



TOWN OF TOWNSHEND

Selectboard

PO Box 121 Townshend, Vermont 05353

Selectboard Meeting Agenda

March 26, 2024 6:00 PM

Townshend Town Hall

Approved: 4/9/2024

Present: Allie Evans, Katie Marrow, Nick Suarez, Sherwood Lake, and via ZOOM Kate Jansak-Alley.

In Attendance: Galen Robinson – BCTV, Connie Holt – Selectboard Assistant

1. **Meeting Call to Order:** Evans calls the meeting to order at 6:00pm
2. **Approval of Minutes:** Evans makes a motion to approve the March 11, 2024, regular Selectboard meeting minutes. Suarez seconds the motion. Motion carries 4-1-0.
3. **Additions and Deletions:** Evans reads through the additions to the agenda.
 - a. Old Business (8e): Hiring Town Attorney
 - b. New Business (9L): Elementary School request regarding Common Road
 - c. New Business (9m): Grace Cottage Town Hall Use request: Tai Chi class
4. **Members of the Public:**
 - a. Resident, Alli Dercoli notifies the Select Board that a committee has been created to explore the feasibility of creating a skate park in town. She reports that right now the committee is putting together next steps.
5. **Correspondence:** Allie Dercoli: Skate Park Committee. The issue is addressed by Dercoli under Members of the Public.
6. **Warrants:** Jansak-Alley makes a motion to pay warrants 1- 6.

Payroll:	\$14,971.22
Payroll taxes:	\$7,443.33
General Fund:	\$13,393.72
Highway:	\$6,064.83
Highway Equipment;	\$3,751.43
Gazebo:	\$326.30
Total:	\$45,950.83

Suarez seconds the motion. Motion carries 3-0-1.

7. **Reports:**

1. **Highway:** Zumbruski gives the report. He reports that two of our FEMA Projects are done. Three trucks are down after the storm. He believes that mud season is over just waiting for the snow to subside.

2. **Treasurer:** Evans gives the report. She reports that there is \$758,459.89 in the Municipal Investment Fund and \$30,000.00 in the checking account.

3. **Town Clerk:** Evans gives the report. She reports that the Town Clerk took in \$904.20 in fees and services.

4. **Chair:** None

8. **Old Business:**

a. **Grant Writing Position:** Evans makes a motion to open discussion on the grant writing position. Suarez seconds the motion. Motion carries 3-0-0. Evans states she has a concern that the position was not advertised and there are no budgeted funds for this position in fiscal year 2024. She states that she believes there was no ill intent but has these concerns. Jansak-Alley agrees that there was no ill intent. Rob Swiger, resident, speaks as a former selectboard member involved in creating the grant writing position. He states that the Select Board received a proposal at a publicly warned meeting. He continues that there is no policy regarding hiring or creating a position so there was no violation of a policy. He says that Katie offered her services at a reasonable rate for a trial basis. He finishes with he attended tonight to speak in favor of the process. Resident, Laura Richardson, states that every other position is posted, and people should have equal opportunity to apply.

Wright, resident, and former Select Board member states that it was a position created on a trial basis to fill a need for the town. Marrow states that the position was not an out of the blue occurrence. It was warned ahead of time. She also brings to the Boards attention that under open meeting laws Select Board members are allowed to discuss documents that will be discussed at the next meeting. She states that Board must be able to talk if they are going to move the business of the town forward. Suarez states that it was done above board but maybe there are residents that want a different process. Evans reiterates that her concern is where the money is coming from.

Jansak-Alley states that she appreciates that it was created as a trial position and that she no longer has concerns about the position. Dercoli, resident, asks if Marrow wrote the grant for

the gazebo project. Marrow replies that she has continuously worked on it since January but the Committee is now discussing what to do with submitting the grant.

Evans asks if it is possible that the position be morphed into a percentage-based compensation with the salary built in rather than a rate of pay. Shaun Marrow, resident, says that a lot of towns have a Select Board point person as a component of the grant with no percentage compensation or any compensation in order to keep the boundaries clear. He says that typically the grant writer gets paid but not out of the grant.

