



# Town of Thetford Vermont

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## **Selectboard Regular Meeting Minutes Thetford Town Offices (w/Virtual Attendance Option) Monday, August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023 7:00 PM**

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

Others present: Jim McCracken, Eddie Ham, Jessica Eaton, Cathy Newbury, David Forbes

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 that Brian is out of town for a memorial service and will be back in the office this Thursday. The dangerous building on Houghton Hill Road has been demolished. This past week the wood from the building was burned after receiving a permit from the Agency of Natural Resources. There was a site visit with Dave Shephard from the Air Quality and Climate Division, Fire Chief Chad Whitcomb, the excavating company, and the owner of the property. They talked through what was allowed to be burned and what was not. The hazardous materials were pulled out and put in a separate area.

Last Tuesday Mary Ellen Parkman started work as interim Zoning Administrator and will work at least through September 1<sup>st</sup>. There is an option to extend that date if both Mary Ellen and the town agree that it needs to happen. There will be an executive session tonight and Sharon anticipates talking about the permanent Zoning Administrator candidate recommended to the Selectboard by the Planning Commission.

Sharon said the Recreation Director Amy Fahey has submitted her resignation.

There will be a special meeting next Tuesday at 7:30 PM for a candidates' forum with the 2 people interested in filling the vacancy on Selectboard. The candidates will give a presentation introducing themselves, giving their reasons why they are interested in the position, what skills they have that are appropriate to the position. Then there will be a period for questions. The Selectboard will discuss the candidates in executive session and announce their decision in open session.

### **3. Public Comment**

No public comment.

### **4. Continued Discussion of the Conservation Easement with the Upper Valley Land Trust with Attorney Ed Adrian**

Ed Adrian suggested that this discussion take place in an executive session, as there may be sensitive legal advice, and there is an open docket number at the Public Utilities Commission.

There was discussion about whether the discussion should be in executive session. Sharon checked with people in the room to see if they had any questions or comments pertaining to this agenda item.

Jim McCracken had some information about logging in the town forest. Ed Adrian said that information might not change anything but would have historical value. Sharon asked Jim to have the Selectboard assistant make copies of the information.

**Motion** by Sharon Harkay to table this agenda item and roll it into the anticipated Executive Session. VOTE by Roll Call: Steve Tofel – in favor, Li Shen – in favor, David Goodrich – in favor, Sharon Harkay – in favor. **Motion passed.**

### **5. Continued Discussion of the Potential Part-Time Town Social Worker Position**

Sharon Harkay reviewed the information and discussion to date. Sharon said she and Steve met with Brian Story last Tuesday. The purpose of the meeting was to inform Brian Story about the previous discussion and Sharon had prepared a handout which condensed the multi-page packet that Steve and Mary had given the Selectboard at the previous meeting, as well as additional thoughts from Sharon's further research. They discussed what Brian thought the timeline should be and overall goals. The main thing is getting community input through a community forum as part of a Selectboard meeting, and then after that the job description would be developed. A survey could also be developed to help get input. Brian was clear that he didn't want to just put the position in the budget and wait for people to notice. He wants to talk about it during the budget information meetings and at the Town Meeting. Then he feels that it's only after the Town Meeting that we would begin the process of hiring somebody. There was also recognition that other salaries need to come up to keep and attract the workers we need.

Li Shen said she likes the timeline and wondered about whether it should be a warned article. Sharon said Brian did not want it as a warned article but have it in the budget with discussion. Li said she hopes that asking for community input doesn't raise expectations too high, as it is only a part time position.

Sharon said that her research indicated that people being trained to go into this field are being encouraged to choose a ~~asked about~~ specific type of work, so the town needs to think about the skill set someone might have and what they can do in the amount of time we give to the position.

David Goodrich thought one of the first things that needed to happen was to look at the services we think are needed and see if the existing social services organizations can pick up some of that slack, so we aren't creating a position that is duplicating efforts.

Sharon said when she met with Brian and Steve, the three agreed that we wouldn't be looking for someone to do therapy and counseling, as there are other agencies that do that. Our social worker would help get the people in need to the different agencies. David said one of the primary needs is things like fuel assistance, and some of the agencies that we give money to are set up to do that. David said he wants to make sure the town is getting what we pay for with these agencies.

Sharon reviewed the bullet points on the document that she compiled and said that the idea is to connect the people to an agency and follow up to make sure they got the help that they need.

There was discussion about organizations that will already do that, and the struggles some of these organizations face with financial cuts.

Steve spoke about the use of the town trust fund and how it's sometimes used in situations that other agencies wouldn't cover.

Eddie Ham once again suggested creating a resource book, which could solve a lot of problems.

There was discussion about the resource book and where it would be made available. Eddie also said it seems that this is getting into a massive description for a job.

