

Greensboro Selectboard

May 26, 2021 Special Meeting

MINUTES

[Meeting was held via Zoom video conference]

SELECTBOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Peter Romans, David Kelley, Gary Circosta, Tracy Collier, Matt McAllister

SELECTBOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Kim Greaves, Brett Stanciu, Betsy Hunt, Chief David Brochu, Jr., Ed Sunday-Winters, Ellen Celnik, Mark Snyder, Maggie Altman, Dave Altman, Anne Altman, Lise Armstrong, Jennifer Ranz, Meghan Wayland, Fan Watkinson, John Stone, Miriam Rodgers, Denise O'Connor, Bethany Warner, Christine Armstrong, Gordon Stoner, Josh Karp

CALLED TO ORDER: 6:30 PM

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

Chief Dave Brochu, Jr. – issue with GFD's new tanker truck

MINUTES

Minutes from 5/12 meeting reviewed but not approved; the Board needs clarification about aspects of reclassifying Caspian Lake.

GREENSBORO FIRE DEPT.

Chief Dave Brochu, Jr. said that the new tanker was delivered without an engine/exhaust brake.

This is extremely problematic, since the truck isn't safe to operate without a brake, and adding one could cost as much as \$16k. Matt said he'd never heard of a truck of that GVW not having an engine/exhaust brake, and he added that it might be illegal to operate the truck without one.

The company that built the tanker says it's the town's fault for not checking the chassis specs closely prior to ordering it.

Chief Brochu said that on one hand, this could be seen as an oversight on our part. However, when the GFD solicited bids for new trucks, they supplied a spec sheet that included an engine/exhaust brake. The company ended up finding a new chassis that was a year or two old, offered it to the GFD for less than a new one, and assured the GFD that the chassis would 'meet your needs'. It was assumed that this particular chassis would meet the new-truck specs that were supplied to the company earlier.

Greensboro still owes the company \$93k for the truck. The Board agreed to send a letter to the company, requesting to negotiate the installation of an engine/exhaust brake.

BEND DEPOT LEASE

Mark Snyder has owned the Bend depot building for 23 years. The land is owned by the state, and while he'd like to purchase the property, it appears impossible due to state statute. Mark said that some of our state representatives are working to change the statute.

In the meantime, he's been trying to come to an agreement with the state for a fair long-term lease; David Kelley has been helping him communicate with the state AOT. No reasonable lease option been offered by the state to date, and Mark asked the Board to consider having the town lease the land from the state for \$1, and then sub-leasing the land to him on a long-term basis.

Mark said there's a business in Morrisville that obtained a \$1 annual lease from the state in a similar situation, and this sets a precedent, in Mark's opinion.

Discussion. Investigation is necessary to determine whether a municipality can lease property to an individual, and to clarify what other legal and liability issues might exist. The Board agreed to discuss with VLCT and the town attorney.

Mark said that the depot is a unique, magnificent building, and offered to give a tour to anyone who's interested. The depot currently serves as his residence and woodworking shop.

LAMOILLE COUNTY SHERIFF – Dispatch Contract

Gary made the following motion:

The Board approves the dispatch contract with the Lamoille County Sheriff in the amount of \$21,034.70, covering the period July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022.

Tracy seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

TOWN CLERK – Kim Greaves

1. Shifting to .gov for town website. Kim suggested that the town switch from .org to .gov for the town website and town emails. The .gov top level domain had been prohibitively expensive to use, but Kim said that the VT Secretary of State has now made it free.

Gary made the following motion:

The town will shift from .org to .gov .

Tracy seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

2. Public access to the town offices.

- Confrontational members of the public. Kim said that prior to restricting public access to the town offices due to the pandemic, there were a few instances where men came in and acted in a threatening manner to town office staff.

Kim proposed to replace one of the inside windows in the town offices with a sliding glass unit, to be used as the primary public access point, like at a doctor's office. Kim said that this change would make the town office staff feel safer physically, while at the same time acting as a COVID-19 safety measure. The level of service to the public would remain the same.

Peter said that he was aware of at least three instances where men were acting aggressively in the town offices, and that the town needs to provide a safe work space for town employees.

David said that the court system has dealt with this problem in a similar way, and that Kim's proposed solution is a 'no brainer'.

Tracy said that this sounds like a good solution to a problem that the Board wasn't sure how to address.

Gary said he doesn't like the idea of making people wait in the hall or have to stand outside the town offices, since it's really the public's building and they should have full access.

Ellen said as a social worker, she experienced similar situations to those described by Kim, and that from a safety perspective, if the staff can provide the same level of service, why wouldn't the Board approve the window? It doesn't mean that the staff can't let someone in the office if they so choose.

Peter made the following motion:

The Board approves the installation of the sliding glass window for public access to the town offices, as discussed. If the town clerk so chooses, the door going into the town offices may be locked.

David seconded the motion, which carried (P.R., M.M, D.K., T.C. in favor; G.C. opposed).

- **COVID-19 concerns.** Peter said that after discussing re-opening the town offices, the Town Emergency Committee recommended that the offices remain closed for now, due to the low rate of vaccination in Orleans County. This is erring on the side of caution, and the committee will re-evaluate this decision as time moves on.

