

Minutes of the January 9, 2012 Meeting of the Board of Selectmen.

Present: Neal Fox, Bill Richards, Joe De Freitas, Delbert Cloud, Lucien Hinkle, Janice Punger, Geneva Gaiko, Ola O'Dell, Eleanor Griffin, David Aldrighetti, David Sambor, Louise Ferris-Burt, Krister Adams, Peter Gregory, Laura Rubenis, Leslie Silberberg and Senator Richard McCormack.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by Chairman Neal Fox, the Board initially reviewing and approving the weekly payroll and payables. The minutes of the December 19, 2011 meeting of the Board of Selectmen were approved by motion of Joe De Freitas, seconded by Bill Richards and unanimously carried.

The Board members agreed that the Town Hall would be available for the Historical Society to use for the day on February 25, 2012. By motion of Joe De Freitas, seconded by Bill Richards and unanimously carried, it was agreed to table the aspect of applicable fees for the Historical Society until the Board could review the available history of costs associated with operating the building.

The annual "Certificate of Highway Mileage" whereby state aid to highways is calculated was next reviewed. No changes in highway mileage have been made since the last filing. Part II was thus simply checked to acknowledge this fact, and the Board members endorsed Part III. Motion to approve the form for return to the Agency of Transportation was made by Bill Richards, seconded by Joe De Freitas and unanimously carried.

A report from the Vermont Agency of Transportation for Bridge #35 on Town Highway #19 was then discussed. It was agreed that the FEMA public assistance program would be looked to for assistance in making repair or replacement of the structure, and that advice should be sought from FEMA officials before a response is filed with the Agency of Transportation.

The Board examined the report of earnings for the Fay and Rose Cowdrey Fund which had been submitted by the Trustees of Public Funds. It was noted that interest earnings for the year are only \$157.57 which fact precludes any use of the earnings other than adding the entirety of the earnings to the principal per the parameters the Town is bound by. Chairman Fox asked the Town Manager to ascertain if there may be a way to re-do the provisions for management of the fund. Leslie Silberberg asked if higher yielding investments could be utilized to provide greater returns. Delbert Cloud will inquire of the Trustee Chair, Carroll Ketchum. In the interim, motion was made by Bill Richards, seconded by Joe De Freitas and unanimously carried, to accept the "Summary of Account of Trustee" and to authorize Chairman Fox to sign both said "Summary" and the "Motion to Allow Account" on behalf of the Board, for filing with Probate Court.

Delbert Cloud gave a brief update on the status of applications to the FEMA Home Buy-out program, "letters of intent" having been filed by the Town on behalf of nine (9) potential applicants. Cloud also informed the Board that the two properties deemed to have urgent need for reparation under the USDA Emergency Watershed Protection program have both been repaired at this time. He also informed the Board that the same Emergency Watershed Protection program is hoping to assist with further removal of debris from stream channels. If such a project is developed, Towns would need to contribute the local share of 25% of the project cost. The EWP engineer believes costs for a project in Bethel (focused primarily on Lilliesville Brook) would be in the magnitude of \$30,000.00 resulting in a local share of approximately \$7,500.00. The Board members concurred that such a project would be in the public interest, and motion to support the project was made by Joe De Freitas, seconded by Bill Richards and unanimously carried.

The Board examined a December 14, 2011 submittal from the Vermont Department of Taxes re. statistical evaluation of the Town's Grand List. The "Common Level of Appraisal" was found to be 102.85%, and the "Coefficient of Dispersion" at 16.48%, both of these being within acceptable limits.

The Board then reviewed the "Wastewater Facilities 20-Year Evaluation" prepared by the engineering firm of Aldrich + Elliott. (Field work for the report was prepared prior to the August 28, 2011 tropical storm Irene flood event.) In essence, the report confirmed that the collection system including the pump stations is in good condition. The components

which will need replacement more quickly are within the treatment plant itself, and it is recommended that the Town give consideration as to how best to make provision for them in the near future.

At 6:48 PM, Chairman Fox welcomed the first appointment of the evening, this being Louise Ferris-Burt in her capacity as Chair of the Human Services Advisory Committee. She informed the Board that her committee has received applications for appropriation of money from three new applicants this year, and would like to have direction from the Selectboard as to the level of funds to be recommended to the voters. Eleanor Griffin spoke in support of one of the new applicants (the Arts Bus) because it has been part of the Recreation Committee's program. Neal Fox said he was hopeful that the Red Cross would be favorably considered; Ms. Ferris-Burt replied that the Red Cross funding level is up from \$250 to \$500. Several spoke of the Community Action Program, and Ms. Ferris-Burt said that organization is level-funded from last year. After due consideration, motion was made by Joe De Freitas to hold the level of funding and recommend no additional applicants for funding this year; this motion was seconded by Bill Richards and unanimously carried.

The next appointment of the evening was welcomed at 7:07 PM, this being Krister Adams of the Housing Foundation Inc. A Public Hearing was warned for this time, to obtain the views of citizens on community development, to furnish information concerning the range of community development activities that have been undertaken under that program, and to give affected citizens the opportunity to examine a statement of the use of funds. The VCDP funds (\$300,000.00) received by the Town have been used to rehabilitate the Depot II apartment complex on Main Street owned by the Housing Foundation, Inc. Mr. Adams explained the rehabilitation project, and in response to a question from Lucien Hinkle, the basis by which other funds had been merged to complete the overall project. Members of the public present expressed their approval of the project. Chairman Fox concluded the Public Hearing at 7:17 PM, as there were no further comments or questions forthcoming.

