

SANDGATE VERMONT SELECTBOARD MINUTES - APRIL 7, 2025

CALL TO ORDER: 6:00 p.m.

ATTENDANCE: Board members: Joe Nolan, John Phelps, Linda Schmidt, Rob Viglas.
Also present: Jack Blandford, Jeanne Blandford, Elizabeth Daut, Jim Henderson, Sheila Kearns, Margaretha Pero, Phyllis Skidmore. Minute taker: Sandy Reidy.

APPOINTMENT TO PLANNING COMMISSION: Linda Schmidt motions to appoint Jack Blandford to the Planning Commission; John Phelps seconds; all in favor.

REVIEW OF SELECTBOARD PROJECTS AND ROUTINE WORK: Linda says she has reviewed the past year's meeting minutes and made a list of all significant tasks, large and small, before the Board for the coming term. She says that, for each larger project, the Board should choose one member to be the main contact for that project, someone who can field questions, answer email, make necessary phone calls, etc., especially between Board meetings. She gives copies of the list to the Board and Town Clerk.

The special projects and other work listed are:

Improved access to West Side Cemetery: Mike Perra asked the Board about this last year. Linda spoke with Julie Robertson, who will invite Mike to the April 14 Cemetery Commission meeting to discuss.

Dwindling storage space in the Town vault: Sandy Reidy raised this concern last year. She estimates there is space in the record-book storage racks for just a few more month's worth of records. She will look into the cost of additional racks and the logistics of ordering them.

Repair of Town message boards: Joe Nolan will work on this on Green Up Day (May 3), and John offers to help.

Meeting minutes: After each Board meeting, Linda writes these minutes by listening to the meeting recording, with Sandy's draft notes, taken in the meeting, as backup. Linda says writing the minutes typically takes two hours.

Review of dry hydrants: Linda is the point person for this. Troy Dare, of the Vermont Association of Conservation Districts' Rural Fire Protection unit, will visit Sandgate on April 15 to review hydrants with Jay Wilson, Brian Hawley (Arlington Fire Chief), and Linda.

Municipal Technical Assistance Program (MTAP): An MTAP grant will fund the outfitting of Town Hall as a temporary emergency shelter, including making its water potable. Joe has contacted Gould Well Drilling, who drilled the well, but has gotten no response. He will also contact Frost Well and Pumps. Jim Henderson suggests first testing the water again, as contamination might have cleared since the septic pipe was repaired, and the Board agrees to this. He will contact Advanced Water Works in Sunderland to re-run the tests. Linda will continue as the point person on the Board for this project.

Compliance with new Vermont Open Meeting Law: There is a discussion of how the Town can comply with this law. Linda says Katie Kenny has drafted a landing page for the Town website to allow online access to audio recordings of meetings. Sheila Kearns says storage space for this data is a concern. Research and more discussion are needed to determine the best approach for the Town. **This will appear on the agenda for the April 21st Board meeting, so citizens can raise questions.** The State now requires an online training for the Board Chair.

Compliance with new Vermont State Code of Ethics: The State now requires a 45-minute online training for all Board members, and the appointment of an Ethics Liaison. Joe suggests the Board call a special meeting to do the training as a group. Rob Viglas volunteers to be the Ethics Liaison. John motions to appoint Rob to this role; Linda seconds; all in favor.

Hazard Mitigation Plan: The Town's updated plan, written last year, has been approved by the State. Dara Zink will attend the April 21 Board meeting to review the plan for adoption by the Board. Responsibility for implementation of the plan will be shared by the Board members, as the plan includes a varied list of mitigation actions.

Bennington County Solid Waste Alliance (BCSWA / ISWAP) representation: Linda has been the Town's representative for the past two years and would like to hand it off. It requires attending quarterly Zoom meetings. Sheila asks if someone other than a Board member can fill this role. Jim offers to ask Scott Grimm-Lyon, program manager for the BCSWA, if that is a possibility.

Emergency planning: Linda sent contact information for Bill Jones, the new Regional Coordinator for Vermont Emergency Management, to Bill Mitchell, the new Emergency Management Director for Sandgate. Linda says Bill Jones will fill Bill Mitchell in on attending the quarterly Regional Emergency Management Committee meetings, but VEM requires two representatives from each town for voting. Linda has been attending these meetings but asks if someone else can take on

this role. Joe advises letting Bill Mitchell suggest a person. Bill will also be involved in updating the Town's Local Emergency Management Plan (LEMP), due June 1.

Municipal Energy Resilience Program (MERP): Last year the Town was awarded a \$112K grant to make energy-related upgrades to Town Hall and the Town Garage. Included in the grant is the cost of a project manager (Clerk of the Works) to handle day-to-day logistics of planning and working with contractors. BCRC has put that job out for bid and has received a proposal from Project Consulting Inc. John asks if anyone has experience working with PCI. Linda says one Board member should be appointed liaison with the project manager. She has been attending preliminary meetings with Sheila and PCI but is not qualified to be the point person for this project. Joe suggests asking PCI what they would want from a Board liaison. Sheila leaves the PCI proposal for the Board to review.

VACANCY ON THE SELECTBOARD: Linda says that, especially given all the work listed above, the Board needs the requisite fifth member. Joe says this should be handled as it was the last time the Board was down a member: a new member should be appointed by the Board. In the previous instance, the Board appointed John to the vacant position instead of appointing the person who received the next most votes in the most recent election. Joe says it would not be fair to use election results in this instance if they were not used last time. John asks if, regardless of the past approach, the election results should be used now. Margaretha Pero asks what other towns do in this situation. Linda recently asked this of Tom Wilson, of the Rupert Selectboard, who said sometimes a vacant position on the Rupert board has been filled by appointment and sometimes not, depending on how much time will pass before the next election. Sheila suggests the Selectboard decide on criteria for appointing a fifth member and, alternatively, asks about the possibility of a special election. John says the Board needs time to consider options. Jim advocates for a special election. **The issue of the vacant seat will be on the agenda for the April 21 Board meeting.**

REVISION TO THE STANDARD SELECTBOARD MEETING AGENDA: Linda says the list above should be incorporated into the standard agenda for these meetings as an "Old Business" section. This will make it easier for the Board and the public to monitor ongoing work. Sandy will send Linda the agenda template, and Linda will add the above list.

CITIZEN CONCERNS: Linda was approached by a resident of Littman Lane, who asked why the **stop sign at the end of Campbell Road**, at the intersection with West Sandgate Road, is gone. Joe says it was taken down to make room for the tractor trailer used for work at Erthein. Linda says she left a message recently for Rebecca Bushee, who was written into the recent ballot as a **Lister candidate**, to see if Rebecca is interested in filling the third (vacant) Lister position. Jim says snowmobiles, ATVs, trailers, and other **vehicles parking in the turnout on Sandgate Road near**

Southeast Corners Road prevent fire department access to the dry hydrant there. This hydrant is currently blocked with silt but should be cleared soon. Linda will mention this issue when dry hydrants are reviewed with Brian Hawley on April 15. A “No Parking” sign was suggested.

SIGN ORDERS.

REVIEW OF FEBRUARY 17 AND MARCH 17 MINUTES: Linda motions to approve; John seconds; all in favor.

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

THE NEXT MEETING WILL BE ON MONDAY APRIL 21 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.