

**Town of Londonderry, Vermont**  
**Selectboard**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**Monday, January 7, 2019**  
**Twitchell Building - 100 Old School Street, South Londonderry, VT**

**Board Members Present:** James Ameden, Georgianne Mora, Thomas Cavanagh, Robert Forbes, and Taylor Prouty.

**Board Members Absent:** None.

**Others in Attendance:** Town Officials - Kelly Pajala, Tina Labeau, Shane O'Keefe, and Kevin Beattie. Members of the Public - Cynthia Gubb, Larry Gubb, Dick Dale, Dale Mann, Kelly Capen, and Bruce Frauman (GNAT).

**1. Call meeting to order**

Selectboard Chair **Jim Ameden** called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

**2. Additions or deletions to the agenda**

- a. *At the request of Shane O'Keefe, Jim Ameden moved to add item 7D, to discuss an item for the upcoming Board meeting, specifically a goal setting session, seconded by Taylor Prouty, passed unanimously.*
- b. *Jim Ameden moved to add item 7E, a report from Emergency Management Director Kevin Beattie on the Williams Dam, seconded by George Mora, passed unanimously.*
- c. *At the request of Kevin Beattie, Jim Ameden moved to add item 11C, to discuss a letter from the Rescue Squad, seconded by Taylor Prouty, passed unanimously.*

**3. Minutes**

- a. *George Mora moved to approve the minutes of the meeting of December 17, 2018, seconded by Taylor Prouty, passed unanimously.*
- b. *George Mora moved to approve the minutes of the meeting of December 20, 2018, seconded by Taylor Prouty, passed unanimously.*

**4. Select board pay orders**

Pay orders were reviewed and signed by the Board members.

## **5. Announcements/Correspondence**

### **a. 2018 Equalization Study results**

The Board reviewed the Vermont Department of Taxes 2018 equalization study results, which showed an education grand list of \$405,126,480, an equalized education grand list of \$400,867,291, a common level of appraisal (CLA) of 101.06%, and a coefficient of dispersion (COD) of 5.67%. It was mentioned that the Listers Office was very pleased with the CLA and COD

## **6. Visitors and Concerned Citizens**

Resident Dick Dale spoke about a warned article for the Taconic and Green District that proposes changes to the organizational voting process. This is a result of frustrations with the existing process, which he stated was onerous. The proposed article will allow for co-mingling of ballots, and allow Clerks to get fair and equitable results. He hopes that people will vote on January 22, 2019. And tomorrow night is the budget vote in Manchester, and it is anticipated that taxes will go up only slightly.

Kelly Pajala noted people can begin registering their dogs for 2019, and that Transfer Station permits are available.

Shane O'Keefe stated that he is pleased to be serving as the new Town Administrator. He said that he had a great first week last week, with Town staff who are helpful and understanding, and looks forward to working with the Board and the people of Londonderry. Board members welcomed O'Keefe.

## **7. Town Officials Business**

### **a. Planning Commission – Water and wastewater update**

Planning Commissioners Larry Gubb, Dale Mann and Dick Dale spoke to the Board about the Commission's concerns regarding water and sewer in the village areas, and their desire to have a study done to evaluate the situation and gather data. They are still information gathering and trying to see how to get the process can get started. They noted that there are a lot of resources that they can tap in this effort.

There are concerns about potential water supply health problems due to density and small property footprints. It was noted that there are potential economic concerns as well, as banks may be reluctant to loan money to properties with questionable septic systems.

Larry Gubb stated that the State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has indicated that they want towns to move forward with these efforts, so that they don't have to enforce their regulations on failed systems. They would hold off on enforcement if communities are making headway. He indicated that it made sense to plan ahead for remediating instead of having to remediate as a result of a cited violation.

Dale Mann asked the Board how the Town should proceed on a study. It was mentioned that Jamaica was working on this at this time. Does this go to Town Meeting? A special meeting?

Jim Ameden said it would be good to see what the cost of the study would be. There was discussion about how best to pay for it, and it was assumed that some grant funding would be available.

George Mora stated that if we do nothing then, down the road, we stand to have a shell of a downtown area, with unusable properties. It was mentioned that if the tax base shrinks everyone's taxes go up.

Bob Forbes stated that he felt there was an interest in doing such a study but wants to know what grant funds would be available to cover costs. Larry Gubb noted that that is a growing number of resources to help towns with this over the past 10 years. They'll try to put together a package of resources and who will apply for grants, and there are other towns that have been doing this work that we can learn from.

Shane O'Keefe noted that he can speak with the Commission at its meeting next week about potential resources of which he is aware.

Larry Gubb stated that Planning Commissioners hope to attend one Selectboard meeting each month to report to on this matter.

