

Town of Ferrisburgh
Selectboard Minutes . APPROVED
February 5, 2019

Members present: Jim Benoit, Rick Ebel, Steve Gutowski, Jessica James.
Michael Red+Muir participated electronically.

Town officials present: No town officials were present.

Visitors present: Kate Brewer, Mark Chaffee, Diane Derby, Michael Donnelly, Will Elwell, Doug Fletcher, Matt Fraley, Peeker Heffernan, Clark Hinsdale, Rob Mullin, Haley Pero, Dean Gilmore, Dick St. George, Bessie Sessions, David Shaw, Bill Sinks, Fritz Tegatz, Don Turner, Bill Wager, Gwynn Zakov.

1. 6:30 p.m. Regular meeting — call to order.

Rick Ebel, chair, called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. He asked for a motion to amend the agenda adding **7 (b) Discussion of PACIF insurance claim (probable executive session)**. Jessica James made a motion to amend the agenda as described. Steve Gutowski seconded. All voted in favor. MOTION PASSED.

2. Approve minutes —January 15, 2019, regular meeting.

Steve Gutowski made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 15, 2019, regular meeting, as submitted. Jim Benoit seconded. All voted in favor. MOTION PASSED.

3. Selectboard new business

(a) Staff representatives from the offices of Senator Leahy, Senator Sanders, Representative Welch, and the Vermont League of Cities & Towns will be present to listen to concerns of volunteer firefighters and emergency response personnel. Volunteers from Addison County and southern Chittenden County are invited. Rick Ebel began the discussion by stating that Ferrisburgh Chief Bill Wager had come to a budget meeting and talked about concerns regarding recruitment and training of firefighters and emergency personnel. Rick asked the representatives from Vermont congressional officials and Vermont Leagues of Cities & Towns to introduce themselves. Diane Derby from Senator Leahy's office said she handles funding streams for numerous safety personnel including fire and EMS. Haley Pero from Senator Bernie Sanders's office said she is a community outreach representative who works on fire, police, and rescue issues. Gwynn Zakov from Vermont League of Cities & Towns said she works as a municipal policy advocate generally taking on public safety issues of fire, rescue, and law enforcement. Ryan McLaren from Representative Welch's office was not able to attend. Rick asked Bill to introduce the fire and rescue personnel in attendance, which included chiefs, deputy chiefs, and fire service members from Bristol, Charlotte, Middlebury, Milton, Vergennes, and Weybridge.

Diane spoke first saying the challenge of federal funding is that it is easier to advocate for physical items, such as equipment, than for funds for recruitment of volunteers. She noted that in the past Senator Leahy's office has been successful obtaining funding for fire training. She asked what the federal government could pay for to assist recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters and emergency response personnel.

Chief Bill Wager led off the discussion saying being a volunteer firefighter takes a special skill and there is not the same sense of community now as before World War II. He said the number one issue is getting awareness of the problem out to the public who think if they call 911 someone is waiting at the firehouse. Referring to the success of the US military as a volunteer organization, Bill suggested continued service for veterans as a possible recruiting incentive. Other incentives mentioned by those present included paying a competitive wage, offering life insurance and retirement packages, and giving tax credits. Numerous reasons were cited for the current situation including a change in demographics (the blue collar population is shrinking), a smaller number of students to draw from as well as the requirement that cadets be 18 years old, discontinued training at high schools and vocation education programs, aging of current personnel, and lack of traction for legislation around the country to support recruitment, training, and retention. Concerns voiced centered on a lack of understanding that this matter is at a crisis level. Right now four or five departments are called for first response to a house fire to have enough personnel. Departments are closing in the Northeast Kingdom. There is a very high dropout rate at the fire academy. It is difficult to attract people even if you pay a wage because businesses such as fast food chains pay a slightly lower wage with no other time commitment or need to be available on an emergency basis 24/7, 365 days a year. The near-future probability that calling 911 may not reach anyone is not a scare tactic. Even minimal financial support right now will still mean changes in coverage areas, as individual towns regionalize services. Without changes, municipalities will have to hire employees at a cost towns will not be able to sustain to provide emergency response services.

