

Selectboard Meeting Minutes

September 13, 2021

Present: Doon Hinderyckx, Frank Severy, Pat Harvey

Guests Present: Kristen LaPell, Terry Severy, Larry Straus, Bruce Flewelling, Orca Media, Dave Harvey, Rob Gardner, Robert Meagher, Larry Creech, Henry Garzia & Barry Chadwick

Guests Present on Zoom: Orca Media, Josh White, Nancy Woolley, Martha Slater, Vic Ribaud, Kathryn Schenkman, Troy LaPell, Robert Franks

Doon called the meeting at 6:15 pm.

Doon confirmed the open meeting law conformity.

Additions to the Agenda: Rob Gardner-2 dead trees on the far side of the ball field by the river.
Robert Franks- Public warnings and alerts

Prior Meeting Minutes: Doon moved to approve the August 23, 2021, SB Meeting minutes with one correction to money amount to the West Hill Bridge. Pat seconded. All in favor. So, approved.

COVID-19 Update: Dr. Josh White spoke to the board about the general updates on COVID-19. The current Delta variant, he mentioned is similar it is to Covid-19 but much more infectious and easier to pass around. He advised that its easier to pick up with even less than the 15 minutes together. He advised to wear masks and social distance still since it is a respiratory virus. He said the peak in Vermont is about 250 a day and will come in the next week or two. He said the state is using the John Hopkins modeling to get that data mirroring Hawaii which is having similar vaccination rates. He said the vaccines are working very well with the 8 months of experience and with the 175 million Americans vaccinated there are very few side effects. The ones they have identified are quite rare and quite transient. He strongly advocates for those who have not had their vaccination to go and get them to protect themselves. The data about the boosters is coming up quite a bit. The data is based on the lab titers so far and the lab titers show the antibodies going down about 8 months on average. Dr. Josh ultimately expects in time we all get our boosters. He said the vaccine is waiting on FDA approval for kids under 12. He said this is important to get done but also get it done right, hopefully sometime this fall. He opened the floor to questions from the floor. Martha asked if he works for Gifford and what his position is there. Dr. Josh noted he is the chief medical officer for Gifford Hospital. Vic asked what he might say for those who may want to go visit those in the Park House or lead a community talk or singing activity. He asked what the good balance for social activities amongst the elderly or community members. Dr. Josh recommended not having any visits while the numbers are increasing. He said those at high risk who have been vaccinated are still vulnerable and can get COVID. He noted the overall risk statistically is low but is important to recognize we are playing with fire a bit and he has had to intubate someone who has got COVID. He said he would generally recommend not having large gatherings. He said if its an essential thing then just be careful by wearing a mask, but if its not essential then just stay away.

Rochester high School Repurposing project discussion: Vic shared an update on the high school repurposing feasibility project. He also mentioned a request for 3 actions. Vic followed up from the last meeting where the selectboard approved Fairweather Consulting firm for the feasibility study. He said after further discussions with the firm and the group they will need to request an extension of time to properly complete this study. He noted with the complexity and scope of work for this project the consultant was persuasive about the project taking 9 months to complete. He felt it would be advisable to have a dedicated Town meeting for this project as opposed to rapping it into the annual Town meeting. Vic said starting in September this project could take us into June of 2022 with additional cost of engineering expertise into the project based on the extension. He said it would all still fall under the funds available from the grant with no extra funds required from the Town. He asked for the first request for approval from the board is that Fairweather Consulting proposal for a nine-month project starting in September 2021 with a cost of \$42,620.00 paid out of grant funds. The second item for request has to do with an addition of the grant for the Schoolboard to get written approval to proceed and good access to the building for the duration of the project through June of 2022. What is required is the town will need to sign off on a Property Access License Agreement. Vic mentioned Pat Harvey is looking into the insurance on that. The third and final item is whether the selectboard agree that Rochester Town would pay the \$15,000.00 towards the cost of heat for the high school building. Kathryn shared that she did send a summary to the board the next day after the school board meeting to keep the board informed. Kathryn noted there will be an ongoing outreach of public information that will be shared as its available to the town. She said the information will be transparent to the town as information is shared. She said she doesn't want the town to be surprised with the information that is forthcoming. She said the other part of the scope of the feasibility study is also to vent out feasibility of the proposal for the five-component use of the facility. She said there is also the piece of an alternate or better use of the building would be made available to inform the committee of information provided with the study.