Discussion of whether the town should 'open up' when Orleans County has a lower rate of vaccination than much of the state. While the governor proclaimed that he'd open up the state when the overall vaccination rate hits 80%, Matt said he's heard that Orleans County may never reach 80%. Gary wondered if the Board is creating problems if the rest of the state opens up, yet Greensboro remain closed.

David made the following motion:

The town offices will remain closed to the public generally. In the case that people must enter the town offices to do business, everyone present must be wearing a mask, until the Selectboard changes this requirement.

Peter seconded the motion, which carried (T.C, P.R., D.K in favor; G.C., M.M. opposed).

TREASURER – Brett Stanciu

1. **Outside auditor – letter of engagement.** The outside audit will cost approx. \$8k, which is the same cost as the last audit. Gary made the following motion:

The town will sign an engagement letter with auditing firm Pace & Hawley.

David seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

2. **American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).** Brett said that the town is expecting the first half of its ARPA funds in June. There is no rush to spend the funds, since the money doesn't need to be encumbered by 2024, or spent until the end of 2026. VLCT is recommending that towns be strategic, thoughtful and transparent as funds are earmarked; the Board will solicit public input on use of the ARPA funds in the future. Brett said that it's too early to speculate on the amount the town will be receiving.

The second half of the ARPA funds are expected to arrive in June 2022.

COMMUNITY GARDEN

Continuation of the discussion from the May 12 Selectboard meeting.

Meghan said the Community Garden (CG) group looked at potential sites and partnerships with the library, school, nursing home, Lauredon apartments and the VT land trust, but that none of these worked out. The Willey Beach Park (WBP) is the best location they've found so far.

Peter said the WBP is an underused public property.

The Altmans, who live directly adjacent to the proposed CG, said they've just heard about the project and don't understand the rush for approval. While they aren't against a CG, they question the choice of WBP as the best location. They like the meadow as it is, and as a wild place it shouldn't be considered 'underutilized'. They asked that other locations be considered, such as the Village Green.

Meghan apologized to the Altmans for the late notice. She said they hadn't considered the Village Green, and wondered if there's room for a garden at that site, since the Green is used for activities such as the Farmer's Market. The Town Hall septic system also takes up part of the Green. Peter said there's a large area of lawn that's not used for anything, and could likely be used for a CG.

Gary said the Village Green is surrounded by roads and traffic, and would be a pretty noisy spot – and that the WBP site is more conducive to gardening. Meghan agreed that the WBP has a nicer feel.

Discussion of parking. There's only three or four parking spots at the WBP, and Ed Sunday-Winters said overflow parking on the Parsonage driveway should not be considered as an option. Maggie Altman suggested that there is plenty of parking at the Town Hall, if a CG was located on the Village Green.

Ed Sunday-Winters said he is supportive of a CG, but is sympathetic to his neighbors the Altmans, adding that catching people by surprise is not ideal, and that more time might be needed to discuss the project. He asked that the Parsonage's French drain that daylight on the WBP isn't disturbed.

Christine Armstrong added that if the group is trying to create an ADA accessible site, it seems like the Village Green is a better location.

Gordon Stoner lives across the road from the WBP access, and said while he's supportive of a CG project, he questions the WBP as the best location. He added that if the WBP ends up being approved, he would support the further-back 'area 1' garden site, referencing the map provided by the CG group. Gordon proposed that the Board approve three raised beds at the Village Green for this year, to get the gardens going, and revisit using the WBP site next year after further discussion.

Meghan thanked everyone for their input, and noted that the raised beds they're planning to use can always be moved if things don't work out.

Tracy suggested approving a CG at the WBP on a one-year trial basis.

David made the following motion:

The Board approves the Community Garden proposal as presented, to be located at Willey Beach Park, on a one year trial basis. The Board expects all those involved with the Community Garden to be sensitive to the needs of their neighbors.

Gary seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

ORLEANS COUNTY SHERIFF MEET & GREET

The Board will be scheduling a virtual meet and greet with the Orleans County Sheriff, who will be taking over policing services in Greensboro on July 1.

OTHER BUSINESS

- 1. Funky Fourth.** While it feels like the pandemic is winding down, there are still concerns about holding public events where people will be congregating, and a decision has to be made about the Funky Fourth. Tracy said the science shows that outside events are safe, and both Matt and Gary said they support holding the event. A decision will be made at the Board's June 9 meeting.

2. **Town committees.** Discussion of whether formal town committees should be following the open meeting law. It was agreed to compile a list of all town committees, discuss why some are ‘ad hoc’ and others are ‘official’, and determine which committees need to improve their compliance with the open meeting law.
3. **Holding Selectboard meetings in person.** While virtual meetings have led to more public participation, Matt said he would prefer to resume in-person meetings as soon as possible. Christine suggested that the Board carefully consider whether it’s safe to resume in-person meetings.
Discussion of a hybrid meeting system, with both in-person and virtual participants. This could provide the opportunity for everyone to participate in the way they so choose. Peter said that the town of Craftsbury has taken this approach for a while and it seems to have worked well.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. The Local Motion traffic study starts on 5/27 and will run through the weekend.
2. The Planning Commission will hold a hearing on June 2, to discuss proposed changes to the Zoning Bylaw.

ADJOURNMENT

The Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 9:12 PM.

Respectfully Submitted: Josh Karp, Selectboard Clerk