Jessica Eaton, Town Service Officer said people will contact agencies but if they can't reach anyone there is often no follow up. The trustees of the Farm Trust would like to see action steps being taken, and that people are learning to help themselves.

Sharon read 3 questions from the document; How do we differentiate between this position and the town service officer's duties? Does the service officer try to help first and then hand clients over to the social worker? Do they have different responsibilities that are clearly delineated?

Jessica said as the town service officer, she was told when she took the position that she was a liaison to the trustees of the trust, and that was it. She is doing a lot more than that. There was discussion about how the town Service officer and the social worker could work together. Jessica said that generally when someone needs assistance, such as an electric bill that needs to be paid or their power will be shut off, Jessica can help them get the bill paid. At that point the client can go to the social worker to help determine what their overall need is.

Sharon said that the idea is to help them solve their problems, not just address the immediate need. Another thing that will need to be decided is whether this position is with the Police Department, or with the Town Manager. Sharon thought if the Police Department needed the help of the social worker, they could cross over and help, but ultimately, they would be under the Town Manager, as the Police Department is also under the town manager. But in the discussion with Brian, it turns out he would like the position in the Police Department. Sharon reached out to the town of Brattleboro, as they had just hired a social worker under the Police department, but they didn't respond to Sharon. She suggested that Brian reach out to them.

Cathy Newbury said at the last meeting she was convinced INSERT CATHY'S VERSION that the job should be a Police department position, but since then she has spoken with some people who do not think it should be in the police department. Some people would be hesitant to even approach the social worker if the social worker is lodged in the police department. Having a survey might bring this out, and Cathy offered to hand them out and/or an announcement about the forum on the 18<sup>th</sup> of September during TEN events.

Sharon thanked everyone for their comments.

Sharon suggested that the community forum for the social worker position be scheduled for September 18<sup>th</sup>.

David Forbes offered to send thoughts about the job description to the Selectboard as both he and his wife are retired from a similar line of work.

#### **6. Convene the Local Liquor Control Board to Review a New Request to Cater Permit for Collaborative Stoke LLC, September 1<sup>st</sup> at a Private Residence**

**Motion** by Sharon Harkay to suspend the regular Selectboard meeting to convene the Local Liquor Control Board at 7:54 PM to review a request from Collaborative Stoke LLC, Trail Break Tap & Tacos. This is a first-time request for this company. VOTE: All in favor (4-0-0). **Motion passed.** **Motion** by David Goodrich to approve the liquor license for Trail Break Tap & Tacos for a September 1 event at a private address on Houghton Hill Road. VOTE: All in favor (4-0-0). **Motion passed.**

**Motion** by Sharon Harkay to adjourn the Local Liquor Control Board meeting and reconvene the regular Selectboard meeting at 7:57 PM. VOTE: All in favor (4-0-0). **Motion passed.**

#### **7. Warrants and Minutes**

# 30.1 \$12,098.51

#15.3 \$552.41

#16.3 \$100.40

#17.2 \$37,630.06

**Motion** by Li Shen to accept the warrants as presented. VOTE: All in favor (4-0-0).

**Motion passed.**

**Motion** by Steve Tofel to approve the minutes of August 7<sup>th</sup> as edited. VOTE: All in favor (4-0-0). **Motion passed.**

#### **8. Anticipated Executive Session to Discuss the Planning Commission's Choice for a Permanent Zoning Administrator per 1 V.S.A. §313(a)(3)**

**Motion** by Sharon Harkay to enter Executive Session at 8:08 PM to discuss the Planning Commission's choice for a permanent Zoning Administrator per 1 V.S.A. §313(a)(3) and to discuss the Conservation Easement with Upper Valley Land Trust and invite attorney Ed Adrian to the discussion per 1 V.S.A. §313(a)(1). VOTE: All in favor (4-0-0). **Motion passed.**

**Motion** by Sharon Harkay to exit Executive Session at 8:47 pm. VOTE: All in favor (4-0-0). **Motion passed.**

**Motion** by Sharon Harkay to approve the Grant of Development Rights, Conservation Restrictions and Public Access Easement and to further ask our attorney to work on any necessary documents to convey the 87 acres to Upper Valley Land Trust by the deadline of September 16th.

VOTE by Roll Call: David Goodrich opposed, Sharon Harkay in favor, Li Shen in favor, Steve Tofel in favor. **Motion passed.**

**Motion** by Sharon Harkay that "The Selectboard directs the Town Manager to extend an offer of employment to the Zoning Administrator candidate chosen by the Planning Commission, contingent on a successful background check."

VOTE by Roll Call: Steve Tofel-in favor, Sharon Harkay-in favor, Li Shen-in favor, David Goodrich-in favor. **Motion passed.**

#### **9. Adjourn**

**Motion** by Steve Tofel to adjourn the Selectboard meeting at 8:54 pm. VOTE: All in favor (4-0-0). **Motion passed.**