Doon moved to approve the 3 points. The first the acceptance of the timeline from six months to nine months to complete the study. Doon moved to approve. Pat seconded. All in favor. So, voted. Doon asked about the Property Access Liability License Agreement. Pat said she would like to investigate the insurance once we have agreed to the contract. Frank asked if we could have time. Doon wanted to table this agreement for now. Doon spoke about the willingness of the town to provide the funds for the heat to the building in the amount of \$15,000.00 so the building doesn't freeze over the winter months. He said with all the progress made this far he would move to make the commitment to support the process. Discussion ensued. Doon made a motion that the town agree to support of \$15,000.00 for the supplemental heating of the school and be open to accept donations to offset that expense with the Rebuild Rochester committee setting the parameters for advertising and solicitating the funds. Pat seconded. All in favor. So, voted.

ARPA money: Kristen announced to the board that we have received both installments for the ARPA funds. She noted in August we received \$56,950.14 and then in September we received the county portion of the ARPA funds in the amount of \$ 105,665.62 for a total amount received of \$162,615.76. She said it has been put into a separate bank account fund. Doon asked if we would receive additional funds. Kristen noted next August and September we expect to receive

the same fund amounts. Robert Meagher asked what the limitation on the funds are and how soon they have to be spent. Doon asked we have 3 years to speak and asked Larry Straus to speak. He said there are limitations that are broad for the allowable uses. He said there is a long process on how the funds can be spent. He said the funds have to be allocated by 2024 but don't have to be spent until 2026. He said there is no rush for the town to spend the funds. He said essentially the funds can be spent on broadband, for infrastructure, backfill for COVID related expenses for during the pandemic. He said the money can be paired with other funding for instance water or sewer projects. The money could be matched with other State funds to give a bigger bang for the buck. There will be a public process with public input to chose where the funds could be spent.

Joan Updates: Doon spoke on Joan's behalf with her updates. He said that she has been assisting Julie and Kristen with preparations for the annual audit and developing systems for integrating grant related information with NEMRC. She has been keeping in touch with Cooter on completed projects with FEMA this year. She also has been continuing to complete documents and backup documents making sure they all reconcile properly to submit to Vermont Department of Public Service for reimbursement of the FEMA roadwork done through December of 2019. She will begin on the remaining FEMA projects completed in 2020-2021 and tasks also related to Nason Brook culvert replacement. She is working with VHB and Green Mountain National Forest towards the completion of the contract design stream alteration and Army Corps permits updated construction costs estimate and bid packages are now getting underway for the West Hill Bridge. She is preparing to work with two private landowners adjacent to the bridge for temporary and permanent easements and addition to the Green Mountain National Forest which will give us the authorization on their property and hoping to have everything ready to go out to bid around January 2022. All are depending on approval of permits especially the Army Corps. and how fast the construction funding arrangements moves along. She said we have received a draft memorandum of agreement from the Federal Highway Administration for construction funding in partnership with the Green Mountain National Forest. She is reviewing that with the GMNF staff. She has lots of details still to be worked out including the funding. The grant approval is \$600,000.00 in construction costs before the final update by VHB are estimated at \$663,000.00 before contingencies. She noted once we have VHB final construction cost estimate we will know if we need to look for more funding which is the expected outcome. This is the GMNF responsibility and if its needed could delay going out to bid. She will keep us updated. Larry Creech spoke to the board about his concerns for the great number of people who confronted the GMNF and will hire a legal firm to stop the GMNF from doing anything, which will delay or stop the completion of the new bridge. He also asked if someone could come out and trim some of the trees on the road before winter. Larry said if the snow piles up on them it will be difficult to travel underneath the weight of the low hanging limbs. Doon reassured Larry that the road crew were about to begin the roadside mowing project beginning September 20th. Larry said they had done a great job. Frank said he would speak to Joan about the long-term implications would be on the Bridge project.

Highway Updates: The road crew will begin the roadside mowing on September 20th.

Utilities Updates: Terry said the controls will be changed over on Thursday at Sewer Site 4.

Public Comment:

Barry Chadwick: Memorial Plaque for Eric Wells- Barry spoke about the plaque for Damion Sleath down by the Tennis courts in the parking lot, who tragically died. He spoke about Eric Wells as a great athlete, great student and great friend who also died tragically and asked the board for approval of adding a plaque near Damion's plaque in honor of his life in the exact same size. He was not asking the town to pay for it but asking for permission for one to be made. The board asked for time to do some research with town's folks and the family. They supported the idea and just asked for time to think about it.

Robert Franks: Made a comment about the public access to the Bethel Mountain Road after the replacement of the culvert project.

Rob Gardner: Robert made a comment about cutting down the two trees down by the river that are dead before someone gets hurt.

Doon moved to adjourn at 7:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Smith