

Greensboro Selectboard

December 11, 2024 - Minutes

[This was a hybrid meeting held at the Greensboro Free Library]

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

SELECTBOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT (in person): Kim Greaves, Josh Karp, DeDe Stabler, Davis Barnett, Erika Karp, Naomi Ranz-Schleifer, Tim Nisbet, Judy Carpenter, Bill Chidsey, Stuart LaPoint, Tom Camarra

OTHERS PRESENT (remote): Janet Long, Aileen Gebbie, Andy Mosedale, Christine Armstrong, Dan Predpall, Diane Irish, Elaine Cole-Kerr, Elissa Mackin, Gary Circosta, Ila Hunt, Robin Hardy, Rick Lovett, Nancy Riege, Mike Lammert, Nancy Lammert, Michael Porrazzo, Meaghan Meachem, Beth Meachem, John Mackin, Michelle Mackin, Lise Armstrong, Kristen Leahy, Kent Hansen, June Bascom, Diane Irish, Rick Ely, Lisa Sartorius, Paul Brierre, Jenny Gundy, Lisa Yokana, Barbara Noyes Pulling, Bob Harnish

CALLED TO ORDER: 6:30 PM

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

- Kim: I.T. disaster recovery; Better Roads grant
- Stuart Lapoint: new tree for Town Park
- Eric: police contract
- Dan Predpall: LVRT amenities grant; Greensboro Bend water issue
- Agenda correction: appointments are for the Energy and Climate Action Committee, not the Conservation Commission.

MINUTES

David made the following motion:

The board approves the minutes from the 10/9, 11/13 and 11/20 budget meetings; 11/21 and 11/26 special wastewater meetings; and the 11/13 regular meeting.

MacNeil seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

SELECTBOARD RULES OF PROCEDURE

Eric said Bobbie has worked hard over the past few months updating the selectboard's Rules of Procedure and proposed that the board approve the revised version. MacNeil made the following motion:

The board adopts the revised "Rules of Procedure for Greensboro Selectboard".

David seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

PUBLIC CONCERNS

Stuart LaPoint. Stuart offered to split with the town the \$400 cost for purchase and installation of a yellow birch or red maple at the Town Park. After discussion, David made the following motion:

The town will contribute \$200 towards the purchase and installation of a yellow birch tree at the Town Park.

MacNeil seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

ORLEANS COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPT.

The town received a \$200k proposal from Sheriff Harlow for FY26 policing services, a modest \$5k increase over the current contract price.

David said some of the smaller towns in our area pay much less for police coverage, and he asked to postpone the contract vote until he's clear what kind of coverage these towns are getting for these lower-priced contracts. While David said the OCSD is doing a good job and their presence is important, Greensboro's policing costs are high and the board is trying to budget responsibly.

Bobbie said the police line item can be discussed and amended at the 2025 town meeting. She added that many residents of Greensboro Bend appreciate the regular OCSD coverage. MacNeil made the following motion:

The board will postpone signing the FY26 Orleans County Sheriff contract to allow David to complete his review of police contracts and coverage provided to area towns.

Bobbie seconded the motion which carried (MacNeil, Hanson, Nisbet, Kelley in favor; Celnik abstained).

Gary urged the selectboard to sign the FY26 contract. These other towns don't receive anywhere near the level of service we get, and historically Greensboro voters have overwhelmingly supported a high level of police coverage, he said.

GREENSBORO FIRE DEPT.

No report was available this evening.

ROADS & DRIVEWAYS

1. Sidewalk machine. Tom said the town's sidewalk machine, an older unit, keeps breaking down. Last year it required \$17k in repairs, and more repairs are needed. How long do we want to continue using this old machine? Tom proposed replacing it with a skid steer that could be used year-round for a wide variety of tasks. The current cost of a new skid steer with sidewalk clearing attachments is \$62k. MacNeil will discuss with Tom and John Schweizer, who's been working with Tom on the HERF.