**b. Town Treasurer – Review draft Town Meeting Warning**

The Board reviewed the draft of the Town Meeting warning as prepared by Tina Labeau.

Regarding Article 6, the Phoenix Fire Company truck, it was agreed to include \$80,000, which represents half of the total cost of \$160,000.

There was brief discussion about the Article 9, the South Londonderry Library Tax Exemption renewal.

Regarding Article 10, the Vermont State Police (VSP) contract, it was discussed whether to keep this figure the same as that for the present budget - \$40,000. It was noted that a revised number can be voted from the floor, as the contract figure can change each year. There should be some discussion with the VSP between now and Town Meeting.

Kelly Pajala noted that there was legislation last year regarding community policing that did not proceed but could come up again. There was conversation about the various alternatives for police services, all of which are more expensive than the VSP contract. It was noted that the VSP is in the area already, but the contract only covers overtime expenses and that the Town has never spent up to the contract maximum. There was discussion about community and regional policing in general. It was agreed to include \$40,000 in the article.

Regarding Article 11, the Highway Equipment Reserve Fund, it was agreed to include \$120,000 in the article.

Regarding Article 12, the Town Buildings Reserve Fund, it was noted that there are long-term costs for Town buildings. The amount previously raised for the fiscal year transition fund would now go toward this reserve fund to address these needs. It was agreed to include \$120,000 in the article.

Regarding Article 13, the Pingree Park Pump Track, Kelly Pajala stated that \$5,000 was to be used by the Parks Board to create a new facility for developing trail biking skills for children, to be located in the ball fields that are no longer being used. This amount would be roughly half the cost of the entire project, with grant and other towns paying the balance. Efforts to include pickle ball at the facility were also discussed.

Articles 18 through 22 are simply appropriations that are somewhat new, have new amounts or that have missed the previous year's Town Meeting.

**c. Town Administrator – VMERS Exemption**

The Board briefly discussed requesting exemption from the Vermont Municipal Employees Retirement System (VMERS) for O'Keefe due to his participation in another retirement program, as provided for in his contract with the Town. He briefly described the exemption process.

*George Mora moved to agree to submit the request of exemption, seconded by Bob Forbes, passed unanimously. The letter was signed by the Board members.*

**d. Town Administrator – Upcoming Meeting/Goal Setting Session**

Shane O'Keefe explained that he hoped to have a goal-setting session at the next meeting in order for the Board to provide him direction in his new role over the next 6 months or longer. He asked the Board members to think about goals and priorities so that he can leave the next meeting with clear list of items that the Board would like to see accomplished.

O'Keefe raised the idea of including an agenda item each meeting that would review items for the following meeting, so that staff and others can better prepare for discussion well ahead of time. It was noted that including old business updates might be the best way to handle this.

**e. Emergency Management Director – Report on Williams Dam**

Kevin Beattie stated that he was advised by the State Hazard Mitigation Office and the Windham Regional Commission that the FEMA grant he has been considering is really for dam mitigation itself and not a good fit for what he'd like to accomplish, which is a study of impacts of a dam breach and what type of planning he must do as Emergency Management Director. He will look at other funding options.

George Mora raised whether it still also makes sense for the Town to continue to maintain a focus on a dam engineering evaluation.

Beattie mentioned that the Hazard Mitigation Plan is being worked on this year and safety the dam will be in that study

There was discussion about the issue of whether dams should remain or be eliminated. Various issues related to the dams discussed include: fire suppression needs; existing siltation; cost of dam rehabilitation; historic/cultural preservation; river health; downstream floor damage.

## **8. Transfer Station**

Tom Cavanagh reminded people to get the Transfer Station permits at the Town Offices as they are required to use the facility, and are different than punch cards.

## **9. Roads and Bridges**

### **a. Report from the Traffic Safety Committee**

Traffic Safety Committee members Dick Dale, Kelly Capen, Cynthia Gubb, Kevin Beattie and George Mora presented the Committee's December 2018 report.

Mr. Dale thanked the Committee members for their efforts, particularly ex-officio member George Mora. He read aloud the report, a copy of which is included as an addendum to these minutes

The Board thanked the Committee members for their work. It was agreed that there is a lot to consider in the report, and there will be additional review and discussion on the part of the Board at the upcoming Board meetings.

Cindy Gubb asked for the Board stay on top of addressing recommendations of the two safety audit reports that have been prepared. George Mora stated that the recommendations of the 2015 Middletown Road safety audit was looked at in the spring and the Board voted to accept its recommendations, and they need to be implemented depending on funding. She mentioned that the Thompsonburg Road safety audit is still in draft form.

