

Greensboro Selectboard

April 10, 2024 – Minutes

[This was a hybrid meeting held at the Greensboro Free Library, with some participants joining remotely]

SELECTBOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Ellen Celnik, David Kelley, Peter Romans, Eric Hanson, MacNeil

SELECTBOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Naomi Ranz-Schleifer, Meaghan Meachem, Tom Camarra, Liz Steel, Kim Greaves, Josh Karp, Brett Stanciu, Beth Meachem, Davis Barnett, Kent Hansen, Rick Ely, Rob Brigham, Tony Acheson, Shelly Jungwirth, Mimi Benedict, Brenden Beer, Skip Hoblin, Devin Burgess, Becky Arnold, Sharon Putney, Jennifer Ranz, Fan Watkinson, Chris Steel, Stew Arnold, Anne Altman, Janet Long, Kristen Leahy, Jeffrey Bennet, Tim LaBombard, BJ Gray, Jess Nichols, Anne Stevens, Bobbie Nisbet, Cathy Irwin, Deb Favreau, Dede Stabler, Elissa Mackin, Lise Armstrong, James Macintyre, Meghan Wayland, Betsy Hunt, Victoria Von Hessert, Sheila Dillon, Robin Sherwood, Elizabeth Sartorius, Ila Hunt, Michael Porrazzo

CALLED TO ORDER: 6:30 PM

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

None this evening.

MINUTES

1. March 13, 2024 approved as amended unanimously.
2. April 5, 2024 approved as written unanimously.

Selectboard meetings. Eric suggested that the Selectboard begin holding two regular meetings a month. Peter made the following motion:

The Selectboard will hold two regular meetings a month.

Ellen seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

April's second regular monthly meeting will be held on Thursday April 25 at 6:30 PM.

PUBLIC CONCERNS

Beth Meachem. Beth said there's a need for better communication between the town and community. For instance, when a town issue comes up, how does it not get lost amongst myriad other issues?

Ellen Celnik wondered about having a town communication liaison/Selectboard assistant who could focus on communications.

Naomi Ranz-Schleifer suggested consistent posting of agendas and meeting locations, and earlier notice of meetings.

TOWN HALL REDEVELOPMENT

1. **Planning for the April 24 public meeting about the Town Hall.** Eric said the Board is planning to include a remote option for this meeting, but there are some technical challenges to overcome. HCA (the initial location) was unable to offer a remote option, so the meeting has been relocated to Lakeview School. The meeting will be moderated by Tim Nisbet.

Discussion. Liz Steel asked who from the town is sponsoring the RuralEdge housing proposal. MacNeil said it is the Selectboard.

At the April 24 meeting, Ellen said she will present a history of the work leading up to the RuralEdge proposal. Housing has been a goal in the Town Plan, and was a priority at the Greater Greensboro meetings, she said. Planning Commission chair Kent Hansen said the housing committee has been working since 2018 to bring more housing options to town.

Ellen added that the town website has a lot of background information on the housing committee's work. Jennifer Ranz thought the April 24 meeting would be about the Town Hall's future in general, and would include discussions of different proposals. Peter said he had the same impression. Eric said RuralEdge has spent over \$30k on feasibility studies and this meeting should focus on that specific proposal. Additional meetings could be held in the future to discuss alternative proposals for the Town Hall.

Regarding the library's proposal to move to the Town Hall, David Kelley said moving the library was discussed five years ago and nothing happened. We have a real need for housing, he said, and there's a serious proposal on the table from an organization that's willing to raise \$10 million to make it happen.

Regarding the library proposal, Eric said he told Becky Arnold that when specific information about cost and financing has been gathered, she should bring it to the Board and a town discussion can be held.

Rob Brigham asked where the 20-housing unit number came from. Kent said the housing committee initially felt 20 units was out of scale for Greensboro, but was told that to get financing and tax credits this is the minimum number of units to make a project economically feasible. Meghan Wayland said it's not apparent that all the housing legwork the town has done matches up with the RuralEdge proposal.

