

Greensboro Selectboard

June 26, 2024 – Minutes

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

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

SELECTBOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT in person: Peter Romans, Liz Steel, Beth Meachem, Erika Karp, Jane Johns, Chris Roy, Davis Barnett, Dan Predpall, Brett Stanciu, Kim Greaves, Josh Karp

OTHERS PRESENT remote: Elissa Mackin, Kent Hansen, Elsa Shultz, Chad Sims, Meaghan Meachem, Janet Long, Chris Steel, Sandra Gebbie, Christine Armstrong

CALLED TO ORDER: 6:32 PM

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

- Kim: approval for library storywalk on Willey Beach.
- Eric: delinquent tax collector will be discussed in executive session.
- Brett: renewal of line of credit with Community National Bank.
- Erika: Greensboro Bend - speed study update.
- Peter Romans requested an executive session to discuss personnel/road crew. Eric so moved, with David seconding the motion. Discussion. MacNeil questioned why an executive session was needed. Peter said he's been asked to assist the Board and would like to clarify his current role, and in his judgement a discussion in executive session is warranted. After it appeared that Eric's motion was likely to fail, Peter withdrew his request for the executive session and implied he was finished assisting the Board. He added that the Board should be looking for a road commissioner.

MINUTES

Minutes from the June 12 regular meeting unanimously approved as amended.

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

At the May 22 selectboard meeting, Eric asked a few members of the public who had concerns about town communications to come up with suggestions for improvement. A communications group (CG) was formed and included Beth Meachem, Liz Steel, Elissa Mackin, Jennifer Ranz, and Julie Porrazzo.

Beth said the committee came together with the intent of putting the 'we' back in the dialog, to positively effect change and rebuild trust between the town and community. The CG met with Susan Clark, author of *Slow Democracy*, who has recently been working with the town of Craftsbury. Clark emphasized Greensboro is not the only town having conversations about improving communication.

The CG presented both short- and long-term recommendations. Beth said while some of the recommendations will have an economic impact and could be considered later, the CG hopes that its first two short-term recommendations will be accepted by the board. Recommendation 1 is to compile all community questions about the RuralEdge project and post on the town website.

Recommendation 2 is to set up a discussion forum where the community gets together to discuss issues. The first session would be about the proposed RuralEdge project, but future sessions could be about any number of topics that affect the town.

Beth said the RuralEdge proposal has brought up many questions from the community and not so many clear answers, leading to misconceptions. People have been asking for better communication between residents, the selectboard and the town office.

The CG reached out to the VT Council on Rural Development (VCRD) who agreed to provide meeting facilitation at no cost, but the request needs to come from the Selectboard. The CG talked to a few other towns such as Craftsbury and Peacham, and heard that it's important to have an independently facilitated process. Viewpoints beyond the selectboard's are what's missing here, Beth said. But all the same, the CG feels it's important that the selectboard take the lead, set up meetings, and do the outreach, which would show a commitment to improved communications.

David asked whether Susan Clark could moderate. Beth thought she was too busy for that role, but she could continue to help out behind the scenes.

Beth said the community meeting we're proposing is simply a first step. You all are carrying a big load, and you asked others to help fill in some holes. We know emotions have been running high and we are struggling with a civil discourse.

Discussion of the April 24 public meeting about the RuralEdge housing proposal. Beth said most of that meeting was Patrick Shattuck talking, and some in the community would like a discussion about the town hall without Patrick. MacNeil said people had the opportunity to speak and ask questions, and many did.

Liz said the CG spoke with Jenna Koloski who facilitated the Community Visit conversations. Jenna's take was that some of the priorities identified during the Community Visit process hadn't been effectively communicated within the community. And while the housing and wastewater committees did a lot of work, it was often done behind the scenes and it appears there wasn't much reporting back to the community on progress made.

Christine Armstrong said the planning commission (PC) is about to begin the process of updating the town plan. The first step is a community survey in August, followed by the first community forums in October. Brett suggested the survey could be sent out to all property owners with the tax bills.