2. Better Roads grant. Kim reported that a \$6900 state road grant is available to complete a required update of the town's road inventory. NVDA has inventoried town roads in the past and could likely do this work again. The grant has a required town match of 25% and the inventory must be completed by 2027. Ellen made the following motion:

The board accepts the Better Roads grant as presented.

MacNeil seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

3. Shadow Lake Road bridge replacement. Engineer Dexter Lefavour put out an RFP for the bridge replacement and eight bids were received. Bids were opened on 12/6; Dexter recommends the board accept the lowest bid, from Isaac's Excavating LLC (West Charleston). David made the following motion:

The board accepts the \$308,730 bid from Issac's Excavating for the bridge replacement on Shadow Lake Rd.

MacNeil seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

The work will happen next summer and take three or four weeks. Josh said 97.8% of project cost will be picked up by FEMA and the State, with the town covering the remaining 2.2%.

- 4. Salt contract.** Cargill quoted \$96.25/Ton for 850 Tons of salt, a price increase of only 25 cents over last year. MacNeil made the following motion:

The board accepts the salt proposal from Cargill.

Bobbie seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Tom and board members thanked Kim for taking on many extra tasks at the office since Brett's been out on medical leave. Judy thanked Tom for keeping the Bend Rd. in excellent condition this winter.

- 5. Driveway plowing.** Eric said a driveway plowing liaison is needed. MacNeil agreed to do this.
- 6. FEMA.** Davis asked how much FEMA money the town has received to date; Josh said it's around \$300k. Eric asked Josh and Kim to write a report detailing FEMA payments received and expected. The town will pay off its two flood loans as soon as enough FEMA reimbursement comes in.

TOWN CLERK / INTERIM TREASURER – Kim Greaves

- 1. Town I.T. systems - improved backup.** Kim and Ellen met with local I.T. consultant Andy Mosedale and a rep. From Firstlight, a regional company that provides backup solutions for commercial users.

Currently Kim does a rudimentary daily backup of the town's server. Firstlight would take over this task and do a more comprehensive backup. While their initial quote for this service was about \$500/month, they have since come down to around \$340/month. Ellen made the following motion:

The board accepts Firstlight's proposal for town office I.T. backups, as discussed.

MacNeil seconded the motion which carried unanimously. The new backup process will begin as soon as possible.

- 2. Town Report.** Kim said she and Lily have begun work on the town report. Some of the financial reports may not be as comprehensive as last year, but they are doing the best they can with help from Jennifer Lucas and Woodbury town treasurer Brandy Smith.

Ellen commented that we are fortunate to have so many experienced people helping us out during Brett's absence.

TOWN HALL REDEVELOPMENT / RURALEDGE

Ellen said while there's no movement on the Purchase & Sales Agreement (PSA) at the moment, the town and RuralEdge (RE) are \$100-200k apart on a selling price for the town hall. While two different appraisals have been done, it appears a third will be required to settle the issue of the selling price. Ellen said both the town and RE will accept this final appraisal, which must be done by a VHFA/HUD-certified firm.

Eric said everyone is getting tired of this process, and asked whether it will be possible to hold an up or down vote on the PSA on town meeting day? David said this can likely happen.

David said the PSA will include many conditions that will need to be met in order for the town to ultimately transfer ownership to RE, such as availability of water and septic, and local zoning approvals. If these various conditions can't be met, the project is dead.

Naomi: if RE is able to find a wastewater solution, wouldn't whatever site they find take away an opportunity for a village system? We have very real wastewater needs in the village center, why are we spending so much energy negotiating a PSA that will have many unknowns at the time it is voted on? Why even bother putting this to a vote?

Christine: since the PSA that the town will be voting on will have these many unknowns, why wait until town meeting to hold the vote? You're spending so much time and energy on this, I would encourage you to have the vote sooner.

Bobbie said the town signed an option agreement and we have to follow through with the process. We owe it to the town, and to those who are in favor of the project, to see this process through and bring it to a vote.

Eric said the option agreement expires at the end of December, and asked whether the town will need to extend this in order to finish negotiating the PSA. David said yes, the agreement will need to be extended.

