

Town of Maidstone – Selectboard Meeting, Monday, June 5, 2023

- **ATTENDANCE**

Members: Scott Lovell, Chairman; Brad McVetty; and Bruno McKenzie.

Members of the Public: Amy Pear (Town Clerk); Robert Champagne-Willis (Town Treasurer); Andy Champagne-Willis (acting scribe for this selectboard meeting); June Lockert; Jim Bennett; Bill Sanborn (Fire Warden); Mike Otis (Town Zoning Administrator); Gail Otis; Bruce Barker (Town Zoning Board and Planning Commission); Jan Baker Barker; Sandra Gray (Town Lister); Linwood Mixer; Bill Colborn; Lisa & Paul Plourde; Carol and Burt Kline; Sam & Carol Gorham; and arriving later in the meeting, VT State Senator Russ Ingalls; Dave Snedeker, NVDA; Ejad Alsibai, National Grid; Danielle Aretz, National Grid; Corey Parent, National Grid; Ryan Scott, VHB, for National Grid; and Laurie & Robert Snowman.

- **THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER BY THE CHAIRMAN AT 7:00 PM**
- **REMINDER ABOUT THE RULES OF PARTICIPATION**, conducted by the Chairman.
- **MINUTES**

For: May 1, 2023

A motion was made by Brad McVetty. **To approve the minutes as submitted. The motion was seconded by Bruno McKenzie. The motion was passed unanimously.**

- **REPORT FROM THE ZONING ADMINISTRATOR.** Chairman recognized Mike Otis.

Zoning Administrator Mike Otis reported to the Selectboard he is aware of one camp being raised and another property owner installing a well and trimming some tress.

Bruno McKenzie asked Mike Otis to explain the application process for conditional use permits. Mike responded by outlining both the permitted and conditional use processes. Mike also talked about the shoreland overview and wastewater systems processes. Scott Lovell questioned whether the Selectboard wanted to establish a practice of approving or reviewing zoning related forms. Mike Otis outlined for the Selectboard the language added onto the forms and advised the Selectboard of their right to review zoning forms. Bob Champagne-Willis suggested the Selectboard might want to make a motion regarding this process.

A motion was made by Brad McVetty. **The Selectboard will establish a practice of reviewing and approving zoning administrator related forms. Bruno McKenzie seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously.**

Bruno McKenzie addressed Mike Otis further in regard to another section in the forms, citing for Mike specifically “underneath the application for the zoning permit and down towards the end of it” where it states “*the undersigned acknowledges receiving the digital link to or hard copy of the Residential or Commercial Building Energy Code Handbook*”, Bruno was concerned about the enforcement of energy codes. Mike Otis responded to Bruno saying [the] “state law requires the zoning administrator to provide applicants with this information and right now we aren’t giving out hard copies

[of the energy code laws to the applicants] but only advising application holders of the state requirements”.

Mike Otis also advised the Selectboard members “we’re not building inspectors, so we don’t enforce it [energy code laws]” and that the information is being supplied to the applicants in order to bring about awareness of state law.

Bruno McKenzie then brought up the matter of *Certificates of Occupancy*. Mike Otis stated he has already conversed with Brad McVetty on this matter and that until such time as our by-laws are amended, we must account for this information when the permit/project is completed. Mike Otis stated he is hoping when the by-laws are updated, they will be looking to take the current language out, and instead of a certificate of occupancy, allow a “certificate of project completion” to be put in its place.

Bruno McKenzie reviewed the \$102.00 application fee for the Appeal of Zoning Administrator Decision and the Variance Request Application.

Bob Champagne-Willis offered this is a decision from the Selectboard.

Mike Otis addressed the Selectboard with the review and processes he has put in place in order to clarify some of the issues on permits, issues making it easier for homeowners to understand the frequently asked questions Mike has been getting from the applicants. These involved concerns over whether a professional survey of the property, and plans requiring “to scale” measurements are mandated. Instead, Mike Otis says has allowed hand drawn sketches, as long as boundary and lot measurements showing accurate sizes, without the need for any further processes which might or might not require either an expensive or long-drawn-out process. Mike Otis is otherwise satisfied provided property owners/contractors submit accuracy in measurements for boundary parameters.

Bob Champagne-Willis added that surveys are still required in sub-division planning, and Mike Otis added that these sub-divisions are part of conditional use permits.

Scott Lovell offered to table the matter til next month and asked the Selectboard if there were any other questions or discussion. Hearing none the Chairman ordered the matter to be tabled until the next Selectboard meeting.

Mike Otis thanked the Chairman. Having heard no further questions or issues, the Chairman moved on to the REPORT OF THE ROAD COMMISSIONER.

- **REPORT OF THE ROAD COMMISSIONER**, Chairman recognized Brad McVetty.

Road Commissioner Brad McVetty reported the status of state grants through the NVDA, and approval of the 9K funding. Brad McVetty also mentioned the culvert at the end (North Side) of the lake, still in progress and scheduled to start shortly after the Labor Day holiday. Bob Champagne-Willis asked Brad McVetty about the “Grant In Aid” and Brad McVetty explained it was for segments of the town roads and after a pre-construction meeting Brad expects approximately three (3) sections of road will be selected for upgrading.

