

SANDGATE VERMONT SELECTBOARD MINUTES - APRIL 21, 2025

CALL TO ORDER: 6:00 p.m.

ATTENDANCE: Board members: Joe Nolan, John Phelps, Linda Schmidt. Also present: Elizabeth Daut, Jean Eisenhart, Sheila Kearns, Peter Markalunas, Bill Mitchell, Julie Robertson, Dara Zink. Minute taker: Sandy Reidy.

CITIZEN CONCERNS: Jean Eisenhart asks when the broken fence at the **West Side Cemetery** will be fixed. Julie Robertson says the Cemetery Commission is working on this. The Board received a complaint about **ATVs** on Southeast Corners Road. Sheila Kearns says they have been racing on Sandgate Road as well, sometimes very late at night. Joe Nolan will look into this but suggests also that people call the State Police when this happens.

ADOPTION OF REVISED HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN: Dara Zink (Bennington County Regional Commission) says the Town's revised Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) has been approved by the State and by FEMA and is ready for final review and adoption by the Board. Linda Schmidt says that compared to the old plan, the new version is simpler, more specific to Sandgate, and more achievable. An updated HMP is required to make the Town eligible for maximum reimbursement by FEMA and the State in the event of an emergency. Going forward the Board will review the plan each December, to assess progress on the mitigation actions and to budget for mitigation work as needed. The finished plan will be posted on the Town website and BCRC website. Linda motions to approve the plan; John Phelps seconds; all in favor. The Board signs the adoption form and returns it to Dara. The rewriting of the plan was funded by a BRIC grant. Dara stresses that, with federal support of this kind in flux, the Town should apply for its reimbursement as quickly as possible.

UPDATE FROM THE TOWN AUDITORS: Sheila Kearns and Peter Markalunas refer to the Auditors Report that appears in the 2024 Town Report, which recommends hiring a professional consultant to review the Town's finances and the workflow surrounding them. Sheila and Peter present the following letter to the Board:

The last professional audit performed for Sandgate, Vt. was conducted in 2010, Prior to that, outside audits were done 2002,1992, and 1982. Sandgate is overdue for an outside audit. For reference, Arlington, Vt. has an outside audit every 5 years and Shaftsbury, Vt. has an outside audit every year. For Sunderland, Vt. the last audit was in 2017.

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Sandgate's elected auditors are not professional accountants. An outside audit is much more extensive in scope and is performed by individuals trained in government auditing standards.

It is estimated that an outside audit would cost Sandgate approximately \$10,000. For reference, Arlington's audit in 2024 cost \$18,000.

The prudent thing to do from a financial perspective is for the town to have an outside audit on a regular schedule similar to Arlington and Shaftsbury.

Sandgate Elected Auditors

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Joe asks if the Auditors have a professional auditor in mind. Peter has contacted one firm and will contact others; bids from at least three would be required per the Town's Procurement Policy. Going forward, budgeting for this work would need to be examined and might require an article at the next Town Meeting. Sheila says about \$6,000 is currently available. Linda asks where additional money would come from. Sandy Reidy suggests other budget line items that could be used. Sheila will contact Arlington Town Hall for a copy of the Request for Proposal (RFP) they used to solicit firms for their last audit. Sandgate can use that as an example. The Board agrees that Sheila and Peter should pursue an audit.

SELECTBOARD VACANCY: Joe says the Board is considering how to fill the vacant position. He says the current Board members work well together and that this is an opportunity for the Board to appoint someone who would work well with the other four members. Linda stresses that we need to fill the fifth slot; Jean agrees. Sheila asks if there has been an outreach to the Town for candidates, and Julie says the Board should spread the word about the vacancy. Bill Mitchell says he would like to be considered. The issue will appear again on the May 5 meeting agenda, and Linda will see about posting a notice on the Town website. **[In the meantime, anyone interested in the position should contact Town Hall or a Selectboard member and should plan to attend the May 5 meeting.]**

COMPLIANCE WITH STATE OPEN MEETING LAW: Vermont Open Meeting Law 1 VSA 310-314 concerns making meetings of public bodies such as the Selectboard easily accessible to the public, including by electronic means in real time and/or after the fact, through publicly available audio and/or video recordings. Towns have leeway to determine the best approach for them, and Sandgate must decide how to comply. **This issue will appear again on the agenda for the May 5 Selectboard meeting, and the Board is interested in hearing from citizens about it.**

DRY HYDRANTS: Linda says that on April 15 she joined Troy Dare of Rural Fire Protection; Brian Hawley, Arlington Fire Chief; and Road Foreman Jay Wilson to visit three of the four nonworking dry hydrant sites in Town. The hydrant that was at Erthein Road will not be replaced, as Troy and

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Brian determined the best approach now is for the FD to draft water directly from the stream when it is needed. Bill (who is Assistant Chief of the Salem Fire Department) points out that fire companies are moving away in general from dry hydrants because they tend to become clogged. Troy and Brian determined the dry hydrant at Southeast Corners Road could also be replaced with drafting, although they will explore a bridge-mounted hydrant on the bridge on Southeast Corners Road as well. The broken hydrant near the Zoppels' pond at Tate Hill Road is in the process of being fixed. The hydrant on Chunks Brook Road will be reviewed at a later date due to water contamination. All other hydrants in Town have been tested and approved by the FD.

MUNICIPAL ENERGY RESILIENCE PROGRAM: Sheila asks if the Board has reviewed the proposal from project-management firm PCI to serve as Clerk of the Works for energy-related work on Town Hall and the Town Garage. Joe later signs the agreement with PCI.

MUNICIPAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM: Bill asks if the problem of nonpotable water at Town Hall has been addressed. Joe says the water will be retested, now that the septic pipe has been repaired. Bill suggests shocking the well before it is tested. Linda says Jim Henderson is contacting Advanced Water Works about retesting. For replacement of the broken expansion tank, Joe will contact a plumber directly.

ROAD REPORT: Joe says the Road Crew has been grading throughout Town. The Road Crew will throw a party for the Town at the Town Garage on the afternoon of Green Up Day, May 3, starting at noon.

TREASURER'S REPORT: The Treasurer distributes the report to the Board.

SIGN ORDERS.

REVIEW OF MARCH 31 AND APRIL 7 MINUTES: John motions to approve the April 7 minutes; Linda seconds; all in favor. Linda motions to approve the March 31 minutes; John seconds; all in favor.

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

THE NEXT MEETING WILL BE ON MONDAY MAY 5 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.

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