

# Greensboro Selectboard

## November 13, 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:** Davis Barnett, Erika Karp, Jane Johns, Meaghan Meachem, Liz Steel, Beth Meachem, Raymonda Parchment, Elaine Cole-Kerr, Nancy Lammert, Renee Circosta, Josh Karp, Kim Greaves, Jennifer Ranz, Dede Stabler, Jan Terweisch, Chris Steel, Sandra Macleod, Meghan Wayland, Tim Nisbet, Maria Amador

**OTHERS PRESENT remote:** Gail Worcelo, Janet Long, Megan Wright, Michael Porrazzo, Rod Kerr, Gary Circosta, Dan Predpall, Elissa Mackin, Lise Armstrong, Diane Irish, Christine Armstrong, Linda Ely, Sheila Dillon, Sara Slater, Robin Hardy, Paul Brierre, Melissa Moffatt, Megan Wright, Kent Hansen, Julie Porrazzo, Brenden Beer, Audra Pitts, Lisa Sartorius, Karl Stein, Meaghen, Rick Lovett, Lisa Yokana, Janet Patterson, Michele Mackin, Tim Nisbet, Vince Cubbage, Jess Nichols, Any Nichols, Aileen Gebbie, Mary White

**CALLED TO ORDER: 6:30 PM**

### ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

Beth: MERP grant.

Kim: Add'l signature for checks for ass't. town clerk, employee health insurance decision

### MINUTES

1. October 9 regular meeting unanimously approved as amended.
2. October 16,23,30 budget meetings unanimously approved.
3. November 6 special meeting unanimously approved.

Kim said that Brett is out on medical leave for an unknown period of time, and town staff and volunteers are trying their best to perform her duties (zoning administrator and treasurer). Kim thanked Jennifer Lucas and John Schweizer for helping with the budget.

Eric clarified that under public concerns, there will be open public comment for 15 minutes, noting that the board may or may not engage with the public during this time. There will also be an opportunity for public comment at some point during each agenda item.

### PUBLIC CONCERNS

1. Jan Terweisch wished Brett well and thanked the road crew for fixing the large pothole at the entrance to North Shore Rd.  
Jan said many young people want to live in Greensboro village but not in an apartment complex, and a village septic system would help create more dwelling units.
2. Liz Steel said the communications working group had proposed two meetings a month, one for administrative topics and the other for a wide-ranging discussion of town issues. She believes it would be more effective to have two shorter meetings a month rather than one long meeting.

### ORLEANS COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPT.

1. The Board reviewed the October OCSD report.

2. Bobbie said she's asked Sheriff Harlow to provide more details in the monthly reports. Sheriff Harlow assured Bobbie they are patrolling daily in Greensboro Bend.
3. Sandra asked what the town is getting from the OCSD other than speeding enforcement. Bobbie said one thing they do is conduct a variety of investigations.

#### **GREENSBORO FIRE DEPT. – Chief Dave Brochu, Jr.**

No report was available this evening.

#### **ROADS & DRIVEWAYS**

1. **Road Foreman's report.** Road foreman Tom Camarra was not present.
2. Bobbie thanked Tom for putting up 25 mph signs on Main St. near the Four Seasons of Early Learning. There has been an increase in traffic due to the closed bridge on E. Main St., as well as from the rail trail trailhead.
3. Tom has approved a curb cut for Susan Schulman. MacNeil made the following motion:  
*The board approves the curb cut request from Susan Schulman.*  
Eric seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

#### **TOWN CLERK / INTERIM TREASURER – Kim Greaves**

1. Kim said Jennifer Lucas and NEMRC are helping out with budgeting and finishing up the FY24 audit in Brett's absence.
2. The board signed the Lister's Errors and Omission's form.
3. Kim said a maple on the Village Green needs dead branches trimmed, and a dangerous leaning tree behind the town hall needs to be removed. She received an estimate of \$800 from Chuck Hill to do this work. David made the following motion:  
*The board accepts Chuck Hill's estimate for tree work..*  
MacNeil seconded the motion which carried unanimously.
4. **Town offices – mold remediation.** Kim reported that Clean & Restore VT has completed mold remediation work in the town hall basement. Sheetrock was removed in places, many surfaces were painted with antimicrobial paint, and carpet was cleaned and sanitized. Wes from Clean & Restore said it will be impossible to properly damp-proof the basement of the old building at a reasonable cost and recommended that dehumidifiers be constantly run in the space. He recommended specific models of commercial dehumidifiers, and noted these must be plumbed in since it's not practical to empty these manually on a daily basis. An exception would be a small unit with a tank that he recommends for the vault. Josh asked that a selectboard member take on the project of lining up a plumber and confirming what units need to be ordered. Bobbie volunteered to take this on.  
Kim said she is planning to move the town offices back downstairs soon.
5. Kim requested that new assistant town clerk Lily McMurtrie be authorized to sign checks, in case Kim is out. MacNeil made the following motion:  
*The board authorizes assistant town clerk Lily McMurtrie to sign checks.*  
David seconded the motion which carried unanimously.
6. Budget meetings continue on Wednesdays at 1 PM. The board plans to have a draft budget completed in early December and is planning to hold two public meetings on the draft budget prior to final approval.

