

Li Shen said she would like some flexibility with that, as there are other committee meetings that fall on a Tuesday.

Steve Tofel wondered if they could word it to say that we will hold a meeting at the nearest practical date.

Joanne Kirsten asked why they didn't just have it on the following Monday.

Sharon pointed out that would mean the next meeting will be in 3 weeks.

Motion by Mary Bryant that should a regularly scheduled meeting fall on a recognized Monday holiday, the meetings will then be changed to the following Monday. **VOTE unanimous (4-0-0)**

7) Discussion of Selectboard Meetings in August 2021

Sharon said she will be out on Monday August 2nd and wanted to know if the Selectboard wanted to carry on without her or put that meeting off until the next week. Sharon said they could cancel it too.

Li said they should keep having 2 meetings a month and was in favor of putting it off until the next week.

Sharon confirmed that the meeting schedule would then be July 12th and 19th, August 9th and 23rd, and September 13th. These will be warned as special selectboard meetings.

8) Warrants & Minutes

Mary asked Tracy for clarification on some of the warrants. Tracy explained she would have to pull them from the office but gave Mary an idea of what was in them. Sharon said she wanted the public to know that these were already signed by the Selectboard, and this was the public approval.

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

Motion by Li Shen to approve the regular Selectboard meeting minutes of June 7th, 2021, as amended. **VOTE unanimous (4-0-0)**

9) Confidential attorney-client communication concerning negotiations with the International Union of Public Employees (IUPE) and with the New England Police Benevolent Association, anticipated Executive Session pursuant to Title 1 V.S.A. section 313 (a) (1)

Sharon Harkay **moved** to find that premature, general public discussion of this subject would clearly place the public body or person involved to suffer a substantial disadvantage. **VOTE unanimous (4-0-0)**

Stuart Rogers commented that in order to make any decisions the Selectboard would need to come out of executive session.

Motion by Sharon Harkay at 8:02 pm to discuss these matters in an Executive Session per Discussion of Matters as per 1V.S.A., section 313(a)(1). **VOTE unanimous (4-0-0)**



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Motion by Sharon Harkay to exit executive session at 9:38 pm. **VOTE unanimous (4-0-0)**

Motion by Li Shen to approve the International Union of Public Employees contract subject to changes to be approved by the Town Manager and Town attorney for the Department of Public Works. **VOTE unanimous (4-0-0)**

10) Adjourn

Motion by Steve Tofel to adjourn the regular Selectboard meeting at 9:40 pm. **VOTE unanimous (4-0-0)**