

Greensboro Selectboard

July 24, 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, Bobbie Nisbet

SELECTBOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT in person: Joseph Gresser, Meaghan Meachem, Beth Meachem, Erika Karp, Tim Nisbet, Lisa Downing, Mary Parker, JoAnn Hanowski, Davis Barnett, Sheriff Jennifer Harlow, Chris Cogswell, Stew Arnold, Elissa Mackin, Jennifer Ranz, Dede Stabler, Chris Steel, Liz Steel, Gary Circosta, Jane Johns, Vangie Kelly, Gwen Mann, Tod Mann, Renee Circosta, Cornelia de Schepper, Brett Stanciu, Kim Greaves, Josh Karp

OTHERS PRESENT remote: Peter Romans, Aileen Gebbie, BJ Gray, Elaine Cole-Kerr, Rod Kerr, Diane Irish, Frank Baker, Janet Long, Lise Armstrong, Michael Porrazzo, Anne Altman, Ellen Burchenal, Kent Hansen, Cynthia West, Christine Armstrong, James Fredericks, Jerilyn Virden, Rosann Hickey, Ila Hunt, Cathay Irwin, Chad Sims, Richard Allman, Karen Gowen, Jennifer Lucas, Gail Sieg

CALLED TO ORDER: 6:30 PM

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

Additions: Frank Barrett's Grange report, Bobbie Nisbet introduction

MINUTES

1. July 10 regular meeting - approved as written unanimously.
2. July 11 emergency meeting - approved as written unanimously.

New selectboard member Bobbie Nisbet introduced herself. She said she's lived in Greensboro for over 50 years and decided to serve on the selectboard because she loves the town and wants to contribute to a civil, respectful discourse locally.

PUBLIC CONCERNS

1. **Save Town Hall Coalition.** Davis said he appreciated Eric's recent call for civil discourse. He then presented a petition on behalf of the 'Save Town Hall Coalition' with 180 signatures asking 'should the Town Hall redevelopment project, as presented, be terminated'. Davis said signers included about 80 full time residents.
He asked the board to take the petition seriously. While the coalition is supportive of affordable housing, Davis said there is concern in the community, a pause is necessary, and an independent community impact report should be undertaken.
2. **Selectboard agenda.** Gary said he went on the town website this morning and the agenda for this evening's selectboard meeting was incomplete. Kim said she noticed this and made corrections by 9 AM.
3. **Selectboard meeting packets.** Meaghan suggested the board packet and other meeting information be made available on the town website. Brett said this was just set up and will be done moving forward.
4. **Costs to maintain the town hall.** Discussion of the costs to operate and maintain the town hall. Different figures have been quoted by different town officials in different contexts, ranging from \$22k to \$70k. Some of those present expressed frustration at this wide range of figures. It appears the higher figures were a

combination of what the town has actually spent in recent years, plus what should be spent on deferred maintenance and improvements.

Brett said she'll put the past five years of actual expenditures on the website, which average about \$30k per year.

Bobbie said when she moved to town in 1972, the town hall was vacant as the high school students had started attending the newly-constructed Hazen Union High School. The town voted to demolish the building, but this decision was ultimately reversed and a three phase plan was developed to revitalize the building. Phase one was completed, but phases two and three were never completed due to cost.

In the early 1980s, the elementary school was bursting at the seams and the idea of renovating the town hall and moving classrooms there was discussed. After the state said this wasn't possible due to the fire risk inherent in the building's construction, an addition was built onto the school building.

ROADS & DRIVEWAYS

- 1. Recent flooding.** Heavy rains from tropical storm Beryl washed out many roads in town on July 10-11. Repairing damages will be expensive and it is hoped that this will become another declared disaster, allowing FEMA to provide assistance. MacNeil said he and Josh have been working with the road crew on planning road repairs.

Josh said according to the state, the emergency repair phase is now over and all work must be put out to bid. The town's bidding policy allows sole source contracts in an emergency situation, which in this case would allow critical repair work to continue, rather than waiting two weeks for the typical bidding process to unfold.