There was a brief discussion on removal trees standing within the right of way. There was also discussion on downed trees within the road rights-of-way from the recent storm.

George Mora discussed efforts to make final curve and speed signage recommendations.

There was discussion about the VTrans plan to grind and resurface Route 11 in the next year or so, and how the Town can best coordinate Traffic Committee recommendations with the State work. George Mora suggested that the Town could request a safety audit for Route 11 ahead of the project.

The Board again thanked the Committee members before they left the meeting.

Jim Ameden stated that there is no report on salt and sand usage as the Highway Department has been very busy. There was discussion about usage of the salt & sand shed.

**b. Annual VTrans Certificate of Highway Mileage**

This matter was discussed and signature of the certificate agreed to at the meeting of November 19, 2018. There were no changes to the Town Highway mileage.

*Tom Cavanagh moved to sign the annual certificate of highway mileage, seconded by George Mora, passed unanimously.*

The Board members signed the document for submission to the State.

**10. Old Business**

None

**11. New Business**

**a. Use of the Town Office as a FEMA operations center during an emergency**

Kevin Beattie shared with the Board a letter from the Emergency Management Director of the VT Agency of Human Services regarding Town participation in the FEMA Disaster Recovery Center project, and whether the Town Offices can be available to FEMA as an operations center in an emergency. He did not have a specific recommendation, and gave pluses and minuses to this use.

*Tom Cavanagh moved to offer the use of the Town Office for emergency response purposes, seconded by George Mora, passed unanimously.*

**b. Membership in the Okemo Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce**

The Board briefly discussed whether to continue membership with the Chamber of Commerce, the cost of which is \$149. It was felt that there were few benefits to the Town.

*Jim Ameden moved to not pay any fees to the Okemo Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce, seconded by George Mora, passed unanimously.*

**c. Discuss letter from the Londonderry Volunteer Rescue Squad**

Kevin Beattie provided a letter from the Londonderry Volunteer Rescue Squad to the Board and all surrounding communities about the worsening of radio communication. The LVRS relies on portables and he said that they're almost useless. He believes it has something to do with the repeater on Stratton mountain, which is owned by Southwestern NH District Fire Mutual Aid (SNHFMA). The Town pays the organization \$32,000 for dispatching services and he feels we should be getting our money's worth; we need a repeater that works. The towns covered by LVRS pay \$162,000. There have been attempts to correct the problem but none have worked.

The letter asks the Town to put pressure on SNHFMA. Jim Amaden suggested the Town put together a letter with teeth to demand action.

He also mentioned that there are other options for dispatching, which were discussed briefly, but said that this organization does a nice job dispatching. Kevin Beattie stated that LVRS can use its own repeater now on Stratton for internal communications, so it leads him to think that the SNHFMA repeater needs work.

It was agreed that Jim Amaden will work with Shane O’Keefe on a draft letter for the Board to consider signing at the next meeting.

**Cobble Ridge Road.** Jim Amaden noted that an issue regarding the turnaround at the end of this road has been resolved with the new owner. The loop at the end is not part of the Town Highway, and while plowed in the past, is not now being plowed. The owner now knows that the Town will not plow except to allow for the Town truck to turn around.

It was stated that the Town does not plow non-Town roads.

## 12. Adjourn

*George Mora moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Taylor Prouty, passed unanimously.*

Meeting adjourned at 9:06 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Shane P. O’Keefe  
Town Administrator

Approved \_\_\_\_\_ *TBD* \_\_\_\_\_

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James Amaden, Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Georgianne Mora, Vice-Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Thomas Cavanagh

\_\_\_\_\_  
Robert Forbes

\_\_\_\_\_  
Taylor Prouty

(see Addendum beginning on next page)

## ADDENDUM

### Traffic Committee Report December 2018

The charge to the Traffic Committee was to study traffic on the local roads in order to promote safety for both vehicular and pedestrian use and to formulate recommendations based on collected data.

The Committee began meeting on Feb. 14, 2018, and developed a comprehensive plan of study. Interviews with Matt Rawson (Road Foreman), Jeff Duda (Champion Fire Chief), and the Rescue Squad identified areas of concern. The Committee did its own survey of roads to identify areas of poor sightlines and ineffective or absent signage. An email address was established for community members to voice their concerns; the Committee solicited feedback via the Londonderry Community Forum and the Town's email list, and Committee members interviewed many citizens to help identify additional areas of concern. The State's Guide to Setting Speed Limits was reviewed, as were all previous traffic counts and safety studies. A meeting was scheduled with the planners of the Route 11 resurfacing project. Finally, the Committee asked Windham Regional Commission to conduct traffic counts on Thompsonburg, Landgrove, and Spring Hill Roads, and requested that a Safety Audit of Thompsonburg Road be conducted by VTrans. (Middletown Road was not included in the traffic count requests, as a Better Roads Safety Study was conducted there in 2015).

