



Town of Thetford Vermont

3910 Vermont Route 113 • P.O. Box 126 • Thetford Center, VT 05075
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Selectboard Special Meeting Approved Minutes

Thetford Town Offices

(w/Virtual Attendance Option)

Monday, June 27th, 2022 7:00 PM

Selectboard members present: Sharon Harkay (chair), Li Shen (vice-chair), Mary Bryant, David Goodrich, Steve Tofel

Others present: Town Manager Bryan Gazda, Town Clerk/Treasurer Tracy Borst, Kate Buckley – Vermont League of Cities and Towns, Selectboard Assistant Martie Betts

Participating community members: Tammy Hazlett, Nicki Corrao, Ben Bradley, Melanie French

1. *Agenda Review*
2. *Public Comment*
3. *Vermont League of Cities & Towns ARPA Presentation with Katie Buckley*
4. *Possible Appointment to the Planning Commission*
5. *Possible Adoption of the Facility Use Policy*
6. *Possible Adoption of the Delinquent Tax Policy*
7. *Regional Energy Coordinator Contract Renewal*
8. *Anticipated Executive Session Pertaining to Employment or Evaluation of a Public Officer or Employee per 1 V.S.A. § 313(3)(a)(3)*
9. *Adjourn*

Sharon Harkay called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM.

1. Agenda Review

The Vermont Council on Rural Development has invited us to choose a town leader to go to the 3rd Vermont Leadership Summit, and Sharon would like to add it to the agenda to meet their deadline.

2. Public Comment

No public comment.

3. Vermont League of Cities & Towns ARPA Presentation with Katie Buckley

Katie Buckley gave an overview of how the funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) could be used. The town of Thetford will receive \$756,851.75, and the funds must be spent by December 21st, 2026. The state has no say over the spending of local ARPA money.

Sharon asked if the legislative body is still responsible when a town has a town manager.

Katie said it depends on what the town charter says, and Sharon said there was no charter. Katie will do some research and get back to the board.

Katie noted there are three ways the money could not be spent. If something is illegal to spend taxpayers money on, if there is an appearance of conflict, and if you wouldn't consider asking taxpayers to spend their money on it. She reminded the board that there is already state assistance for individuals and households, businesses, childcare and broadband, along with



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billions of federal dollars pouring into Vermont for water and sewer, broadband, and to repair roads and bridges. ARPA funds could be used to match grants in these areas.

Tammy Hazlett commented that all the financing that local daycares have received does not apply to increasing capacity. That is one of the goals, as we are not meeting the needs in our own community for our children and families. Tammy did contact Let's Grow Kids, and they encouraged her to go to the town for ARPA funds. Tammy said daycares will be losing \$300 a month in subsidies for the food program come July 1st and funding has been cut for COVID related expenses.

Katie said she will do some research and see if she can come up with more resources.

Katie said that many other towns are forming ARPA committees, who are sending out surveys to gather input from the community. She suggested consultation with the regional planning commission, who can offer assistance with public communications.

4. Possible Appointment to the Planning Commission

Motion by Sharon Harkay to appoint Jeff Jemele to the Planning Commission for a 3-year term, ending in 2025. VOTE by roll call: Steve Tofel – in favor, Mary Bryant – in favor, Li Shen – in favor, David Goodrich – in favor, Sharon Harkay – in favor. **Motion passed.**

5. Possible Adoption of the Facility Use Policy

Nicki Carrao, a Thetford Center Community Association (TCCA) board member, had some questions about the policy as they would like to use the Thetford Center Green on July 23rd for a Vendor Fair. They have used the green before, and never had to sign a contract, pay a fee or provide insurance.

Sharon said as a point of order, the policy has not been adopted yet, and she is not finding anything about insurance in the draft policy.

Bryan Gazda said the insurance requirement is noted in the agreement.

Sharon felt it should be added to the policy because both the policy and the agreement should say the same thing.

Li Shen agreed and said she was under the impression that the town was protected under PACIF (Property and Casualty Intermunicipal Fund).

Bryan said if a vendor wants to use a municipal property and you don't require any insurance, the town becomes the first line of defense should something happen.

Li thought it very unfortunate that we are considering making the TCCA, a community association that works very hard just to survive, pay for insurance.

Bryan said they have already forwarded a certificate of insurance naming us and doesn't understand why this is an issue.

Nicki said the association does not have the time to wait for another meeting, as vendors have already assigned up to be at the fair. They are really not sure where to go from here.

Sharon suggested in addition to adding a section about insurance, to also add that by written request the Selectboard may waive or reduce the fee or the insurance.

Nicki noted that their concern is whether or not they have been granted use of the space and could the fees be waived.

Sharon noted that 2 vendors who pay the \$25 fee to TCCA would cover the \$50 user fee for the green. She said they would benefit from letting the board continue the process of adopting a



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policy. The Selectboard does not need to decide on the TCCA case tonight but can wait until the 11th and then decide whether or not to waive the \$50 fee.

