

## Selectboard Meeting Minutes

September 26, 2022

Present: Doon Hinderyckx, Frank Severy, Pat Harvey

**Guests Present:** Orca Media, Nancy Woolley, Terry Severy, Kristen LaPell

**Guests Present on Zoom:** Orca Media, Martha Slater, Troy LaPell, Vic Ribaud, Rob Gardner

Doon called the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

Doon confirmed the open meeting law conformity

**Prior Meeting Minutes:** Doon moved to approve the September 12, 2022, selectboard minutes. Pat seconded. All in favor. So, approved.

**Letter of SB support for Rochester High School Repurposing Project grant proposal:** Vic Ribaud spoke to the board asking for a letter of support from the board to seek additional funding through Vermont Housing and Conservation Board. This organization has a program called Rural Economic Development Initiative. They provide grants to municipalities who are seeking larger grants. This application would be on behalf of the town in the amount of \$7,000.00 to go towards grant writing assistance to get support for the high school project. This would need a letter of support toward these funds. Doon noted this is not a commitment to purchase the building. Doon moved to sign this letter. Pat seconded. All in favor. So, approved.

**Announcement Town Clerk's office closed October 6-7:** The Town clerks office will have limited hours during the week of Oct. 3-7. The only days open will be Tuesday and Wednesday for regular hours 9am-5pm.

**Letter of support for Sue Moulton's request for reducing speed limit on North Hollow:** A letter written for support and signed by Peter Schneider, Gail Stockwell, Larry Levitski, George and Lynn Moltz, Katherine Stern Brennan, Fred Stern, Mark and Mary McGraths and Deb Roberts. Doon shared this process is easier said than done. Frank summarized his research with Two Rivers. They don't recommend setting speeds on dirt roads, but we have already done that with a blanket 35 mile an hour zone. To change the speed on one road it would require a traffic study on all the back roads. This would be a very big endeavor. Frank personally doesn't support reducing the speed on back roads. There will be a Guide to setting the speed limits available in the town office for anyone who would like to come in and view. Doon said they are drafting a letter to the state to reduce the speed on Route 100 through the village. Frank shared this would be best to drop down to 25 mph in the village center with the school and heavier pedestrian traffic. Nancy asked about the Bethel Mountain Road reduce to 40 to match the Bethel side. Frank is working on that as well with Two Rivers. He would like to work with the state in adding 89 signs to help direct truck traffic away from Bethel Mountain.

**Letter of request for access to Sherman Property:** Doon shared a letter from Ruben Sherman from the Sherman Trust who owns a 3 acre landlocked parcel for over 20 years accessible only by ancient trail up on Jones Mountain Road off West Hill Road. He is requesting that the selectboard reclassify the trail crossing the neighbors property back to a road suitable and open

to traffic. This is to make the property more marketable for the property to sell. Doon spoke with Bruce Flewelling, and he feels this is a class 4 Pent Road. He will need to do some verification with GPS to give to the state to determine that for sure. If this is a legal Class 4 road there is no reason to keep him from accessing his property. That would be the next step to finalize and identify that classification.

**Operation and Maintenance Plan agreement for Stormwater Project at the town garage:**  
Terry Severy and Cooter will meet with Frank to see what is being asked for on the monitoring maintenance on the newly installed stormwater project.

**Highway Updates:** Frank said he and Cooter have been discussing the Better Roads Grants coming up in October and what projects he will want to do. They are looking at the upper Bethel Mountain Road culverts.

Old Business:

Master Financial Policy review Sections 5-7: Still under review. Tabled

Review August Treasurer's Report: Board asked if they need to sign off on the reports? Budget and Finance committee will be starting their work.

Doon read a letter of thanks from John Lackard expressing his thanks for being included in the summer concert series.

Maya asked for a funny request for a kid's program to rake on the park. The board expressed their support to Maya and the kids.

Nancy shared how she and Frank met with two women from the state who spent the day on the park. They made recommendations and inventoried all the trees on the park

Rob Gardner asked the board a list of questions pertaining to the high school repurposing project. Doon asked if Pat could read the questions so they could be out there for awareness. The questions are attached to the minutes.

Doon moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:03 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Smith

To the select board,

I would like to ask to be put on the agenda at the next select board meeting so that I can ask a series of questions of the select board regarding the high school building. To be clear, these are not questions for the repurposing committee, though I'd be happy to have Vic or Kathryn there to elaborate or respond if they would like to, but these are questions for the select board.

I am concerned that we have not had a broad enough public dialog about the options, the costs and the risks relating to this subject, so I am taking this opportunity to ask these question in the public forum of the select board meeting in order to open the subject up. I hope other voters, in person or on zoom, will be willing to join in the conversation, perhaps with questions of their own.

I am sending this to both Vic and Kathryn as a courtesy, but these questions are really directed at the select board. I am sending you these questions in advance because I have no desire to ambush or embarrass anybody, I just want these topics discussed in public.

These are the questions:

- 1) What do you think the next steps are if the town votes no to purchasing the high school building and please be specific if you can?
- 2) If the town votes no on the purchase of the building, do we know what our legal options are if the school board or SU decides to board up the building and stop heating it, rendering it derelict?
- 3) The issue of the actual cost of heating the building seems confusing to me. We know that it takes about 18,000 gallons of fuel oil to heat the building, based on the energy audit. Since my assumption is that we really only need to cover Stockbridge's share of the heating cost since the Rochester portion is already (I think) being paid for in the education budget as long as the school board owns the building, can you make clear exactly how much money we expect it to cost to heat the building for the winter if we do not own the building and how much it will cost if we do own the building?
- 4) Can we assume, if we do buy the building, that the education budget will be reduced by a number matching Rochester's share to heat the building now?

5) Do you believe the town needs a cultural and community life center, as described in the Fairweather Consulting feasibility study?

6) Has the select board made the decision that the one option examined in the feasibility study (a cultural and community life center, supported with rentals) will be the only or the preferred option under investigation by the town, should the voters decide to buy the building, or will you continue to examine or consider other options prior to the vote in March?

7) Does the select board expect to continue to use the existing re-purposing committee in its current form to guide any further actions or research relating to the building, or are you considering a second phase committee, or perhaps just handling the issue yourselves?

8) Does the select board consider the issue of the high school building one principally of money or community, or would you characterize it in some other way?

9) What effect would the town's securing a large bond for the high school building (one to three million dollars) have on the town's ability to raise another bond in the future for replacement or repair of (for instance) water or sewerage system or a major problem with town buildings or roads, or any other fiscal concerns of the town in the future?

If you think any of these questions are problematic for any reason, or if you need clarity on them, just let me know. If you think the whole conversation is unhelpful and you would rather not answer any of them, then I will respect that too. I don't have any desire to cause dissension or any more problems that we already have, I just think these are questions that should be discussed in public and on the record. If you agree to do this, I will also send the list of questions to Martha, as a courtesy.

Please let me know what you think.

Thanks for your help,

Rob Gardner