ONGOING BUSINESS

1. **Sign Policy.** Davis said while the sign policy went into effect on 11/26, it appears the town is not following it. While the town constable removed 19 *Save Town Hall* signs that were placed on private property outside the ROW, the HCA placed event signs in the town ROW without a permit, yet these were left alone. This feels like a targeted cleansing. Gary agreed, there are dozens of other signs in the town ROW that have not been removed by the constable. Kim noted that zero permits have been filed to date.

Mike: we've created a tempest in a teapot, this whole thing is ridiculous. The only reason we're talking about this is because a few people didn't like the *Save Town Hall* signs. What about signs on trees such as 'no trespassing', 'Posted', or security camera signs?

Ellen: historically both the selectboard and planning commission have struggled with this issue. There wasn't a policy before because no one had figured out how to write one.

Beth complimented Bobbie on her hard work drafting the sign policy, but added there's clearly some confusion about some of the language.

David said some good points have been raised and the board should work to clarify the policy, especially regarding signs in the town ROW.

2. **Community Wastewater Project.** Eric said the town doesn't have a site or signed PSA, so will lose the \$2.5 million in ARPA funding. Bobbie said she was impressed with the conversations we've had with Hoyle Tanner, and their final PER report will detail what sites in town were investigated and would be useful if we apply for new wastewater grants in the future. David made the following motion:

The town will send a letter to the state requesting full rescission of the ARPA wastewater funds.

Ellen seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Eric: we'll have to start over. I don't think the selectboard has the bandwidth to take this on directly, I propose standing up a new wastewater committee and charging them with investigating next steps and coming back to the board with recommendations. DeDe asked whether this new group would have anything to do with RuralEdge. Eric said it would not, it would be tasked with looking for wastewater solutions for the village center.

Ellen suggested this new group be structured as a "working group" or "task force" rather than an official town committee. Some board members felt that having to follow the open meeting law (OML) can make committee work inefficient and more difficult. Josh questioned why the board would form an unofficial group that wouldn't be required to post meeting notices and file meeting minutes, given the recent scrutiny the town has been under about a perceived lack of transparency.

Gary agreed that transparency is needed. He noted that the original wastewater committee did not keep track of their meetings properly. Eric also agreed, saying that this new group should be an official town committee. We'd invite people to apply, and lay out the rules and responsibilities the committee must adhere to. David made the following motion:

The board will form a new Community Wastewater Committee in the new year.

MacNeil seconded the motion which carried. (MacNeil, Kelley, Nisbet, Hanson in favor; Celnik abstained).

Janet asked if the Energy and Climate Action group is an official town committee. Beth said it is, and must follow the OML, in contrast with the informal Communications Working Group which was asked to do some research and provide recommendations to the board.

3. **Glover property encroachment.** David said an easement would give the property owners peace of mind, since their spring is involved. The language could specify that if they cease to use the spring, the easement is nullified.

Eric: We are now aware of this encroachment, what if we just do nothing about it? The selectboard is very busy and to me, this issue is not a big deal. If you disagree, come up with a concrete proposal. David said he'd ask the property owners to hire a lawyer and come back to the town with a proposal.

Christine proposed the town offer the trespassers a year-by-year easement on the property to access their spring, much like the Bend Park's relationship with Vtrans, charging \$1/year or whatever the tax cost equivalent would be for such a small parcel. David thought this was a reasonable suggestion.

4. **Wake Boat hearings.** David will be speaking on behalf of the town at the ANR hearing on Dec. 12. Naomi said ANR will receive written comments until Dec. 23.

OTHER BUSINESS

1. **Rail Trail (LVRT) grant – Dan Predpall.** Dan said the NEK Regional LVRT Council will be submitting a grant next week for amenities for six area trailheads. Greensboro is requesting an enclosure for the portalet, a bench, and a bike rack, all to be located across the street from the new trailhead parking lot.

The cost for these amenities is about \$10k with a 20% local match. Portalet rental fees already in the town budget can count towards the match, leaving about \$400 for the town to cover.