In the absence of posted speed limits, Vermont sets the speed limit at 50 MPH for all roads, with an expectation that drivers will adjust their speed based on weather, road condition, curves, or poor sightlines. Over the course of the last year, a local Sheriff has reported to the Town Administrator five complaints of excessive speed on local roads which the Sheriff agreed were valid due to road conditions, but no tickets could be issued because of the 50 MPH speed limit on all of Thompsonburg Road. The WRC traffic studies show that between 1.2% and 13.6% of vehicles travelled in excess of 50 MPH, with the highest percentage on a short straightaway on Thompsonburg Road. The 85th percentile was between 43 and 49 MPH, and average speeds were between 38 and 42 MPH, with the highest again on Thompsonburg Road. (See pages 2 – 6 of the Londonderry Traffic Studies.) A visual review of Londonderry roads suggests that the characteristics of most roads include poor sightlines, awkward grade changes, places of significant tree and brush growth along the road, and sharp narrow curves. Based on the characteristics of local roads, speed limits can be set five miles below the 85th percentile of speeds recorded in traffic studies. People tend to remember and consider as their perception for all traffic, the speed of drivers exceeding 50 MPH, not the vast majority of drivers.

The VTrans Safety Audit identified a number of safety issues on Thompsonburg Rd., and the Audit Report makes recommendations for speed limits, improved signage, guardrails, and tree and brush clearing.

The Committee recommends the following based on the data collected:

1. That the Town adopt a Traffic Ordinance, with speed limits to be set on the basis of the traffic counts and the VTrans Safety Audit. The new ordinance will require posted speed limits (about \$100 per required sign). It is possible that the signs may be paid for by a grant. Because of the



costs, the Committee recommends that if it has to be applied over several years, Thompsonburg Road and Middletown Road be prioritized, (There was grant funding available for the changes suggested by the grant-funded Middletown Road Safety Study.)

2. That all of the recommendations of the Thompsonburg Traffic Safety Audit (see pages 10 – 21), and all of the Middletown Road recommendations, be implemented as soon as possible.
3. That Spring Hill Road get three new warning signs: 'Narrow Bridge' near the intersection of Spring Hill Road and Livermore Mills Road, a more visible 'Stop' or 'Yield' sign at the bottom of Haven Hill Road, and a 'Stop' or 'Yield' sign at the intersection of Spring Hill Road and Livermore Mills Road. It should be noted that over the last two years, Spring Hill Road has experienced a significant increase in traffic load due in part to a new GPS redirection of traffic from and to Winhall, as well as the usual numerous visitors to Gale Meadows in the summer months.
4. A sign at all entrances to Londonderry and South Londonderry asking drivers to "Please drive like your children live here. Please slow down."
5. Improve sightlines for intersecting roads and driveways by cutting brush, grass, and small trees. Remove large trees very close to the road.
6. Establish better traffic control on Lowell Lake Road by working more closely with the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation. West River Road also has a large number of people who travel to the West River Trail who do not adjust to its characteristics. More signage is needed beyond that already provided to slow down traffic.

Because many complaints concerning Route 11 and 100 were expressed, and recognizing that those roads are under the jurisdiction of the State, the Committee asks the Select Board to make a request to VTrans for the following:

1. A complete and comprehensive Safety Audit for Route 11 from Thompsonburg Road to Reilly Road, emphasizing the Village of Londonderry proper. Of particular concern are:
  - The intersection of Old Stowell Hill Rd., RT 100, and RT 11.; the intersection of Hell's Peak and RT 11; and the intersection of Edgehill Road/Middletown Road with RT 11 (particularly the sightline).
  - The Utley Bridge as it relates to oversized vehicles.
  - The inability of trucks to slow down sufficiently when approaching Londonderry from the west on Stowell Hill, due to the placement of signs too close to the intersection of RT 11 and RT 100, a very awkward and dangerous intersection.
  - The speed of traffic (trucks in particular) and poor sightlines on RT 11 approaching Thompsonburg Rd from the east.
  - The size, speed, and timing of trailered prefabricated homes and the speed of trucks through the commercial center of the Town.
2. Clarification of the proposed plan of a few years ago for the intersection of Edge Hill / Middletown Road / RT 11.

3. Proposals to calm traffic and promote safer pedestrian and bike traffic and a safer capacity to walk across the two bridges.

Respectfully Submitted, Dick Dale, Bill Barclay, Kelly Capen, Cynthia Gubb, Kevin Beattie, and George Mora (ex officio)

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DRAFT