Jansak-Alley asks if the Selectboard can just conclude the discussion and leave the decision as is. Lake states that because the position was put on hold the Board needs to settle that issue before moving on. Suarez and Holt state that currently there is no motion to change the grant writing position. Wright states that it was not set in stone. It was created as a trial. The town has \$6,844.50 for the six-month trial period. He states that he is pretty sure that the town can afford this trial position and will not create a burden to the tax rate or the town.

Jansak-Alley states that the purpose of this discussion is twofold. First, to understand how the proposal and decision came about, and then the question of where the money is coming from. Richardson asks if there can be a caveat added that if no grants are obtained that there be an evaluation as to re-upping the position. Marrow says yes.

Evans asks the board if they would like to put the position on hold until after Marrow takes a grant writing course or move ahead with the position. Jansak-Alley states that the Board should move forward with the position. Bob Desiervo, resident, states that time is of the essence in obtaining grants. Suarez makes a motion to close discussion. Evans seconds the motion. Motion carries 4-0-1. Lake states that this board needs a motion to take change the decision to put the position on hold.

Evans makes a motion to concur with the previous Selectboard and offer Katie Marrow the grant writing position as stated in the 2/27/24 meeting minutes. Suarez seconds the motion. Motion carries 4-0-1.

b. Minutes from 2/27/24 Select Board Meeting: Evans makes a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the 2/27/24 Selectboard meeting. Marrow seconds the motion. Lake asks why are you approving minutes when you were not the Board at the time. Evans replies this Board did information gathering. Motion carries 5-0-0.

c. Stone Arch Bridge Insurance Research update: Holt gives update on the questions that Selectboard was researching with VLCT. She states that we are waiting for VLCT to get back to us. Marrow informs the Board that there is a meeting scheduled to meet with the contractor on ways to minimize costs.

d. **Windham Regional – Resiliency Zones Meeting update:** Suarez reports on the meeting with Windham Regional. He describes the program as a new initiative between Green Mountain Power and Windham Regional to increase the resiliency of the electrical grid. Windham Regional is just getting started and met with us to gauge our interest as a town. The nature of the program will be up to GMP focusing on power walls and micro grids. First step is for GMP to evaluate our circuits and areas most effected. Several months down the line they will reach back out to us. Marrow informs the new board members about the experience the town recently had with GMP on upgrading lines on long town roads. She states that we need to keep in mind accountability on GMP going forward. Richardson, resident, raises her concerns about the Tesla Battery Power walls. Suarez states that we should keep these things in mind as this process goes forward.

e. **Hiring Town Attorney:** Evans makes a motion to discuss the lawyer position. Suarez seconds the motion. Lake suggests that a motion be made to hire a specific lawyer rather than a motion to discuss. Evans makes a motion to hire a town attorney. Suarez seconds the motion. Evans runs through the three lawyers researched. Marrow asks if Rich Carroll was on a retainer when he worked with the town. Lake and Holt state there was no retainer. Lake states that the rates are comparable.

Wright raises that he believes Steve Ankuda was the lawyer that was working with the town and did not tell us that he was also representing a resident who was involved in a legal matter with the town. Lake states that he believes it was not Ankuda, but rather it was Rich Carroll. Evans asks the Board if they would like hire Ankuda and get to know him or not hire him and find out more information. Lake states that the Board needs to find out the answer to this question. Lake suggests tabling the issue and then the motion can be picked back up. Evans moves to table the motion. Suarez second the motion. Motion carries 5-0-0.

