Selectboard Meeting - November 2, 2026 at 6:00 pm

Call to Order: 6:01 pm

Attendance: Joe Nolan, Linda Schmidt, Jessica Pendleton, Rob Viglas, John Phelps.
Also in attendance: Sheila Kearns, Shelley Finn, Margaret Phelps, Rich Zoppel,
Jessica Lewis, GNAT-TV (via Zoom). Minute taker: Jessica Lewis

Citizen Concerns

Margaret Phelps announces that the Christmas Party will be on Sunday December 6th, likely at 3:00 or 3:30 pm, and will include a potluck dinner.

Rich Zoppel says he was surprised the GNAT-TV camera crew was at the Planning & Zoning Commission meeting and would have liked to have been notified. The Selectboard states they were not aware that they were coming, and no one in Town knew they were coming who could have notified the Planning Commission.

Rob Viglas states the Planning Commission meeting is scheduled for next week on Veteran's Day and will be moved to Thursday, and says in the future it would be worth discussing whether Selectboard meetings should be rescheduled when they fall on major holidays to allow for optimal attendance.

Ongoing Business

- **Drinking water at Town Hall**

John Bushee said he has a lot going on but will get to it as soon as he can**.**

- **Short-Term-Rental Ordinance**

The Board plans to work through a few sections of the ordinance draft at upcoming meetings.

The first section refers to laws and statutes that allow the Town to write ordinances.
Section two lays out the purpose of the ordinance, some points include the intention to preserve neighborhood character, balance tourism activity with the availability of long-term housing, and provide clear standards for owners, guests, and enforcement officials. Rob asks if this is where it may be useful to point out in this section that part of the purpose is to limit the burden on taxpayers in terms of the extra burden on roads and infrastructure.

Sheila suggests looking to the bylaws for language on this.

John states some of the points in the purpose section are covered in the bylaws already. John states further that he is against creating the short-term rental ordinance. He is concerned if rules are put in place to tell people what to do with their homes in terms of how they can rent it that it could go further, and cautions against trying to control others' behaviors too much.

Rob states the primary concern has more to do with limiting the amount of these that can go on one property. John reiterates that he believes the bylaws would cover this concern and already exist to limit over-development of an individual property.

Sheila states the way the zoning bylaws are written, they deal primarily with residential-level matters. For example, while the number of buildings is limited, that limit can always be brought to the Planning Commission for request for conditional review or waiver, and because there is no language about short-term rentals of property, the Planning Commission only has the power to treat it as a residence. Sheila also points out the effectiveness of enforcing bylaws is limited because they are civil matters not legal matters.

Shelley asks if it would be fair to say that the zoning regulations have more to do with building, and the ordinance would have more to do with how the buildings are operated.

Margaret points out that when there was a health and safety issue on Chunks Brook, there wasn't anything the Board could do to fix it, and questions how effective the Town would be at enforcing any ordinance that is put in place.

Linda states this ordinance came from a demand at a Planning Commission meeting that was heavily attended by concerned citizens, and the Board is trying to respond to this demand.

Rob states some of the neighbors' concerns were concern for their children with significantly increased traffic on the road.

John says use of electricity and generators is covered in bylaws and would serve as another barrier to over-development. Sheila points out the language in the bylaws has more to do with regulating primitive camps within a certain distance of some classes of roads. She says that there is little authority to enforce a lot of what is outlined in the bylaws.

John says this is one of the primary issues, that there would be a hard time enforcing the rules of this ordinance.

Shelley says she also thinks enforcement is a concern and should be considered carefully how it is set up.

A question is raised as to how this ordinance would affect long-term rentals. The draft ordinance refers to nonowner-occupied properties and creates a distinction between short-term and long-term rentals. Jessica P says she believes there are already laws to create standards for long-term rentals. Sheila says they are not always enforced.

Joe says in regards to enforcement in the past with situations of recurring speeding, the state police came in and were able to make a difference. He also references a dispute about property lines where the state police were involved and took action. He says they wouldn't be the first line of enforcement, but would be there if needed.

Rob says the ordinance gives neighbors a leg to stand on if something does happen involving these short-term rental properties.

Linda says even if enforcement is difficult, it is still important to set standards and create a context. Joe points out that the role of the town constable would be useful here.

Joe points out that this process will be lengthy, and lots of revision will be made. Sheila suggests there could be a warned item on the ballot for the Town Meeting that would allow all the Town voters to vote in March on whether or not they want the Selectboard to pursue the ordinance. Jessica P asks if it should be tabled until then.

John reiterates that he is concerned it would be over-regulation and just wants to point out that it's important to be cautious.

Rob says as a Board we should move forward as opposed to tabling it at this time because it is a response to the citizen demand in the Zoning and Planning meeting, and the Board should continue to listen to citizens as discussion progresses, including possibly putting it on the ballot.

Margaret says she is concerned the ordinance would control what she could do with the rooms in her home, and she wouldn't want to have to follow rules from the Town.

Linda says she feels it would be helpful for more input from other residents, whether they are for or against the short-term rental ordinance and what their specific concerns are.

Joe points out there could be value in going through this process now before it is a major issue as in 4 or 5 years, it could be much harder to put the rules in place.

Linda reiterates that in no way is this ordinance meant to prevent anyone from renting their homes.

Rich points out that towns all over the Southern VT area are working through issues with rental properties and it is important to be proactive and look at what other towns are doing. Linda points out that much of the draft came from Sunderland's STR ordinance, along with that of Woodstock.

The Board will continue to discuss the ordinance at the next meeting, and encourages folks to voice their opinions on the matter.

Road Report

The road crew has moved to Southeast Corners to install the culvert. A hole has been patched and a tree has been cut in the Notch which has been a noticeable improvement. There have been repairs done on the trucks in recent weeks, plus new tires on trucks.

Approval of Meeting Minutes from 10/19 meeting
Linda motions to pass, Joe seconds; all in favor.

Orders are signed.

Other Business

John has fixed the message board on Rupert Road, and the Board is grateful for the effort.

BCRC said the national weather service is gathering information about drought and was asking if anyone had been discussing their wells running dry. No one has heard anything.

John motions to adjourn, Jessica P seconds; all in favor.

Meeting adjourned: 6:50 pm

Respectfully submitted by Jessica Lewis