

# SANDGATE VERMONT SELECTBOARD MINUTES - MARCH 17, 2025

**CALL TO ORDER: 6:00 p.m.**

**ATTENDANCE:** Board members: Joe Nolan, John Phelps, Linda Schmidt, Rob Viglas. Also present: Elizabeth Daut, Adam Hess, Bill Jones, Sheila Kearns, Bill Mitchell, Phyllis Skidmore, Jay Wilson, Skipper Wilson. Minute taker: Sandy Reidy.

**NEW REGIONAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COORDINATOR FOR BENNINGTON COUNTY: Bill Jones** introduces himself. He is a lifelong Vermont resident and veteran of the fire service in Poultney. He is now responsible for helping towns in Bennington County get the support they need from the state in the event of an emergency. He is the contact for revisions to this year's Local Emergency Management Plan (LEMP). Joe Nolan says the Town does not have an Emergency Management Director (EMD) and asks Bill what is involved in that. Bill explains that full certification in this role entails about 75 hours of training, some online and some in person. Linda Schmidt says she asked Dara Zink of the BCRC what the minimum training for the role would be; Dara advises five core classes totaling about 22 hours of training. John Phelps asks what the responsibilities of the EMD are. Bill says that in the event of a disaster, the Sandgate EMD would manage the Town's response, including requesting access to the shelter in Arlington. Elizabeth Daut asks if the Town EMD must be fully certified to fill the role. After attaining the basic level of training, the EMD could choose to complete more training, or not. Bill Mitchell says that, as a firefighter, he has completed many of the required courses and that they are very helpful, especially for helping fire companies from different towns and states coordinate their shared work on individual fires. Sandy Reidy asks if the EMD position is compensated in other towns. Bill says that in his town the EMD is the town manager, salaried by the town. Bill has created a draft of the LEMP that is due June 1 and will send it to Joe for updating.

**FILLING VACANT LISTER POSITIONS: Phyllis Skidmore and Adam Hess** are interested in this role. John asks if they are aware of the work involved. Linda says training is available, and Sheila Kearns says the most significant things to learn are the use of NEMRC and VT-PIE, the two digital systems in which data is recorded. Linda asks about the volume and timing of work. Sheila says the main deadlines are for the updating of the Grand List and Current Use data, and the grievance process. She says more complete property details and updated mapping should also be added to the Town's data. Linda says Phyllis and Adam should talk with Jeanne Zoppel to learn exactly what is needed in the role. Linda will arrange a meeting. Sheila has provided the Board with information on assessor consultants who can be hired as needed.

March 17, 2025

**ROAD REPORT:** Jay Wilson says he and Skipper are grading and hauling stone, trying to keep ahead of the mud, working most recently on Wuerslin Road. There is work to be done now in Beartown. Sheila asks if Crown Maple has been asked about contributing to the cost of Town road maintenance. Joe spoke with them a few weeks ago, and Crown Maple plans to discuss this in their upcoming budget meeting. Sheila asks if an annual amount can be agreed on and planned for in the annual Town budget. Joe will propose this to the company and ask again about a contribution for this year.

**OTHER BUSINESS:** Joe says there are still two **open slots on the Planning Commission**. Linda asks about the plan for the damaged **plow truck**. Jay says a mechanic has been found who might be able to repair the plow frame; he will look at the truck this week. Linda asks about **Charlie Pike's resignation from the Selectboard**. Joe says that, in this situation in the past, the Board has appointed an alternate to serve. Sheila asks if the results of the recent election should be considered. Joe says this was discussed in a similar situation several years ago, but the decision was made to appoint an alternate instead. Linda says the state statute she read does not refer specifically to this situation, where the resignation occurs shortly after an election. Sheila says an appointment would be valid until the next election, which would fill the vacant seat. She asks if the Board feels four people are enough to do the work needed. Bill Mitchell asks if four people are sufficient to represent the voters when five members are called for. Rob Viglas asks if choosing the person with the next most votes would negate the votes of those who voted for Charlie. Linda asks if Sandgate has ever held a special election; Sandy says there was one several years ago, concerning a specific article regarding use of funds. Linda says she thinks the Board needs a fifth person to complete its work. Linda has compiled a list of items left over from last year and items to be dealt with in the coming year and will bring it to the April 7 Board meeting, so everyone sees what there is to do.

Jay says he received an email from **FEMA** saying two more road projects—including the recent ditching and stone lining on Lincoln Lane—were approved for payment. He is waiting for a third approval of payment for administrative time. He says Rupert plans to trade in its **pay loader**, and he suggests Sandgate buy it. Joe says a portion of the incoming FEMA reimbursement can cover this cost. Joe says incoming grant money should be recorded in Town accounting as a separate line item, so residents can easily see those numbers. Sheila reminds the Board that the Auditors will attend the April 7 Board meeting, and this can be brought up then. Elizabeth asks what a pay loader would be used for, and Joe says it will be used to clean stone-lined ditches, which it can do more efficiently than the excavator currently being used. Cleaning ditches in this way means the stone can be reused rather than replaced. Elizabeth asks if the FEMA funding is still definitely expected; Jay and Sandy say the money is already with the State and is expected to be sent to the Town within the next couple weeks.

Linda asks if a recent **discrepancy in payments** toward Jay's and Skipper's retirement accounts has been fixed, and Sandy says it has. Sheila asks if a discrepancy in payments to Dead River, noticed by the Auditors, has been settled, and Sandy says she will contact Dead River.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** The Board reviews the report.

**SIGN ORDERS.**

**REVIEW OF FEBRUARY 3 AND MARCH 5 MINUTES:** Linda motions to approve; Joe seconds; all in favor.

**ADJOURN:** John motions to adjourn; Joe seconds; all in favor.

**THE NEXT MEETING WILL BE ON MONDAY APRIL 7 AT 6:00 IN SANDGATE TOWN HALL.**

Respectfully submitted by Sandra Reidy and Linda Schmidt.

*A complete recording is available by request at Sandgate Town Hall.*