9. **New Business**

a. **Request from Select Board member K. Jansak-Alley – where can the Select Board have a discussion:** Evans summarizes that the issue came up that the members of the Board cannot just meet and have discussion because of the Open Meeting Law. Evans brings to the attention of the board the VLCT webinar on the Open Meeting Law. She also raises the idea of holding monthly Selectboard round tables to enhance discussion. Marrow states how she moves the business of the town in between meetings. She states that things can get worked on as long as there is no quorum. Otherwise, the meeting needs to be warned and notes taken. Lake reiterates that point. Jansak-Alley states why she raised the question. She says that she had basic questions regarding governance after reading the handbook. Evans suggests that until the Open Meeting Law webinar the Selectboard should err on the side of caution. She asks that if Jansak-Alley have questions she should give them to Connie, and they can be put on the agenda.

b. **Cleaner/ Maintenance Personnel for Town Hall:** Evans describes the position. Marrow makes a motion to create a cleaner/ light maintenance position and to post the position. Lake seconds the motion. Motion carries 5-0-0.

c. **VTrans Certification:** Evans moves to sign the Highway Certification of Compliance and Annual Financial Plan. Marrow seconds the motion. Motion carries 5-0-0.

d. **Tobacco License: Harmonyville Store:** Marrow makes a motion to approve the tobacco license. Suarez seconds the motion. Motion carries 5-0-0.

e. **Restaurant/Bar License: West River Community Project Company:** Evans makes a motion to approve the restaurant/bar license. Suarez seconds the motion. Motion carries 5-0-0.

f. **Outside Consumption Permit: West River Community Project Company:** Evans makes a motion to approve the outside consumption permit. Suarez seconds the motion. Motion carries 5-0-0.

g. **C. Holt request to meet with auditor:** Evans moves to approve Holt meeting with the auditor for up to one half hour in reference the True Balance Report. Marrow seconds the motion. Motion carries 5-0-0.

h. **J. Zumbuski highway equipment proposal:** Zumbuski explains his proposal on the purchasing of highway equipment. There is a discussion of timeline and preferred types of equipment. Jansak-Alley raises the issue of the criteria on how to decide between options. Evans states that we are still seeking information. There is a discussion on the state of the Backhoe and the safety of using it. Zumbuski describes the state of the backhoe as unsafe and problematic. Suarez raises the VT municipal equipment loan program. Board decides to do some more research and come to the next meeting with information on the State of VT Loan Program and leasing information for two pieces of equipment.

i. **Hazard Mitigation Plan – Selectboard point person:** Holt gives some background on the Hazard Mitigation Program. She requests that the Select Board designate a point person to work with Holt and Windham Regional. Lake gives a description for the Hazard Mitigation Plan and its purpose. Suarez volunteers to be the point person from the Board.

j. **Highway Department Selectboard Liaison:** Evans describes the need for a Highway Dept Liaison. Marrow volunteers to be the liaison.

k. **Action Items discussion:** Evans suggest we revisit this issue after the webinar on the Open Meeting Law.

l. **Elementary School request regarding Common Road:** Evans makes a motion to close Common Road during recess. Marrow seconds the motion. Lake states that the signs need to follow guidelines. Marrow amends the motion to require the school to purchase the legally correct signs. Evans seconds the motion. Suarez request that we get the days and times. Motion on the amendment carries 5-0-0. Motion to approve the closing of Common Road during school recess hours with the amendment. Motion carries 5-0-0.

m. **Grace Cottage Town Hall Use request - Tai Chi class:** Marrow makes a motion to approve the town hall use request by Grace Cottage Hospital for ongoing Tai Chi classes. MOP, Laura Richardson, raises the issue of requiring a fee. She is in support of requiring a fee. Lake recommends that Board enter into a rental contract for this type of use. Jansak-Alley volunteers to discuss a use policy with Ellenka and Katie Marrow. Lake recommends tabling this request until a contract is drafted. Board decides to table the request until there is a discussion on the policy and how it relates to a fee. Evans instructs Connie to ask the requestor if they are willing to pay a fee if any.

10. **Executive Session:** none

11. **Next Regularly Scheduled Meeting:** Tuesday, April 9, 2024 at 6:00pm

12. **Adjournment:** Evan makes a motion to adjourn. Suarez seconds the motion. Motion carries 5-0-. The meeting is adjourned at 8:09pm.