7. At the last budget meeting the board indicated it is not planning to change the town employee health insurance plan or the employee contribution of 10%. Ellen noted health insurance costs are rising everywhere, not just for Greensboro. David made the following motion:

*The town will continue with the same health insurance plan and employee contribution in FY26*

MacNeil seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

8. The Board reviewed the FY24 budget report and the October check warrant reports.

## **ONGOING BUSINESS**

1. **Sign Policy.** Bobbie said she was not comfortable with the “no signs at all” decision after the last selectboard meeting. Discussion of the sign policy she’s been working on that she hopes finds a middle ground.

The policy says what signs are allowed to be placed on town property and in the town ROW. A permit will be required for signs, this is simply going to the town clerk and filling out a form with basic information. This way, the town knows who to contact if there’s any issue. Bobbie noted there will be no charge for a sign permit.

The Greensboro Historical Society and Library, as they have their own board of directors, can put signs on their property as they wish, even though it’s town property.

Food venues are exempt from this policy, such as farmers market signs or farm stand signs.

Gallery signs are allowed and are exempt from time limitations, but a form must be filled out.

Political signs can be put up for a period of two weeks and then must be removed.

Signs at polling places are under the jurisdiction of the town clerk.

A yard sale sign would be classified as an ‘event’ sign and may be up for up to two weeks.

Nancy Lammert said she’s upset about this policy and that if the board is going to restrict signs, the policy should be consistent with state regulations. Bobbie said there’s a state statute that allows towns to enact stricter policies than the state.

Bobbie said the policy will be enforced by the town constable.

Josh asked what problem the board is trying to solve with this policy. Bobbie said there wasn’t a problem until the “Save the Town Hall” signs appeared on the Village Green, and it was hard to find out who put them up. Bobbie said she believes the policy is simple and provides clarity for everyone.

Christine asked whether the town could have an online registration to reduce the administrative burden. Kim said this would be up to the selectboard. David made the following motion:

*The board adopts the sign policy as presented.*

Ellen seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

2. **Encroachment on town’s Glover land.** David said the folks have been using the spring on Greensboro’s land for a number of decades, and he proposed granting an easement, for \$1, allowing the continual use of the land. David proposed that the residents would pay attorney’s fees. While an appraisal could be done, this land is not valuable and appraisals are known to be expensive. David will discuss the easement with the town attorney and determine whether this needs to come before the voters.
3. **Bend Rd/Rt. 16 dangerous intersection.** Bobbie reported that Josh spoke with the state about clearing brush and weeds that impede visibility. Josh said the state did this but the visibility is still not great, in large part due to the fact that much of the vegetation is outside the state’s ROW. Bobbie said more discussion is warranted.

Janet said the stop sign at the bottom of French Hill could be made more visible, and wondered about installing a flashing light at the bottom of the hill.

Sandra said when you approach Tolman's Corners from Hardwick Street, visibility is poor to the left due to a number of cedars planted by the HCA. MacNeil said these trees were required to be installed for screening by local and state permits.

## **COMMUNITY WASTEWATER SYSTEM**

Testing has been completed on the Perron property, with results expected by Nov. 15.

Dan said the wastewater committee tried to negotiate a purchase and sales agreement with St. Michael's Church but this fell through. Grant funding then dropped from about \$8 million to \$3-4 million because we weren't meeting required milestones, at which point we were about ready to give up.

In the meantime the RuralEdge project was being investigated and engineers Hoyle Tanner thought perhaps the Village Green could be used to service the new apartments and village. This proved to be not possible due to poor soils at that site. After assessing the Village Green, the hydrogeologist felt there was some promising soils to the north that could be worth investigating, and test pits were dug on the Perron farm in early November.