Josh said this would be temporary and in a few weeks the town would switch to the regular bidding process. He suggested the board approve MacNeil approving and signing off on road repair contracts in the short term. Josh said in order to get FEMA reimbursement the town is required to sign contracts with all contractors moving forwards. VLCT has provided boilerplate contracts which the town can use, but it was recommend these be reviewed by the town attorney. David felt that since these sample contracts were written by competent attorneys at VLCT, a review shouldn't be necessary. Other board members agreed.

David made the following motion:

The town will hire contractors using the emergency clause in the purchasing policy for three weeks, with the board authorizing MacNeil to approve bids and sign contracts during that time.

Bobbie seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Davis asked about suing contractors who's repair work from last year's flooding didn't hold up. Josh said contractors followed guidance from the town and state on the repair work, and in most cases actually improved the roads they worked on. These new washouts should be blamed on unprecedented weather conditions, not on the contractors.

- 2. Selling gravel pit land.** Gary said the minutes of the Glover Selectboard's June 13 meeting say they are planning to offer \$150k for a portion of Greensboro's gravel pit, to be communicated to Greensboro via Peter Romans. Eric said no offer has been received to date.
- 3. State road grants – open bids.** Kim said three road improvement grants were applied for last year, with work locations recommended by the state. RFPs were put out and one bid was received, from Mark Colburn. The board reviewed the bid and David made the following motion:

The board accepts Mark Colburn's bid for the three state grant road projects.

MacNeil seconded the motion which carried unanimously. He noted the contractor has a ledge hammer which is required for some sections of the work.

Peter said there needs to be better communication between the board and road foreman. The board should be paying attention to where we've had big failures and make sure the right work is being prioritized.

- 4. Wilson St. Drainage issues.** Chad has had repeated damage to his house on East St. from stormwater runoff and the town has received a grant to hire an engineer to find solutions to this problem. Josh said it could be a year before the improvements are actually made, and suggested the board come up with a temporary fix for Chad and Elsa in the meantime. Josh and MacNeil asked Tom to think about a short-term fix, but Tom is very busy with road repairs at the moment. Chad said he would appreciate a conversation with a selectboard member. David made the following motion:

The town will ask the engineering firm currently working on the Wilson St. drainage issue to consider short-term solutions to Chad and Elsa's ongoing stormwater problem.

MacNeil seconded the motion which carried unanimously. Eric said he would follow up with the engineers.

STEWARDS OF THE GREENSBORO WATERSHED

JoAnne Hanowski said a Lake Watershed Action Plan has been completed, with a major goal of controlling phosphorus releases into Caspian Lake. 35 improvement projects were identified which included 11 road segments. Josh and JoAnne will discuss grant funding possibilities to complete the road projects.

Chris Steel said there are grants available from Watersheds United Vermont, and suggested the selectboard look into this. Grant applications are due at the end of September.

GREENSBORO FIRE DEPT. – Chief Dave Brochu, Jr.

The board reviewed the June/July GFD report.

ORLEANS COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPT.

Sheriff's contract. The cost for this year's contract is \$195,700 and covers policing services from July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025. David made the following motion:

The board accepts the OCSD contract as presented.

MacNeil seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

TOWN CLERK – Kim Greaves

- 1. Town hall - recent fire inspection report.** Violations were found and need to be addressed. This report will be put on the town website.
- 2. Local Emergency Management Plan.** This plan must be updated and re-adopted annually. Kim reviewed and updated the plan with emergency management director Dave Brochu, Jr. David Kelley made the following motion:

The board adopts the updated Local Emergency Management Plan.

Bobbie seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

- 3. VT Appraisal Company - assessor contract.** Kim said current town assessor Brittany Butler is working out well. Her contract is year-to-year and needs to be renewed. David made the following motion:

The board will renew the assessor contract with the VT Appraisal Company.