Hearing no further questions or discussion, the Chairman moved on to PRESENTATION ABOUT TWIN STATES CLEAN ENERGY LINK PROPOSAL.

- **PRESENTATION ABOUT TWIN STATES CLEAN ENERGY LINK PROPOSAL**, Chairman recognized and the visiting team from National Grid.

A presentation of a "Project Briefing – Maidstone, VT" was provided by National Grid representatives attending the Selectboard meeting, including: Ejad Alsibai; Danielle Aretz; and Ryan Scott (VHB) along with Corey Parent, Director of Business and Municipal Affairs from Leonine Public Affairs (802) 370—0494; all from National Grid. In addition: Russ Ingalls, State Senator (VT), Essex/Orleans (802) 323-4756 was also present for the presentation.

A power point printed slide presentation is attached to these minutes.

After introductions by the group, the National Grid team outlined the project is in the beginning stages. They discussed the community benefits on a 7.8-mile stretch of VT. Rt. 102 in Maidstone along with the expected revenues for the state of VT. They reported when and where the stages of their operation would begin and end, proposed a length of time, and a willingness to work with the community in order to minimize disruptions during their construction period along proposed routes in our town. The National Grid team claims participants in cooperation with their plan involve renewable energy companies as well as explaining the risks and grant awards, in excess of 100 million dollars towards funding their proposal. They are also looking for Selectboard and town support which they claim will benefit the entire six (6) New England states. The presenters outlined the power flow expectations from the project, and questions from the assembled were varied and diverse.

Contacts numbers were provided (see above). E-mail addresses are included in the power point slide printout attached to these minutes.

The presentation lasted a little over 30 mins. in length.

The Chairman thanked the presenters, and the team left the meeting. The Chairman recognized David Snedeker, Executive Director of the Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA).

- **PRESENTATION BY NVDA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**, David Snedeker.

The presenter was introduced by the Chairman. Mr. Snedeker discussed the American Rescue Plan Act otherwise known as ARPA. Mr. Snedeker said monies from these funds are available for Town projects and that he was going around to all the rural communities in the area to also discuss broadband as well as the ARPA funds.

Discussed: Municipal Water Systems, Broadband, build-out plan for the CUD. Brad McVetty brought up the broadband and the fiber optic cable installation regarding a company by the name of CV Fiber and wanted to know if the Executive Director was familiar with them. Speculation was offered by the presenter in response to NEK Broadband and from Comcast that community participation in the installation might improve our town's priority in the listing with the contractor.

Discussed: Municipal Energy Audit for town buildings. Bob Champagne-Willis & Amy Pear provided information on grants the town has made to date and bids for some of the ARPA funds to be expended towards.

Discussed: Resource Office of Annie McLean Amclean@nvda.net for how to use and provide ARPA fund for associated expenditures.

The discussion lasted approximately 15 to 20 mins.

- **REPORT OF THE TOWN TREASURER**

Treasurer, Bob Champagne-Willis provided copies of the Budget to Actual General Fund report and had nothing to add. Hearing no questions, Bob moved on to the Selectboard Warrant. The Warrant for May, 2023 is on the signing desk.

- **REPORT OF THE DELINQUENT TAX COLLECTOR**

Treasurer, Bob Champagne-Willis provided copies of the Delinquent Tax Collector report as of May 31, 2023. There have been a few payments since the last report. Two taxpayers paid their balance since this report was produced.

- **REPORT FROM THE TOWN LISTERS**

Lister, Bob Champagne-Willis reported for the listers that the 2023 Grand List has increased by about .25% over the 2022 Grand List. Guildhall has just completed their reappraisal for their 2023 Grand List, which increased by 33%. Maidstone will be doing a statistical reappraisal for the 2024 Grand List. Work will start later this summer and continue through the winter. Bob expects that the 2024 Grand List will increase in value even more than the percentage increase to the Guildhall Grand List.

- **REPORT OF THE TOWN CLERK**

Town Clerk, Amy Pear reported to the Selectboard that Susan Irwin is making great progress with her health issues and is expecting to return to work this week. Amy expects she and Susan Irwin will be discussing a replacement for the Asst. Town Clerk position.

Warrant for unlicensed dogs was submitted to the Selectboard as warranted yearly by the Town Clerk. Amy and the Selectboard discussed the status of our Town Constable and the process on enforcement of the dog licensing. The Town Clerk was asked by the Selectboard for her recommendation on the matter. The Town Clerk suggested the Selectboard may wish to consult with the VT statute governing their responsibility in the matter. Brad McVetty suggested to the Selectboard to contact our Town Constable "as we've always have in the past, and go from there." The Town Clerk reported this year's unlicensed dog list is shorter than last year's list.