At 7:18 PM, Chairman Fox then welcomed the third appointment of the evening, this being Peter Gregory, Executive Director of the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Planning Commission. Mr. Gregory first explained the Commission's position in asking for a dues increase for FY13, this being an increase to the Town of Bethel of approximately \$360.00. He further explained the various services which the regional commission provides. Chairman Fox offered concern that Towns seem to be given a "one size fits all" approach when it comes to land use planning matters, adding that the Town of Bethel wishes to promote opportunity for business growth to the best extent possible. Mr. Gregory replied that the Commission tries to respect each Town's unique features, but emphasized that if a Town chooses to participate in "planning" as referenced in State law and regulations, all Town Plans do have to meet parameters originating in the Vermont State Plan. Discussion concluded with the expression of hope that dialogue between the Town and the regional commission on planning matters would continue on a regular basis. At 7:45 PM, the Board then returned to the order of the agenda.

The Town General Fund budget was then taken up. Delbert Cloud provided the Board with the Recreation Committee's minutes of January 8, 2012 and a memo dated January 8, 2012 from that Committee recommending the amount of \$11,000.00 be budgeted for the annual appropriation to the Recreation Facility Improvement Fund. A copy of a proposal to develop a master plan for the facility was also provided by the Committee, this being submitted by Steve Durkee Associates of Killington, Vermont. Delbert Cloud provided an over-view of the draft FY'13 budget, and then explained the basis for particular line items within the budget. Lucien Hinkle recommended that consideration be given to reduction of overtime during the winter season by scheduling Town crew time to shorter days over the full five-day week. With reference to the Fire Department Safety and Equipment Fund, Laura Rubenis asked if the Irene relief funds held by the Town could be dedicated to the Fire Department's fund; Chairman Fox replied that this might be a valid possibility but that it is premature to say at this time. Regarding the Town Hall portion of the budget, David Sambor encouraged effort in "marketing" the Hall in an attempt to see greater use of the building. The means of doing so was then discussed, and the benefits to the community of greater usage were spoken of. A few matters relative to the logistics of the Annual Town Meeting and production of the Annual Town Report were then discussed; no formal action was required or taken by the Board on these matters.

The Board next considered a request from Sovernet Communications to place cables within the highway rights-of-way along Town highways from the Randolph Town line to the Royalton Town line, as shown on attached plans. Discussion of this request revealed that many are disillusioned with “false starts” which have been made on providing better communication services, and the credibility of service providers was brought into question. Ultimately, the motion was made by Joe De Freitas to approve the request, this being seconded by Bill Richards and thus carried; Neal Fox abstained.

Delbert Cloud then announced that the Town has received two grants, one being the increase to the Agency of Transportation Enhancement Grant in the amount of \$167,000.00. However due to rulings on eligibility for some of the requested work items, it may be that the Town will not be able to expend the entire amount of this award. This matter will be taken up with the Town’s engineer and the Agency of Transportation officials in charge of the enhancement program. The second grant was coordinated by Christine Hadsel of “Curtains Without Borders”, and is in the amount of \$3500.00. This latter grant is to be used for display of the historic painted curtain at the Town Hall; it may be possible to use the subject money for a “match” such that other grant funds could be acquired to add lighting, etc.

A January 9, 2012 memo from Emma Zavez of the regional planning commission was noted, this informing the Board that a single “Community Recovery Meeting” for discussion of the “Irene” disaster recovery effort would be held on January 17, 2012 for the Town officials and residents of Sharon, Royalton, Randolph, and Bethel. Laura Rubenis asked if the Town would be holding its own meeting; Neal Fox suggested that might be a good idea after the State and regional meetings were done. Ms. Rubenis questioned if it might not be better to hold a local meeting more quickly than that. In the subsequent discussion, Fire Chief David Aldrighetti referenced the fact that the regional LEPC meetings had revealed many common circumstances among Towns – there were not that many variables; he also noted that there is a distinction between a citizen’s phone tree and the Hazards Response Plan used by emergency responders. Chairman Fox suggested that the Selectboard should develop a revised Emergency Response Plan and seek broad-based input to help finalize it. He noted that some information gathered in the aftermath of Irene has not been turned over to the Town which would be helpful in planning for future disasters, such as the nature and level of needs of individuals, and the effectiveness of the volunteer effort in addressing those needs. Ola O’Dell said she has “notebooks of data” but regards these as being private rather than public. Senator Richard McCormack suggested that the information gathered while the Town Hall was used as a relief center might be public, but that the information gathered thereafter might be private. It was suggested by the Selectboard that the public good would be best served if copies of the information could be made for the Town’s use.

At 10:00 PM, the motion was made by Joe De Freitas, seconded by Bill Richards and unanimously carried, to enter executive session to discuss (1) litigation in which the Town is a party, and (2) contract negotiations associated with a repair of wastewater infrastructure. Delbert Cloud was the only person remaining with the Board for the executive session. No minutes were kept. Upon return to open meeting at 10:50 PM, the motion was made by Joe De Freitas to award a contract for repair of the siphon intake structure at the Bethel Mills wastewater pump station to J. P. Sicard in the amount of \$442,088.00, this motion being seconded by Bill Richards and unanimously carried.

The motion to adjourn was then made by Bill Richards, seconded by Joe De Freitas and unanimously carried.

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Neal Fox

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Bill Richards

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Joe De Freitas