Christine said these town plan meetings sound very similar to the community meetings being proposed by the CG. Liz agreed, but said the CG group is hoping these community conversations could happen sooner.

Ellen questioned duplicating public meetings over and over. A forum now, and later another round of them from the PC? It's hard to get people to come to meetings like this, many folks work three jobs and can't attend multiple meetings. Why don't we join in the PC's process that is about to start? Official, town-sponsored meetings use a lot of resources.

Eric: the temperature of conversations in town has gone up dramatically, and the selectboard should take some responsibility for that. I'd favor moving ahead with CG recommendations 1 and 2, this could be the selectboard doing its part to lower the temperature. Eric urged other Board members to endorse the two proposals, noting the time and thought the CG has put into this.

Ellen and MacNeil said they'd like more time to digest the CG's recommendations.

David: I agree that a compilation of all the RuralEdge questions would be useful for residents, as well as to MacNeil and Ellen, who are currently negotiating the P&S agreement. We have a lot of challenges in town and there's no harm in having a thoughtful conversation about Greensboro's future. But if this discussion is going to be more fighting about the RuralEdge proposal, I'm not interested.

Ellen: my understanding is that we asked the CG to make recommendations on how to make official information more easily accessible.

MacNeil: I understood that this communications group was going to propose ways for the town to improve communication generally, not focus on the RuralEdge proposal specifically. Also, there are huge challenges at our school, why aren't people questioning what's happening there?

The Board agreed to table discussion of the communications recommendations until its next meeting, to give board members time to review the proposals.

Meaghan asked selectboard members to remember they are public servants, and to consider their tone as they dialog with the public. She added that the town process around the RuralEdge proposal has not been as transparent as the board thinks it's been. Eric made the following motion:

The Board will post the communications group's recommendations online.

David second the motion, which did not carry (Hanson, Kelley in favor; MacNeil, Celnik opposed).

Janet said Selectboard members are voted in to handle town business, and that there doesn't need to be a town meeting for everything that happens in town. She added that you can't expect them to be nice at all times.

ORLEANS COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPT.

- 1. Speed study – Greensboro Bend.** Erika asked for an update on the speed study. Kim said she'll ask Sgt. Wells to attend the next meeting, hopefully with speed study data to discuss. Jane said the closing of the bridge near Canyon Drive after last year's flooding has exacerbated the speeding problem.
Erika and Jane met with OCSO Sgt. Wells. If a speed study doesn't provide the favorable data required by the state to lower the speed limit, seasonal speed bumps or humps could be used. Speed humps are more gradual than bumps and could be preferable. Erika said everyone will hate them but something needs to be done to make Main St. safer.
She noted that last year, the speed cart was set up on the north end of town past Smith's, and that the cart needs to be set up near the school as well.
- 2.** David relayed a story about an injured bird that a OCSO deputy tried to euthanize using his firearm, but he missed. David will discuss this incident with the Sheriff, as some consider this an inappropriate use of the officer's firearm.

ROADS & DRIVEWAYS

- 1. Road Foreman's report.** Tom was not present. Heavy rains recently washed out Edsall road, which was also washed out in July and December last year.
- 2. Unfixed road damages.** Sandra Gebbie noted washouts on Gebbie and Rocking Rock roads that have been left unfixed for many weeks, some since last summer. She has spoken to Tom about this and is not sure what else to do. Eric said he'd pass along her concerns to Tom.
Liz asked if the town website could list upcoming road work, so residents could be aware of the road crew's schedule. Kim said she doesn't have that information, but Tom could be asked to provide it.
- 3. Rail Trail trailhead in Greensboro Bend.** Dan said work on the trailhead is scheduled to begin on July 8. He requested that the road crew provide two trucks to assist the contractor on the first day.
- 4. State grants for road improvements.** Kim said the town has been awarded three state grants this year, two from the Grants-in-Aid program, one from the Better Backroads program. Kim said once she's received the grant documents the work can be put out to bid. Peter suggested that the road foreman should confer with the selectboard about road work priorities for these grants.
- 5. Driveway plowing.** Discussion of putting a new driveway plowing contract out to bid so the Board will have a number to work with for budgeting this fall. It was agreed to do this in August. Eric said Jeff Perry is willing to submit a bid.
- 6. Selectboard road liaison.** Josh said he's unclear if Peter Romans is continuing to assist the Board with roads. If he's not continuing, the Board should consider appointing a new roads liaison. MacNeil offered to take the position and Board members approved.