Amy Pear stated she left a copy of the Town Clerk's job description for each of the Selectboard members. Amy is concerned with the E911 requirements in the current job description and stated at the meeting "...we actually have an E911 coordinator for the town of Maidstone, so I'd just be looking to

update that and the only other thing on there is that there is a requirement for the town clerk to hold a certified municipal clerk's certification. I think that's a typo, I think the town meant for that to be a CVC (Certified Vermont Clerk) certificate, if the town does require the municipal clerk certificate it will cost the town, I believe, twelve-hundred dollars (\$1,200.00) per year just to be part of the International Clerk's Association and that does not include any of the training the clerk would need to continue that. So, I think that's just a typo regarding which certification you, the town, was looking at, but that's something we can look at in the next meeting if you wanted to."

The Chairman will place the item on the agenda for next month to: Substitute the CVC certification for all VT Town Clerks for the certified municipal clerk's certification (CMC).

(NOTE: For the record here, CVC requires 3 full years' experience and the training already required and performed, otherwise known as CEU's.)

- **REPORT FROM THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COORDINATOR AND FIRE WARDEN, Bill Sanborn**

Trailer ordered. Four to six (4-6) weeks until it is expected by the end of June 2023. Will need some additions for organizing equipment.

Will need to order a ball hitch due to specifications.

Military Trailer, from years ago, will be put into surplus. Perhaps to be advertised or the best offer for monies rendered.

Radio equipment ordered.

Groveton, NH FD coming to town to back flush and pump the dry hydrants. Homeowners on whose property the hydrants are located have been notified of these events. The North Rd. hydrant may or may not be scheduled.

- **OLD BUSINESS**

Review quotes from website designers and Town Clerk's recommendation for which designer to select and take necessary action.

The Town Clerk reviewed four (4) web designers and their submitted proposals to the Selectboard for the new Town Website. To this end, Amy Pear entertained questions from the Selectboard and afterwards submitted her recommendation to them. Brad McVetty stated he felt the proposals were "all over the board". Amy Pear then explained her criteria for selection, which was based on one, a simple clean platform, two, ability to fill out forms and three, to make payments on-line and four, hosting. Having heard no questions on these points Amy Pear then followed ADA requirements as stipulated by the four proposed website engineers eliminating one engineer for lack of municipality expertise then factored in the yearly maintenance costs and time and cost to get their website design up and running. Based on these factors, Amy Pear suggested the Selectboard select "Green Light" platform. She based this on the above and the fact the owner is local and is recommended by our town computer specialist and the owner specializes in municipalities. Build time is six-eight (6-8) weeks, for four thousand and five-hundred dollars (\$4,500.00) fee and a twelve-hundred-dollar yearly maintenance fee. The other options were studied by the Selectboard and agreed with Amy's suggestion. Amy also suggested purchasing an Adobe Acrobat subscription.

Brad McVetty offered to use ARPA funds for the purchase, however Treasurer Bob Champagne-Willis suggested the previous Selectboard authorization of Reserve Funds has been established for this purchase.

A motion was made by Brad McVetty. **To use Green Light to build the town's new website with payment to be issued from the Reserve Fund. Bruno McKenzie seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.**

Update about purchase and installation of flagpole for Town Hall.

Scott Lovell reported he got some pricing and checked several websites for: A 25' flagpole, rated for 88 m.p.h. winds with an eagle mounted to the top affixed with a solar up light; cost one thousand and five-hundred and eight dollars (\$1,508.00); with a seven-hundred-dollar (\$700.00) tilt-base; combined total approximately twenty-two hundred dollars (\$2,200.00). Additional cost or costs for concrete anchor.

Discussion: None.

Motion addressed and funds already put aside from last month's hearing. Scott Lovell to send Town Treasurer all particulars and an estimate for a concrete pour.

Decide upon specifications for Taylor cemetery work and decide upon course of action.

Discussion over the cost of the work vs. first assessments which were low. New financials appear to be 10K or higher. It was decided to write up an assessment, to initiate a bidding process with a follow-up on how to pay for the repairs needed, possibly ARPA monies? Suggestion by the Treasurer to look at both ARPA and the Reserve Fund. The Town Clerk will pull together note on repairs with the assistance of Selectboard member Bruno McKenzie and to come up with a detailed list for bidders. Amy suggested that the project could be prioritized, with payments over several years. The compilation will be resolved first and foremost and a decision on means of payment will be reviewed after a bid is accepted.

Continue review of Purchasing Policy; discuss and decide upon revisions.

Not discussed.

- **NEW BUSINESS**

Review and approve VMCTA & VLCT Annual Training, hotel and mileage, and VLCT Planning and Zoning Training.

Bob Champagne-Willis reviewed for the Selectboard the VMCTA & VLCT Annual Training, hotel and mileage costs. Conferences costs are in Montpelier and Burlington, VT.

Bruno McKenzie made a motion. **To send the Town Clerk and the Town Treasurer to the Annual Meetings for training and to pay for the expense of hotel rooms, conference fees and mileage costs. The motion also authorized training for the VLCT Zoning classes for the Zoning Board of Adjustment and Planning Commission. Brad McVetty seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.**

- **OTHER BUSINESS**

Hearing none, the Chairman asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Brad McVetty made a motion to adjourn the meeting. It was seconded by Bruno McKenzie. The vote was unanimous.

The meeting was **adjourned** by the Chairman at **8:43 PM**.

Respectfully submitted by: Andy Champagne-Willis, acting scribe for this Selectboard meeting.