MacNeil seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

TREASURER – Brett Stanciu

- 1. Renew line of credit for 2023 flood expenses.** The LOC with Community National Bank has an expiration date of August 3, with a current balance of \$708,345 and can be renewed with an interest rate of 5.25%. Brett requested the board renew the LOC. Bobbie made the following motion:

The town will renew the line of credit with Community National Bank.

MacNeil seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

- 2. Set tax rate.** Brett asked the Board to set the tax rate. The calculations she presented were municipal tax \$.7646; homestead education \$1.8584; non-homestead education \$1.9425. MacNeil made the following motion:

The board approves the tax rate as presented by the town treasurer.

David seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Gary asked whether interest income on fund balances was included in the calculation. Brett said while she did include a figure for this, it was a challenging number to come up with. She invited Gary to help with this and other budget issues given his expertise.

Tax bills will be mailed out by the end of next week.

- 3.** Gary suggested funds for the town hall's replacement generator should come out of the capital budget, not the general fund. He suggested taking the \$18k earmarked for the generator and putting it towards the implementation of the communications group's recommendations.

TOWN HALL / RURALEDGE UPDATE

Mary asked who contacted RuralEdge (RE) originally. Ellen said the housing committee and RE looked at different properties around town for a housing project but couldn't find one that was suitable. After WonderArts withdrew their town hall renovation proposal, Peter and Kent discussed the idea of housing at the town hall with RE.

Gary asked why there hasn't been a public meeting where people opposed to RE's town hall proposal could share their opinions. Regarding the event at the GUCC, Bobbie said this was not organized by the town and seemed to be focused on the need for housing.

Discussion about holding a meeting about the town hall in August. Ellen requested that someone from VHCB and/or VHFA attend this meeting to answer questions and clarify how financing works for projects like this.

Regarding long term leases for housing developments, Ellen read a communication from RE director Patrick Shattuck explaining why these leases are common in major metropolitan areas but not in Vermont. This is due in part to the fact that raising funds up front for property acquisition is easier than structuring a project around long-term lease costs, and in part due to VT's perpetual deed restrictions.

Ellen said the August meeting would be aimed at folks such as summer residents who weren't at the April 24 RE meeting. The history of the RE proposal would be shared again and updates provided. She said some people feel they haven't gotten all the information about the proposed project. Ellen added that the town could have done a better job communicating about the project as it took shape.

She reiterated that this housing project would be 'modest income' housing, not 'subsidized' housing.

Ellen said she has no problem having a meeting, but that the discussion needs to be civil. She wants to support the housing committee's work and the housing recommendations in the town plan.

She requested that people call her directly with thoughts and questions.

Kent Hansen said the communications group (CG) recommended starting a series of community conversations addressing a broad spectrum of issues, but there's concern that the proposed RE project will dominate the discussions. Based on this concern, the CG has been rethinking the timing of these community conversations.

Liz said the VT Council on Rural Development (VCRD), who offered to facilitate the first community conversation, agreed that having the housing issue dominate the first conversation wouldn't be ideal.

David said as important as housing is, there are many important issues to discuss as a community and broader visioning is important.

Bobbie said given the angst expressed by a part of the community, there may need to be a meeting to discuss the town hall and RE proposal prior to the community conversation. Eric agreed.

Ellen said she supports a RE meeting similar to the April 24 meeting, but insisted state officials who can explain funding be present to provide accurate answers. MacNeil agreed with Ellen, and said while questions about the project can be asked again, and answers provided when known, there's not much new information to convey.

David agreed that having VHCB staff there makes sense.

Nancy said summer residents need to be able to ask questions about the RE proposal. Cornelia said there's very helpful literature about the proposal at the town offices that addressed many of her concerns. Kim added this information is also posted on the town website.

Bobbie asked those present if they'd like to attend an RE info meeting in August. Many of those present said they would, but would like it to be held without reps from the state agencies.

Christine said the August meeting should be more of a listening session for the selectboard. She added that the planning commission has not endorsed the RE project. While there is some overlap in membership between the housing committee and the planning commission, she wanted the community to know that the housing committee is a separate entity that predated the 2019 VCRD Community Visit.

