

TOWN OF BRIDGEWATER

SELECTBOARD / SEWER COMMISSIONERS MEETING MINUTES

August 20, 2024

Present: William O. Young-Chair, Stephen S. Tarleton – Vice Chair, Road Commissioner, Owen Astbury – Board Member, Melissa Spear –Treasurer, Nancy Robinson-Clerk, Randy Kennedy –Road Foreman & Victoria Young-Administrative Assistant & Lister

Visitors: Bob & Sue Kancir, John Keough, Don McNeil, Bruce Maxham, George Spear, Mike Geno, Becca White –Senator, Allison Clarkson-Senator, Nope Martin, Anthony & Vicki Scalzilli, Chris Stevens, & Paul Dirsia

Zoom: Joan Wideman, Martins, Andrew McCleod, Lynne Bertram & Naomi

Call to Order: William called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

- ** Additions/Changes to Agenda: Melissa asked to move the FEMA discussion to first on the agenda and to move the Treasurer Report before Highway as she has information needed for the Highway discussion.
- FEMA Update - Melissa reported that we received an email from the Vermont State Public Assistance Officer- Kim Canarecci that FEMA announced the funding for the July 2023 Flood will not be released for permanent work until funding issues are resolved. When the funds are made available the State will release them. In the meantime, we will continue to submit completed projects for reimbursement. To date we have submitted just under 2 M in completed projects. One project has been obligated for Gunderson Bridge in the amount of \$8,427.00. which we will receive when funds are available. Randy has postponed any further projects for the December 2023 flooding- of which there are four. We would like to complete the Holiday Farm Bridge and Jenne Road Bridge paving so we can complete these projects and get them obligated. Randy will address the bids under the highway report. The Fire Department would like to work on the Dry Hydrant projects – Bruce Maxham would like to be added to the agenda to talk about the lift hydrant on Holiday Farm Bridge. William said that we would add Bruce Maxham-hydrant discussion under old business.

Minutes: July 16, 2024 –The minutes were reviewed and approved by the board as written.

Don McNeil, Allison Clarkson-Senator, Becca White-Senator & Heather

Suprenant-Representative (No response) – Tax Discussion- Don McNeil addressed the Board and our Senators. He had prepared a document (see attached) asking for two things: (1)- a Property Tax Cap and (2)- Term Limits. Don stated that the vote on the new school was defeated at the town meeting – a clear message of the will of the people, and yet the legislature moved forward and overrode the veto of the Governor on the Tax Bill. Don would like the Senator's to stay connected with him and present the two proposals to the legislature. Both Senators responded to his request. General discussion ensued. Many issues were discussed including the State cutting their budgets, the Town Reassessment process, and the use of the sales during the pandemic which resulted in all our assessments being raised to the level of what was paid for property during this high market time. Neighboring towns - Woodstock being one - are going through a reappraisal process with a low CLA (Common Level of Appraisal) which will have the same result as Bridgewater's. Increased property values. Allison explained that one of the results of the lawsuit that started ACT 68 was that all towns needed to be assessed at 100% Fair Market Value. Because towns are required to use the prior three years sale values in the reappraisal process –it has increased the values for all our properties.

There was also discussion of the Current Use Program.

Discussion of the State “moving money from one pot to another pot” – When will the State cut budgets – because this is not sustainable.”

“This hit is so significant-where does it end?”

“The Fuel Tax” increase- Affordable heat – Becca explained the bill – by lowering our fossil fuel costs, it will save us money over time. Finding alternative ways to heat our homes by solar, weatherization, heat pumps etc. There is a lot of disinformation out there about this bill. The legislature has not voted on this – they are doing a study.

Discussion of “handouts” - too many.

“We as taxpayers have to make cuts to our budgets to pay the higher taxes –the State increases their budgets and expects people to pay more. The State needs to cut budgets for any increases - simple as that.”

“We did the right thing – our values were adjusted – but we are not reaping the benefits of that.”

William asked Allison what can be done to get funding for our flood damage. She feels the State should reimburse the flooding cost and then have FEMA reimburse the State. Something that they are looking into.

Bruce asked Allison about the new Nationwide OSHA Rules & Regulations that Fire Department's cannot afford.

Highway Report: Updates – Randy updated that they have been graveling the North Bridgewater and Cox District roads and finishing the Grant that we had for Blanchard Rd, Bridgewater Hollow and Chateaugay. We have our Chloride Tank and will be ordering some chloride.