Janet Long and some others felt that the April 24 meeting should be held without RuralEdge executive director Patrick Shattuck present. David Kelley said Patrick has a lot of knowledge and it will be useful for him to be there to answer questions.

Naomi suggested the Selectboard introduce the April 24 meeting as the first in a series of conversations we will have as a town about the Town Hall building.

2. Library Proposal. Fan Watkinson and Becky Arnold, co-chairs of Friends of the Greensboro Free Library, presented a proposal to move the library to the Town Hall building. There's been an alignment of three factors, they explained:

- The expiration of the Town's option agreement with RuralEdge.
- The launching of the Village Trust Initiative (VTI), a joint program of the Preservation Trust of VT, VT Council on Rural Development, and VT Community Foundation. The VTI will provide expertise and some funding to 20 small towns that are interested in revitalizing town-owned buildings.
- Long range planning. The Friends have been considering the library's future 10-20 years out, and among the major issues discussed was the challenging driveway and lack of parking.

The library trustees voted at their last meeting to investigate moving the library to the Town Hall. Fan said while the library couldn't take on a project of this scale by itself, the VTI program could give it the support needed to investigate and possibly pursue this option. Becky said while we love the current building, the site has real challenges and the need for better accessibility is only increasing. Their initial proposal is to renovate the Town Hall and move the library to the 2nd and 3rd floors. The town offices could remain in the basement.

The Friends would like to apply to the VTI, and MacNeil asked whether the town needs to approve the application. Naomi said formal support from the Selectboard is needed, and then the library would complete the application. MacNeil asked if the library proposal moves forward, would a library-affiliated group be formed to manage the project? Naomi said part of the VTI process is to create a community trust organization. Meghan Wayland said she was involved with the Albany Community Trust, and found it to be a great approach to expanding municipal capacity.

Naomi added that the initial visioning component of the VTI program would be similar to VCRD's Community Visit process, but with a focus on municipal buildings. Peter made the following motion:

The Selectboard supports applying to the Village Trust Initiative.

Ellen seconded the motion and there was further discussion. She wondered if the VTI program would revisit needs of the town, such as housing, that were previously identified in the Town Plan and during the Community Visit process. Naomi noted that housing was not one of the top four priorities that came out of the Community Visits.

David Kelley said assuming we extend the option agreement with RuralEdge, while we are a long way from a Purchase and Sales agreement, we are nevertheless at a point where RuralEdge has done a great deal of work and spent funds on what many of us feel is our town's most urgent need: to create housing for young families to support our school and area businesses. We've begun a journey down the road towards this housing project, and I don't want to create a false hope that all of a sudden, this library proposal is going to trump the housing proposal.

Kent Hansen said while the library is a treasure, and while better accessibility and parking would be nice, these things are not critical, while the need for housing is indeed critical. With many people having put in considerable time and effort over the years to get this RuralEdge project off the ground, housing should be 'Plan A' for the Town Hall. Kent added that funds could be sought to improve parking and access at the current library site.

Liz Steel observed that all this work on housing that the Planning Commission and others have done hasn't been shared widely with the community. It seems like a waste of effort for the town to simply vote down a Purchase and Sales agreement, we need to have a wide-ranging discussion about options and ideally, we'd not be in opposition to each other.

Peter said the Selectboard giving support to the VTI application is not a statement against the housing proposal, it's simply saying the Board approves exploring different options for our town buildings.

The vote was held and the motion carried (P.R., E.C., E.H., M. in favor; D.K. abstained).

3. Renewal of option agreement. Jeffrey Bennett asked, if RuralEdge has exercised its option, even if the agreement is extended, isn't the future of the Town Hall already out of the community's hands?

Rick Ely said it appears to him that the option agreement was not exercised, as it expired before a Purchase and Sales agreement (P&S) was signed – so there is, in effect, no longer any agreement in place between the Town and RuralEdge. He said it would be prudent for the Board to consult the town attorney on this matter. David Kelley said option agreements can indeed be problematic, and agreed that an attorney should be consulted.

MacNeil said for the project to move forward, the Selectboard has to agree to negotiate a P&S agreement with RuralEdge, and this hasn't happened yet. Eric said if the Board does agree to sign a P&S, 5% of the town voters can petition to bring the question - whether or not the Board should proceed with a P&S - to a town vote. Chris Steel wondered about liability for the town if the town votes no.