Liz said the town administration has a lot of things going on, and capacity seems to be a real challenge. The housing committee has been mentioned a few times – can they support the selectboard during this process? Or other talented people in this community could help out?

Meaghan said there have been lessons learned by the board and community of how to undertake a better process next time. But in the short term, the community wants to have a conversation about the future of the town hall. At the end of the day, if we've learned nothing else, we can say this building matters to a lot of people in the community.

Ellen said many things must be negotiated in order for the Purchase and Sales agreement with RE to be completed, including the use of the Village Green, future of the town offices and giving closet, parking arrangements...all we have now is a preliminary design, RE is going one step at a time. There's a good chance this project won't ultimately happen.

Stew said some people feel that the proposed number of housing units is too many for our small town, that this high density of apartments is out of place. These folks wished more public input was gathered prior to the option agreement being signed.

David made the following motion:

The selectboard will hold a public meeting and pot luck on August 19 to discuss the town hall and RuralEdge housing proposal, assuming representatives from VHCB and/or VHFA can attend. If they are not available on that date, the meeting will be rescheduled for the earliest date they can attend.

MacNeil seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Eric wondered how the meeting would be structured. Bobbie noted that any state officials who attend would not be running the meeting, just answering questions.

GREENSBORO PLANNING COMMISSION

Planning commission (PC) chair Kent Hansen reminded those present that the selectboard is holding a public hearing on the 'misc. changes' bylaw proposal tomorrow night. He hoped the board will discuss the Shoreland Protection District proposed amendments at its next meeting.

The community survey has been completed and will be released to the public on August 3. This is the first step to help the PC revisit the town plan, which is updated every seven or eight years. Liz said while there will be paper copies distributed around town, ideally folks would fill out the survey online using a link or QR code. Ellen said the PC sets priorities and helps to vision the future of the town, and the PC often has openings that need to be filled. It was noted that up to three PC members can be non-residents.

ONGOING BUSINESS

1. **Glover land survey.** No update.
2. **Speeding on Main St.** Kim said the OCSO has completed a speed study and it shows that speeding above 35 mph is not common. Josh had a discussion with a Vtrans traffic engineer who recommended the town contact Doug Morton at NVDA for assistance. It appears the town can ignore the speed study and lower the speed limit to 25 mph, but with this approach it's possible a traffic ticket could be challenged in court. David suggested that the town lower the speed limit anyway.
Sheriff Harlow suggested changing the speed for the whole of Main St, not just a section.
Bobbie wondered about installing radar speed signs.
Kim will confirm the process for changing the town's traffic ordinance and report back at the next board meeting. Gary noted this could be an opportunity to include other changes made to the traffic ordinance in recent years that have yet to be included.
3. **Civil Discourse Policy / Selectboard Rules of Procedure.** The board reviewed the selectboard rules of procedure last discussed in 2018. Eric proposed language be changed regarding location of meetings. Meaghen suggested that 'Zoom' be identified as a sub-location.
Bobbie had suggestions about profane remarks, bullying and harassment, and noted this must also apply to remote participants.
Kim will incorporate these changes and the board will review and approve at its next meeting.
Gary suggested that all ordinances and policies be uploaded to the town website.
4. **Community wastewater system.** Eric said there will be another meeting on 7/26 to discuss land purchase or lease possibilities with St. Michael's Church. He noted that up to \$7.5 million has been set aside for this project, and deadlines for land acquisition keep being extended as the funders really want projects like this to go ahead.
5. **Grange study.** Eric said architect Frank Barrett submitted a plan for renovating the Grange building. Frank did this study pro bono and the plan will be uploaded to the town website.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Ellen made the following motion:

The board will enter executive session at 9:25 PM to discuss contracts/legal.

MacNeil seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

The board left executive session at 9:48 PM and took no action.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 9:48 PM.

Respectfully Submitted, Josh Karp, Selectboard Clerk

AMENDED 8/15/24 J.K.