Dan said the current situation is very difficult. A report must be submitted by December 31 or all funds will disappear. Next week, the selectboard needs to choose one of these three options:

1. **Use the Perron property for RuralEdge's town hall apartments septic system.** While this would maximize the total grants funds at \$4.9 million, it would likely take the entire estimated capacity of the site. A minimum of 6500 gallons per day (GPD) is the number we're hoping for. But if the board decides on this option and the RuralEdge project doesn't move forward, all funds will be lost.

Josh asked, if the selectboard chooses a different option, is this the end of RuralEdge's town hall project? David said while this could indeed be the end, this is not known for sure at this point.

2. **Use the Perron property to serve as a village septic system.** The big problem with this option is that we haven't selected who will be served by a future system. A design report would need to be done by the end of December showing specifically who would be served by this project. If the town doesn't supply this information, the engineers will create a table 'assigning' residences and/or businesses that will be served and the town would likely have to create an ordinance requiring these properties to sign up. According to Dan, such requirements are common in towns that have community septic systems.

A possible way around this is to allocate the capacity to the Willey's Store, the nursing home, possibly the library or school – facilities we are sure would want to hook up. This might leave capacity for 3-5 residences.

David asked what the user fees would be. Dan said this is not known at this point, but after the system is designed in December Hoyle Tanner could be asked to provide a rough estimate of the fee structure.

Davis said the original plan was for a 40,000 GPD system, and Ellen added it was hoped that up to 90 residences would be hooked up. Ellen wondered about system maintenance costs with a smaller scale system with just a handful of residences or businesses hooked up.

3. **Forgo all current grant funds, start over and apply for new grant funding.** With this option, possibly the Perron parcel could be used as the first site in a cluster of smaller sites. Dan said since 6500 GPD can serve about 20 residences, you would have to have more people sign up in order to justify constructing additional sites.

Josh asked whether the current grant funding will cover 100% of construction costs. Dan said it is thought so, but if not, additional grant funds can be sought.

David wanted to clarify: if there's no sign ups, there's no project? Bobbie said the owners of Greensboro Garage and Willey's are interested. The nursing home is also interested as they can't expand beyond their current 32 beds unless they have more capacity. The facilities manager at Lakeview School said the school district would likely be interested as well.

Jan said a community septic system is essential for ADUs and infill housing, and expects that many folks would take advantage of such a system.

Bobbie said coming out of the ‘Greater Greensboro’ process in 2019, a community wastewater system was one of the top four priorities.

Jan said if a village system is constructed, the toilets at the public beach should be hooked up.

Jane asked about capacity in Greensboro Bend. Eric said early on in the community wastewater process, Bend residents were asked about hooking up to a community septic system and most were not interested.

Liz encouraged selectboard members to review the 2021 survey Hoyle Tanner did, which provided good feedback about who wanted to hook up.

Hoyle Tanner has proposed a meeting on Thursday November 21 to further discuss the town’s options. It is possible that during this meeting the selectboard will decide which of the three options to pursue.

## **RURALEdge / TOWN HALL REDEVELOPMENT**

David and Ellen have been negotiating the purchase and sales agreement with RuralEdge.

David said some of the challenges have been unknowns about septic, different appraisal values, and keeping the Village Green under town ownership and control (RuralEdge has agreed with this last point). He added they are not ready to put a proposal before the voters.

Jennifer said she’s shocked at the rushed process around the community septic, how residents are being informed, and appalled at how the town is being put in this position, with such urgency. It appears to her that the selectboard is ill-informed, yet needs to be making very careful decisions for our community.

David said he’s not going to rush anything, and added that any proposed conveyance will need to be approved by the voters.

Meghan asked whether the timeline for the vote on the purchase and sales agreement is related to the expiration of the option agreement on 12/31. David said it is not, as the P&S can be extended.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

- 1. Planning commission appointment.** Chair Kent Hansen’s term was up in 2024 but this was overlooked during selectboard appointments in March. David made the following motion:

*The board re-appoints Kent Hansen to the Planning Commission.*

Ellen seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Julie Porrazzo asked how openings on the planning commission are publicized. Kim said openings are put on the website; Julie noted not everyone looks at the website. Christine said she’ll see to it that openings on the planning commission are also posted on Front Porch Forum. There are currently one or two openings on the planning commission.