- **Paving Bids- Holiday Farm Bridge, Jenne RD Bridge, Hubbard Bridge-** Randy had a bid from Vermont Roadworks LLC for paving the Jenne Bridge, Hubbard Bridge & Holiday Farm Bridge. He had reached out to two other paving contractors and did not hear back from them. We have been waiting for two months and have not heard back. We need to get these jobs done so that we can get these projects into FEMA. Total Estimate for the three bridges \$24,350.00. William made a motion to accept the Estimate as a contract price of \$24,350.00 -seconded by Steve. Randy will check tomorrow to ensure the estimate is the contract price. Motion passed. The Fire Department would also like to have some paving done around their building. The Fire Department will pay for the paving from funds that had been raised to cover things that were previously cut in their building costs. Randy reported that the culvert by Hank Smith’s property needs to be fixed. It will either need a temporary fix for now or to replace the whole culvert. Steve and Randy will go and look at what it will entail.
- **Road Reclassification: Baker Hill Update & Oxbow Rd – Anthony Scalzilli.** Vicky reported that there was no update on the Baker Hill Reclassification- the town attorney is still working on that. Discussion of the repairs that are needed to the Oxbow Class 4 road. But because of the delay of the FEMA funding - Anthony Scalzilli asked to withdraw his request to reclassify the Oxbow Road at this time. More discussion of the work needed on the road by the snowmobile trail and Blanchard’s camp. Blasting may be required.
- **Municipal Grants in Aid FY 25-GA0739** – William signed the Grant to receive the Ditching Grant from the State for \$17,750.00 which expires in September 2025. This money can be used for ditching and small cross culverts.

Treasurer’s File: Was moved to before the Highway Report.

- Expense Warrant #25 – Manual Cks #2859- #2867, AP Cks #21384- #21416- The board reviewed and signed the warrant.

- Payroll Warrant –July 2024- E-Cks #5175- #5186 – PR Cks #4027- #4048 –The Board reviewed and signed the warrant.
- Budget Status Report –Melissa reviewed the report with the Board. Melissa noted that we have not received a bill from the Sheriff’s department yet. They wrote 4 tickets in July- we received \$326.00 in fines. We received all 4 quarterly State Highway payments for the year. The State sent them all to help with the cash flow. In the Flood Fund- under materials- we have a credit of \$15,000.00 - we were credited from Pike for materials that should have been billed to Killington.
- Wastewater Plant- Yankee Generator Contract – This is a three-year contract for \$1,845.00 to be paid in three yearly installments of \$615.00 at the start of each service year. William made a motion to accept the contract –seconded by Owen - motion passed. William signed the Contract.
- Money Market Account for Tax Money-Melissa withdrew this discussion after the information was received about the FEMA funding.
- Melissa also informed the Board of the Local Impact Grant of 50k that we received from the State. The money cannot be used for FEMA expenses –but for our own highway needs. William made a motion to use the 50k for materials in our highway budget – seconded by Steve. Motion passed.
- FEMA Update-see above

Clerk’s File:

- Request to Cater Permits for:
 - OQ Farm (Aug 9th from 6-10 pm) Approved by Board
 - OQ Farm (Aug 10th from 3-11pm) Approved by Board
 - OQ Farm (Aug 31st from 3-11 pm) approved by the Board. William moved to accept all three – seconded by Steve. Motion passed.
- **Health Officer Update-** Corey Solitaire’s term is up December 31, 2024, and he will not be renewing his term. If no one steps up to be appointed - it falls to the Selectboard Chair.
- **Primary Election Update-** Nancy reported 139 Voters- 121 in person and 18 Absentee Ballots. She is happy with the tabulator machine- They were all done by 8:45 p.m.
- Nancy reported that she will be attending an online webinar on Active Shooter Preparedness on September 5, 2024.

New Business:

- Next Meeting – September 10, 2024, we will return to two meetings a month - 2nd & 4th Tuesday’s at 4:30 p.m.
- **BACF- Baseline Documentation Report** - Brian Bontrager – BACF Board Chair, had asked William as representative for the town to sign the document. “To accept and acknowledge the following document including the attached photographs as being, to the best of our respective knowledge, an accurate description of the setting, significant interior features, exterior features and uses of a building known as the Bridgewater Community Center located in the Town of Bridgewater, Vermont (the "Building"). We further affirm that we know of no activities ongoing at the Building which are inconsistent with the covenants contained in the Historic Preservation Easement conveyed by the Town of Bridgewater to VHCB and Preservation Trust on July 11, 2023 and recorded on July 12, 2023 in Book 104 at Pages 52-59 of the Town of Bridgewater Land Records.” (See attached document). After review and discussion -William signed the document.

- **Bridgewater Historical Society** – Permission for AC/Heat Pumps – Chris Stevens gave information about installing heat pumps for the building in October. Jason Potwin will do the job. There will be no cost to the town. The Board approved the installation. William made a motion to allow the Bridgewater Historical Society to install heat pumps in the building. Seconded by Owen- motion passed.

Old / Other Business: Bruce Maxham asked permission for the fire department to install a dry hydrant with an angle mount design on the Holiday Farm Bridge. William made a motion to allow the fire department to install the angle mount dry hydrant to the Holiday Farm Bridge –seconded by Steve. Motion passed.

Visitors: No Comments

Adjourn: William made a motion to adjourn at 8:00 p.m. - seconded by Steve. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Victoria Young Administrative Assistant