The amended option agreement, not yet signed by the Board, would extend the term of the original agreement through 2024.

Eric made the following motion:

The Board will not renew the option agreement this evening. Further discussion of the option agreement will happen at the April 25 Selectboard meeting at the earliest.

Ellen seconded the motion, which carried (P.R., E.C., E.H., M. in favor; D.K. abstained).

GREENSBORO PLANNING COMMISSION (GPC)

Kent Hansen proposed a joint meeting between the GPC and Selectboard to review proposed changes to the Zoning Bylaw. Selectboard members agreed this is a good idea and will propose a date for the meeting.

VTRANS BIKE/PED SCOPING STUDY

Naomi asked whether the Selectboard supports applying for a VTrans Bike/Ped scoping study grant. She said VTrans suggested the town apply for a \$55k grant, with the typical cost of these studies ranging from \$35-60k. There is a required 20% town match, based on actual grant funds spent. This means if the project comes in under budget, the town match will be also be lower.

It appears the \$18k allocated for sidewalks in FY24 can't be used for the town match, as these funds can't be carried over to the next fiscal year and the project won't be underway before July 1.

Treasurer Brett Stanciu suggested proceeding with caution, as the town budget is very tight at the moment. Naomi said if the grant is received the town could always choose to not proceed with the scoping study, if sourcing matching town funds ends up being too difficult.

Liz Steel asked whether the recreation path study that was done a few years ago could be part of this application. Naomi said that study doesn't have the engineering or design documents required for this grant application. Peter made the following motion:

The Selectboard approves applying for the VTrans Bike/Ped grant, which requires a 20% town match of grant funds spent.

Ellen seconded the motion which carried unanimously. Naomi will hand the application to the town for submission once completed.

ORLEANS COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPT.

The Board reviewed the March OCSD report.

GREENSBORO FIRE DEPT. – Chief Dave Brochu, Jr.

No report was available this evening.

ROADS & DRIVEWAYS

- 1. Road foreman's report – Tom Camarra.** Tom said the road crew has been grading as much as possible, given the rainy weather. The road crew has also been fixing equipment, trimming trees in the town R.O.W., and stockpiling gravel at the stump dump.
Ellen asked why, during the last snowstorm, Skunk Hollow Road didn't get plowed. Tom said while this was partly an oversight of the road crew, they had a stuck truck and mechanical breakdowns to deal with.
- 2. Contacting road foreman after hours.** Kim said she often gets road-related calls after hours, and would like to have a number to give residents so they can reach the road foreman directly. Tom said during the day, calling the town garage is the best way to reach the road crew. After discussion, it remained unclear what number should be called on evenings and weekends. Peter said a better system is needed so fewer road calls go through the town clerk.
- 3. Summer work plan.** Peter asked Tom about the road crew's summer work plan. Tom said they are planning to start the season working on Bayley Hazen Rd., Salls Rd., Breezy Ave., White Rd., Tousant Hill Rd. and Country Club Rd.
- 4. Shoulder reclaimer.** Peter suggested the road crew contact Barton about renting the shoulder reclaimer again. He noted the rental is by the day, so proper planning is important to keep costs down.
- 5. Cutting trees and brush in town R.O.W.** Peter suggested that the road crew communicate with property owners when significant amounts of brush or trees need to be cut in the town ROW.
- 6. Communications between road foreman and Selectboard.** Peter said it's important to have close communication between the Selectboard and road foreman, and noted that previous foremen have typically attended Selectboard meetings. Tom said he'd do his best to attend meetings, but that it's harder in winter

when he needs to get to sleep early. Peter requested that when he's unable to make a meeting, Tom provides the Board a roads update ahead of the meeting.

