



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 Thetford Town Offices (w/Virtual Attendance Option) Monday, May 15th, 2023, 7:00 PM

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

Others present: Interim Town Manager Tom Yennerell, DPW Foreman Dale Lewis, Selectboard Assistant Martie Betts

Participating community members: Chair of the Joint Thetford Energy Committee Nolan Riegler, Margaret Stephens

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

1. Agenda Review

No changes to the agenda.

2. Notes from the Selectboard Chair

Sharon said she is still waiting for the results of the background and reference check for the town manager candidate and hopes to get something in the next few days.

Sharon has been in touch with Jeff Potter, the project manager for the Lyme-Thetford Bridge Project about the misleading signs on I-91. The signs say the detour is for Route 113 east which has been leading people to believe they can't go from the I-91 exit down to East Thetford. Jeff said they are reviewing the situation. Chris Bump from VTrans called to make sure he understood what the town was worried about and how it could be fixed. Sharon asked Chris to reach out to Jeff Potter, which he did, and he reported back to Sharon that NH DOT is taking the concerns very seriously. There are very strict guidelines for what signage can be used for each circumstance. They may augment with more of the electronic signboards to make it clearer that you can get from I-91 to East Thetford.

3. Town Manager Report – interim manager Tom Yennerell

Tom said this was his 6th day in the office, and he has spent considerable time setting up communications and finding out what's going on in town. All of this has taken a little more time than he anticipated.

There will be a Treasure Island workday this Saturday, May 20th, and the beach should be open on the 27th. They will be open on the weekends only for now.

Li Shen asked about staffing and Tom said Amy Fahey has it fully staffed.

Steve Tofel asked Tom if he had been receiving recent emails about Jackson Brook Road.

Sharon said it is out of the hands of the Selectboard now, but she was aware that both parties have retained attorneys.

Steve asked if there has been progress on getting more police officers.

Tom said he spoke with Chief Scruggs, and he has been working on it. Tom said he believes there have been applicants.



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4. Public Comment

No public comment.

5. Joint Thetford Energy Committee Request to Apply for New England Grassroots Fund Grant – Window Dressers Program

Sharon said the Energy Committee would like Selectboard approval to allow them to apply for a grant. The committee has applied for this grant before. The committee chair Nolan Riegler had suggested making a motion to allow them to do it every year, so they wouldn't have to ask. Mary said the time of year for the grant is when we are working on budgets and town meeting, so it doesn't always make it on the agenda. The committee has been doing this for 4 or 5 years and it's the same grant every year.

Nolan Riegler, chair of the Energy Committee confirmed what Mary said and added that as the committee is part of town government, they need to have Selectboard's permission to apply. If the Selectboard could give permission to continually apply for the grant it would speed up the process.

Sharon asked about the excess left over from the last grant.

Nolan said they are asking for a smaller amount this year because of the money left over. It is his understanding that if they haven't spent all of the money, they are able to roll it over into similar programs and in the past the excess has been returned. The grant is always for the window dressers program.

Sharon said she totally understands why the committee would want the Selectboard to give a blanket go-ahead, but they have been cautioned in the past about tying the hands of future Selectboards.

Li Shen agreed.

David Goodrich asked if the process could begin sooner so it didn't get overlooked during the budget/town meeting time.

Nolan acknowledged that it does happen around the same time every year so they could work on making sure they get the request in early enough.

Motion by Mary Bryant that we approve the Joint Thetford Energy Committee's application to apply for the New England Grassroots Fund Grant for the Window Dressers Program for this next year. VOTE: All in favor (5-0-0), **motion passed**.

6. 2023 Priorities and Goals for Town Manager and Selectboard

Sharon said she has made the changes discussed at the April 3rd meeting.

David Goodrich wondered if they should create an application form for the agricultural tax stabilization policy.

There was discussion about developing a building maintenance ordinance.

The Selectboard reviewed the document and made more edits.

Tom suggested the Selectboard discuss this with the new town manager and consider an order of the priorities.

Sharon will make the changes discussed tonight and will share the document.



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7. Discussion re. Next Steps in Applying Ordinance Regulating Dangerous or Unsafe Buildings to the Property at the Corner of Houghton Hill and Turnpike Roads

Tom said there have been several complaints about this building and after looking at it, he agrees that it is an issue and recommends the Selectboard convene a committee to look at the building. The ordinance gives options of what can be done about it. Tom said the Selectboard should include a structural engineer in the committee, as well as the Fire Chief and Health Officer. Sharon said the Fire Chief (Chad Whitcomb) and Health Officer (Mariah Whitcomb) have already looked at it, so do they need to be on the committee.

Tom said that according to the ordinance they should be there. Tom did reach out to the owner and told him this would be on the agenda tonight. Tom will contact him again to tell him how the board is going to proceed.

Sharon said at this point the Listers say it would have to be classified as salvage. There is concern from some residents about materials going into the pond, such as insulation and plastic. Margaret Stephens wrote in the chat that the current owner, Richard Balagur, has had the building for at least 5 years. She also said that she doesn't know anything about degrading plastic, but the whole building has been covered with plastic for 5 to 6 years, and it's tearing apart and being degraded by the sun. Margaret thinks that's what's happening in the oceans and it's too bad that it's happening in Thetford. She goes by this property every day and it's just falling down bit by bit.

Motion by Sharon Harkay that we direct the Town Manager to form a committee consisting of the Town Manager, the Fire Chief, the Health Officer and a qualified structural engineer to conduct a site visit and compile a report of findings of fact, conclusions and recommendations and submit that report to the Selectboard. All of this should happen unless during the Town Manager's discussion with the property owner another arrangement is made to handle the problem. VOTE: All in favor (5-0-0), **motion passed**.

8. Board Volunteer to Research Pros and Cons of Having a Town Social Worker and Details of Position, etc., in VT and NH Towns That Have One

Sharon said there were requests last year from several people, including our town Service Officer and Community Nurse that we consider adding a position of a town social worker. Sharon would like 1 or 2 Selectboard members to really look into the idea and come back with a written report so we can determine if we want to have one.

Mary Bryant had information on Rutland's Project Vision, which started as a grass roots initiative with the police department.

Steve and Mary will work on it and submit a preliminary report by July 17th.

Sharon suggested they speak with Jessica Eaton and Pril Hall to hear what they think some of the issues are.

David Goodrich also suggested they reach out to Orange County Restorative Justice, as some things may overlap.

Tom noted that the initiative in Rutland began as a response to the opioid epidemic there, and that Thetford's circumstances are quite different.



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9. Change July 3rd Meeting to July 10th

Sharon suggested the Selectboard move their regular meeting scheduled for July 3rd to July 10th due to the holiday. All agreed to move the meeting. The second meeting in July will remain on the 17th.

10. Warrants and Minutes

PR #10 PPE 5.13.23

#9.3 \$10,450.00

#9.4 \$21,185.97

#10.2 \$22,835.94

#11.2 \$9,106.84

#19.1 \$8,584.72

#20.1 \$8,371.87

Motion by Li Shen to accept the warrants as presented. VOTE: All in favor (5-0-0), **motion passed**.

Motion by Mary Bryant that we accept the special Selectboard meeting minutes of April 24th, 2023, as presented and the regular Selectboard meeting minutes of May 4th, 2023, as amended. VOTE: All in favor (5-0-0), **motion passed**.

11. Adjourn

Motion by Steve Tofel to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 PM. VOTE: All in favor (5-0-0), **motion passed**.