TOWN CLERK – Kim Greaves

Library story walk. Kim said the library is requesting permission to do a story walk on the Willey Beach trail. MacNeil made the following motion:

The Board approves the library using the Willey Beach trail for a story walk.

David seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

TREASURER – Brett Stanciu

The selectboard approved Brett renegotiating the line of credit with Community National Bank. Last year, the town borrowed \$1 million for flood repairs and is still waiting on FEMA reimbursement.

ONGOING BUSINESS

- 1. Glover land encroachment.** Peter said a Glover resident's encroachment onto Greensboro's gravel pit property amounts to about half an acre. Peter said the Board needs to decide how much additional land it wants to offer for sale, and then a valuation can be determined.

It was unclear whether Peter will continue working on this project.

Erika noted that there should be a public discussion when the town is considering disposing of land or buildings. For instance, many years ago the selectboard voted to sell the Greensboro Bend Depot to a private person, and she believes this was a short-sighted decision made without public input.

- 2. Delinquent tax attorney.** David said the new delinquent tax attorney is charging the town for his work, whereas the prior attorney's fees were paid by the property owner. Janet and David will research how this works in other towns. Janet said she'll also ask the attorney who did this work for the town years ago if she's still available.

- 3. Community wastewater project.** Eric and Dan met at St. Michael's church with members of the congregation and the statewide facilities manager of the diocese. Eric said the town proposed a permanent easement on 1.5 acres of land behind the cemetery. It appeared that the church group was not in favor of this, concerned about future cemetery expansion and a lowering of their property value.

The town needs a signed purchase and sales agreement by the end of July or \$4-5 million in grant funds earmarked for construction will have to be declined. Eric said he and Dan might go back to the church with another proposal.

Although this acreage is the highest quality site for a disposal field, some have wondered why alternative sites have not been considered. MacNeil said six other sites were looked at and all ended up being non-suitable.

- 4. Wilson St. drainage improvements – engineering study.** Dan, Peter and Eric interviewed four engineering firms and recommended KAS Engineering. The firm will come up with a few different solutions to the drainage problem and the town will decide which option to go with. VT Emergency Management (VEM) will cover the town's grant match for both engineering and construction.

The study will get started immediately and the town will put in an application for a construction grant in December. David made the following motion:

The Board accepts the KAS bid for the Wilson St. engineering study.

Ellen seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Peter noted that during a recent downpour, he checked the drainage inlet at the bottom of the Town Park parking lot to make sure it wasn't plugged. He recommended that the road foreman keep a close eye on this, to keep stormwater coming down behind Wilson St. from damaging buildings on East Street.

- 5. Town Hall housing proposal – standard closing conditions.** MacNeil said this document outlines what RuralEdge's responsibilities would be for managing the town hall as a housing complex. David said this

appears to be boilerplate language and that the town attorney is looking it over. Kim will post the document to the town website.

Erika asked how the RuralEdge housing should be characterized, since it's not 'Section 8' or 'subsidized' housing. Josh said Patrick has used the term 'below market rent' housing. Ellen said it's considered 'modest income' housing.

EXECUTIVE SESSIONS

MacNeil made the following motion:

The selectboard will enter executive session at 8:40 PM to discuss a personnel issue.

Ellen seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

The Board left executive session at 8:45 PM.

David made the following motion:

The selectboard appoints Mike Cloutier as interim Collector of Delinquent Taxes.

MacNeil seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Ellen made the following motion:

The selectboard will enter executive session at 8:50 PM to discuss a personnel issue.

MacNeil seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

The Board left executive session at 9:20 PM and took no action.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 9:22 PM.

Respectfully Submitted, Josh Karp, Selectboard Clerk