Bryan said it was hard to understand everything that's going on. With the current event, TCCA got the current agreement. They have already provided their certificate of insurance. In order to have the fee waived they needed to come before the Selectboard, which is where we are at now. He was not aware that someone from TCCA would be here tonight, because it was on the agenda for the 11th. It seems like there are two conversations going on, but the decision for tonight is whether you want to waive the fee. They have already been given permission to use the green on that day and have provided a certificate of insurance.

Sharon said come July 11th we will have this on the agenda, whether or not to waive the fee.

Ben Bradly said if they intended to waive the fee under the new policy why don't they just waive the fee under the old policy and then it's done.

Sharon said she would like to pass the policy first, and then make the decision on July 11th, so it can be put on the agenda.

Nicki added that it is a concern that there will be a fee to use that public space, and that they should consider that the green and Town Hall are two different types of facilities, so that might need to be taken into consideration.

Melanie French thought requiring insurance where only groups and vendors that are commercial and larger can afford it, in order to use a space that has been open to residents before is a concern to her. She is bothered that a family won't be able to use it.

Sharon said the question is do we or don't we want to put in whether or not we would be able to waive that insurance. If it is a town group, they are already covered by town insurance. An outside group would need insurance.

Li said they need to pay attention to what Melanie just said. This doesn't mean residents that want to do something on the green can't use it. Perhaps we should look at people who are commercial vs. people from the town. It would be yet another little barrier for residents who would like to use the green.

Sharon asked Bryan if he could get some numbers on what the cost would be for a person to have insurance for use of the green.

Bryan said this will not prevent residents from having a picnic or ball game on the field but would give an individual the first right to use the space. We would be allowing them sole use of that facility for that day and purpose.

Sharon suggested 2 copies, one with the insurance and possible waiver, and one without, then we can decide based on the cost of getting insurance.

Li noted that 150 maximum occupancy is not that big considering the size of the green.

Bryan said parking needs to be a consideration.

Li said people have always managed to figure it out in the past.

The rest of the Selectboard felt 150 was sufficient and there were other places in town that could be used for larger events.

Bryan noted changes he made to the section on alcohol, tobacco and drug use.

Steve Tofel asked about the ability to restrict the space for any group who has a particular viewpoint that would be controversial.

Sharon said the policy should be fair and consistent, and noted the last sentence of the second paragraph.



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Bryan will go back to the draft and make more changes for review at the July 11th meeting.

6. Possible Adoption of the Delinquent Tax Policy

The Selectboard discussed including language that would give the delinquent tax collector more flexibility in determining payment plans.

Tracy Borst said she does not see the payment of taxes as negotiable. Most people know they owe the tax and of the 20 people currently on the delinquent list, there are multiple payment plans or reasons for the delinquency. There has not been active delinquent tax collection for several years. Tracy has given information for COVID relief funds, and several people have taken advantage of it.

Bryan said he did not think the property owner should have the final decision on how to pay the taxes. There should be some sort of mutual agreement. Until the policy is adopted and put into place we won't know how it is going to work. A lot depends on who is sitting on the chair as the delinquent tax collector. The policy can always be amended later.

Motion by Sharon Harkay to accept the Policy of the Collector of Delinquent Taxes, as presented, effective June 27th, 2022.

Tracy said she would like the board to consider one more time, the requirement of taxes being paid in 2 years versus one. Allowing 2 years has the potential for so much more debt for the tax payer. Sharon noted that it won't benefit the taxpayer to string it out longer than necessary due to the increase in interest.

Mary Bryant said while she can see that, someone might just need some more time to catch up. She supports the 2 years, allowing the judgment of the tax collector.

VOTE by roll call: Steve Tofel – in favor, Mary Bryant – in favor, Li Shen – in favor, David Goodrich – in favor, Sharon Harkay – in favor. **Motion passed.**

7. Regional Energy Coordinator Contract Renewal

Motion by Mary Bryant to accept the Regional Energy Coordinator Contract Renewal agreement for the fiscal year of 2023. VOTE by roll call: Steve Tofel – in favor, Mary Bryant – in favor, Li Shen – in favor, David Goodrich – in favor, Sharon Harkay – in favor. **Motion passed.**

8. Nomination for Leadership Summit

The summit will be on August 10th at the Vermont Technical College in Randolph. Sharon Harkay nominated David Goodrich.

David Goodrich accepts the nomination and Sharon will submit his registration.

9. Anticipated Executive Session Pertaining to Employment or Evaluation of a Public Officer or Employee per 1 V.S.A. § 313(3)(a)(3)

Sharon proposed moving the executive session to July 11th. Li noted that she would not be at that meeting. The Selectboard agreed to move the executive session to July 11th.

10. Adjourn

Motion by Steve Tofel to adjourn the regular Selectboard meeting at 9:15 PM. VOTE; All in favor (5-0-0) Motion passed.