7. **Road budget.** Peter asked Tom to do his best during budgeting season to anticipate significant expenses coming up during the next fiscal year. This issue came up due to recent big-ticket items not having been included in the FY24 road budget, such as new tires for the loader and overburden work at the gravel pit. Peter also asked Tom to refrain from sending the road crew to non-essential trainings for the time being, to reduce expenses.
8. **Salt brine.** Peter said using salt brine is an alternative approach to spreading loose rock salt. He and Craftsbury Selectboard member Bruce Urie are planning a trip to Hyde Park to check out their salt brine system. Peter said this approach could save the town a considerable amount of money.
9. **July 2023 flood – FEMA update.** Town FEMA coordinator Josh Karp said he will be sending FEMA a large amount of consolidated data next week, which they will use to move projects along the path towards reimbursement. An initial \$150k in flood reimbursements should be received by the town soon.
Just announced is a new \$50k state grant for FEMA-ineligible flood recovery costs. Josh is hoping the gravel pit reclamation project can be covered by these funds, but was unable to get confirmation of this prior to this meeting.

TOWN CLERK – Kim Greaves

1. **FY24 sidewalk funds.** Kim asked if the Board is planning to spend the \$18k in sidewalk funds remaining in the FY24 budget. Discussion; it appears there is no project in mind for these funds and they'll likely be rolled over into the general fund when the fiscal year changes over.
2. **Town Hall generator.** The town's generator has a major problem, and given that the unit is 20 years old, Peter recommended the unit be replaced. Josh suggested the town rent a unit for the short term, since the Town Hall's future is uncertain. Peter felt the town should send out an RFP for a new generator. Eric made the following motion:

The town will send out an RFP for a new generator.

MacNeil seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

TREASURER – Brett Stanciu

1. The Board reviewed the treasurer's monthly report, the FY24 budget report, and the March check warrant reports.
2. **Flood expenditures & budget issues.** Brett said while the town received a low interest loan from the VT Municipal Bond Bank for \$289k, there is a stipulation that 50% of FEMA reimbursements must go to pay down this loan. This means it will take the town longer to pay down the much larger, higher interest loan from Community National Bank (CNB).
Brett said the town will need to renegotiate the CNB loan in July. In the meantime, depending on the pace of FEMA reimbursements, the town may have to dip into reserve funds to cover budget shortfalls. Items challenging the budget include the interest on the CNB flood loan and the cost of four different attorneys - unbudgeted for, yet necessary for a variety of situations. Brett said it's her responsibility as treasurer to remind the Board that this is a challenging time for the town budget.
3. **Naming new driveway on North Shore Rd.** Brett told the Board that a private driveway off North Shore Rd. has a proposed third driveway which will require a road name. The residents have agreed to "Summey Cottage Lane". Peter made the following motion:

The Selectboard approves 'Summey Cottage Lane' as the name for the proposed third driveway.

Ellen seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

ONGOING BUSINESS

1. **Wilson St. Drainage issues.** According to Peter, Dan Predpall expects the town will hear about the engineering grant later this month.
2. **Community Wastewater Project.** No update.

OTHER BUSINESS

1. **Caspian Challenge race.** After reviewing the race proposal from the Greensboro Association, Peter made the following motion:
The Board supports the Caspian Challenge race, to be held on July 28, 2024.
MacNeil seconded the motion which carried unanimously.
2. **1% Local Option tax.** Tabled.
3. **Sale of Glover property.** There is a small field adjacent to Rt. 16 that is connected to the town's gravel pit property in Glover. Peter suggested the town consider selling this field, which is currently in agricultural use. Discussion tabled.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

MacNeil made the following motion:

The Board will enter executive session at 8:45 PM to discuss legal and personnel issues.

Peter seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

The Board left executive session at 9:30 PM.

Peter made the following motion:

David Kelley is authorized to instruct Kevin Kite to negotiate the final settlement in the Rocco Realty lawsuit subject to Selectboard review of the final documents.

MacNeil seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Peter made the following motion:

David Kelley is authorized to speak to VLCT and agree to the Reservation of Rights.

MacNeil seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Eric made the following motion:

The Selectboard will invite Kent Hansen and the Planning Commission to attend the April 25, 2024 Selectboard meeting in executive session.

Ellen seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 9:35 PM.

Respectfully Submitted, Josh Karp, Selectboard Clerk