Naomi asked whether there is still a plan for a pavilion in that area. Dan said there would be space for this in the future. He added they're working out a plan to lease the land from VTrans. Ellen made the following motion:

The board approves paying the 20% town match for the LVRT grant.

MacNeil seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

2. **Greensboro Bend water issues.** Dan said the Bend Revitalization Initiative is working on a project to repurpose the Methodist church, yet they've learned that the church no longer has a water allocation and the Bend's water system has no extra water. Dan said this is not only a problem for the church project but for everyone in the Bend, and will hamper future development.

Dan talked with the state, and was told that if he can find a few users of the water system to volunteer some of their time, they can approach the state about a preliminary engineering report to determine how the water system can be improved. Board members thanked Dan for his work on this issue.

3. **Federal grant requirements.** This past fall, Liz and Beth applied for and received pre-approval for \$65k federal grant through the Dept. of Energy. It turned out that in order to receive the grant, a host of policies need to be in place on the town level, many of which Greensboro doesn't have. Josh and Beth suggested that the town work with NVDA and/or VLCT to put these policies in place so next time a federal grant opportunity comes along, the town will be in a better position to receive grant funds.

Beth suggested that moving forward, grant applications include funding to cover some of the local administrative costs whenever possible.

Eric said Brett has historically done most of the grants administration, but as Josh's FEMA work winds down he can hopefully begin helping out with this work. David made the following motion:

The board approves Josh, Liz and Beth working to move the town towards federal grant compliant policies.

MacNeil seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

- 4. Appointments to the Energy and Climate Action Committee.** Liz Steel let the board know that Blake Auchincloss and Bill Chidsey have volunteered to join the committee. David made the following motion:

The board appoints Blake Auchincloss and Bill Chidsey to the Energy and Climate Action Committee.

Bobbie seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

- 5. Interim Zoning Administrator and Development Review Board Chair.** Eric said ZBA chair Jane Woodruff has volunteered to act as interim Zoning Administrator and will step down from the DRB for now. DRB vice chair Nat Smith will become acting chair of the DRB. David made the following motion:

The board approves Jane Woodruff serving as acting Zoning Administrator, and Nat Smith serving as acting chair of the Development Review Board.

MacNeil seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

- 6. Declaration of Inclusion.** A group from Rutland County has a goal for all towns in the state to adopt a "Declaration of Inclusion". Eric read the Declaration:

The town of [] condemns racism and welcomes all persons, regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, age, disability, or socioeconomic status, and wants everyone to feel safe and welcome in our community. As a town we formally condemn all discrimination in all of its forms, commit to fair and equal treatment of everyone in our community, and will strive to ensure all of our actions, policies, and operating procedures reflect this commitment. The town of [] has and will continue to be a place where individuals can live freely and express their opinions.

Group members Barbara Noyes Pulling and Bob Harnish explained that this Declaration is a fancy name for a simple idea: asking towns and their residents to be respectful and condemn discrimination. The town of Franklin was the first to adopt this back in 2020, now 158 towns have adopted this or something similar.

The 2020 census indicates the VT population is stagnant and aging. This Declaration can make our state as attractive as possible, to help reverse population loss, better compete for business, address our labor shortage, and let newcomers know your town is an open community. VLCT, Vt Chamber of Commerce, VCRD, and Governor Scott all support this Declaration. Once adopted, funding for educational opportunities may be available from the VT Community Foundation. David made the following motion:

The board will adopt the Declaration of Inclusion as presented.

Ellen seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

David made the following motion:

The board will enter executive session at 9:06 PM to discuss a Real Estate issue.

Ellen seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

The Board left executive session at 9:29 PM.

David made the following motion:

With regards to the Rural Edge project, the board authorizes the engagement of a third appraisal firm, approved by VHFA, to resolve differences in the purchase price and extend the option agreement with Rural Edge for six months with the intent of getting to a vote on a proposed conveyance at the 2025 Town Meeting.

Ellen seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

The board unanimously adjourned the meeting at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully Submitted: Josh Karp, Selectboard Clerk

AMENDED 1/9/25 J.K.