Meghan said we often hear volunteers are needed to serve on committees, yet meetings are often held during the day. This makes it hard for folks with a day job to serve. Christine said in that case, if someone really wants to serve on a committee they should propose a meeting schedule change to other members.

- 2. Wake Boat hearings.** David said a petition has been filed with ANR asking that Caspian Lake be exempt from the state’s wake boat regulations. A second petition has also been filed in case the first petition is unsuccessful, that asks the ANR to delegate Caspian boating regulations to the town. A public hearing on the initial petition will be held December 12 at 4:30 PM in Montpelier. David asked residents to attend the hearing and support the town’s efforts. There is also an opportunity to express opinions to ANR via email. All comments must be received by December 23.
- 3. MERP grant.** Beth said the library has been awarded \$121k to complete a variety of weatherization and energy efficiency projects at the library, and is looking for selectboard approval. This grant has no match

requirements. MacNeil asked whether the grant includes funds to offset town administrative costs. Beth said there are some ‘slush funds’ that could be used for this. David made the following motion:

*The board accepts the MERP grant funding for the library, as presented.*

Bobbie seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

- 4. Communications working group – Liz Steel, Julie Porrazzo.** Liz Steel said the group met with Susan Clark about ways to get more attendance at town meeting (TM). To that end, the group proposed including two articles in the 2025 town meeting warning.

Liz: not everyone gets town meeting off. In our town survey 60% said they did not attend TM, and 80% of that group said it was because they had to work. Should we give the town voters the choice to select the day and time of TM? While traditionally held the first Tuesday in March, TM may be held the Saturday, Sunday or Monday prior.

The first proposed article would be whether the voters should be able to select the day and time of town meeting.

If this article is passed, an Australian ballot vote would be held during summer 2025 where the actual day and time would be voted on. David said if voters have three or four options here, there may not be a majority position. He thought the articles should generally be a simple Yes or No.

Ellen said she’s heard that some towns that have a Saturday town meeting didn’t necessarily have better attended meetings.

Meaghan Meachem teaches journalism at NVU and said of the 14 towns her students cover on town meeting day, 10 of them hold their meetings on ‘untraditional’ days. In most cases, these towns changed their meeting day hoping for increased attendance, and in most cases attendance has indeed increased. She said the majority of towns in this area are moving away from the traditional Tuesday daytime meeting.

Meaghan said she could never run for selectboard because her job precludes her attending TM. Bobbie said currently, someone could easily nominate you and read a statement from you about why you want to run. If you’re interested in running, you can talk to your neighbors, and word will get around.

Davis said where he came from, TMs were always in the evening. If time ran out, the meeting would just adjourn to a second night. Janet was not in favor of an evening meeting.

Jane wondered if ballots could be mailed to all voters like was done for the recent election.

Tim suggested doing a survey before TM, asking voters what day and time they’d like to move future TMs to, this way you’d have the day and time known ahead of time.

Liz said the second article asks whether the town should move to Australian ballot for electing town officers. This would allow those who can’t make TM to at least vote for officers.

Ellen questioned the premise: on one hand you want to change the date to get more participation, yet with this article you want to change the elections to Australian ballot to make it easier for folks to vote while not attending the meeting?

Ellen said while she would like as many people as possible voting for town officers, she does have some concerns about interest groups campaigning, possible misinformation, making allegations, rather than the current face to face community process we have now. Liz said there would be an informational meeting prior to the vote, so residents could hear candidates speak and know ahead of time who’s running and get information about the candidates.

Kim clarified that if TM is moved to a different day, all Australian ballot votes such as school and waste district budgets must still be held on that first Tuesday in March, with polls open from 10-7.

Julie Porrazzo said the communication group’s proposals come from the desire for better communication, relationship building, inclusivity, and to help Greensboro residents work better, together.

Selectboard members indicated they would be willing to put the two proposed articles on the 2025 town meeting warning, but that they should be rewritten for clarity. David said the rewritten articles should be presented again at the board's December meeting.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSIONS**

1. David made the following motion:

*The board will enter executive session at 9:04 PM for confidential attorney client communications.*

Ellen seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

The board left executive session at 9:14 PM and took no action.

2. MacNeil made the following motion:

*The board will enter executive session at 9:17 PM to discuss a labor relations agreement.*

Bobbie seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

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

3. David made the following motion:

*The board will enter executive session for contracts at 9:21 PM.*

MacNeil seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

The board left executive session at 9:50 PM and took no action.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 9:50 PM.

*Respectfully Submitted, Josh Karp, Selectboard Clerk*