Haley spoke about some past work by Senator Sanders's office, the current situation, and suggestions that may work now. She said Senator Sanders was considering reintroducing a bill that would match local incentives since it did not become law. Citing a time before she worked in the Sanders's office, she said Senator Sanders had secured \$100,000 for cadet programs. She said due to the government shutdown there is still time to apply for SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire Emergency Response) grants through FEMA. The funds could be used for hiring on the career side and recruitment and retention on the volunteer side. She commented that her office is currently looking at creating a video for social media on recruitment and retention, which would include all types of emergency response positions. It would be produced by Senator Sanders's office and highlight the value of service: reasons people volunteer and what they get out of it. Saying the issue seems to be about workforce development, she said her office could help facilitate a fair, which has been done before, letting students know there are careers beyond college. Diane said she has worked on issues with Haley before and would bring ideas to the state house to get the conversation rolling.

Gwynn said the overall problem is there is not a state presence in emergency response for fire and rescue at the state level; unlike the opioid crisis, fire and rescue issues are not rising to the level of getting a response from the legislature. She remarked that problems with recruitment, training, and retention are new issues for the legislature. She said she testified earlier in the day before the House Government Operations Committee and mentioned tonight's selectboard meeting when discussing dispatching issues. She encouraged everyone to call government representatives and tell them what is happening and how it is adversely affecting each department.

(b) Villari's of Ferrisburgh — 2019 hall rental agreement. Jim Benoit made a motion to continue renting the upstairs community hall to Villari's of Ferrisburgh for youth and adult self-defense classes on Saturdays from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. for the rental fee of \$50 per Saturday, with the required \$500 deposit, and proof of insurance. Steve Gutowski seconded. All voted in favor. MOTION PASSED.

4. Selectboard old business

(a) US Route 7/Old Hollow Road/Stage Road update. Rick Ebel commented that there would be a meeting of stakeholders and community members who have been working on this issue on March 25, 2019, at 2:00 p.m. at the town offices; the purpose of the meeting is to plan for the April 16, 2019, meeting when VTrans and VHB will present alternatives to this intersection.

(b) Arnold Bay Road tree cutting and right-of-way update. Rick Ebel said there was no update to share since the previous meeting when the board authorized the town's attorney to file a complaint in Vermont Superior Court.

5. Selectboard general business

(a) Vermont Agency of Transportation — Road Posting Notice. After discussion, Rick Ebel said he will ask the town clerk to post one notice in the town offices and a second notice in West Ferrisburgh. Rick said this agenda item would also be discussed with John Bull, road foreman, at the next regular selectboard meeting on February 19, 2019.

(b) Listers/Justus DeVries, Jr. — CLA (Common Level of Appraisal) and COD (Coefficient of Dispersion) letter. Rick Ebel announced that based on his review Justus DeVries, Jr. does not recommend appeal of the new 102.26% CLA and COD of 14.13% to the Property Valuation and Review.

(c) Discussion of backup services: cleaning, animal control. Discussion ensued when Rick Ebel said the person contracted to clean the office building has been ill or unavailable on several occasions. Noting health concerns for the public, Rick said he wanted to talk about the need for a backup cleaner. Jessica James said renters of the space expect a place that is clean and ready for use. Further discussion mentioned having someone available to perform light maintenance, such as changing light bulbs in ceiling fixtures.

Rick Ebel detailed for the rest of the board a recent incident of a stray dog found in Ferrisburgh. Since Jaimeelyn Gaboriault, dog officer, could not be reached, the Vermont State Police picked up the dog. Richard Catchpaw, Vergennes animal control officer, was contacted and helped. Following discussion, Rick said he would follow up with Richard to see if he would be interested in acting as a backup for Jaimeelyn.

6. Public comment

Clark Hinsdale congratulated Steve Gutowski on the *Addison Independent* article about his retirement from the selectboard, adding appreciation for Steve's service.

7. Other business

(a) Ken Sullivan — Ferrisburgh Central School snowplowing. Rick Ebel announced that per a letter addressed to JoAn Canning and dated January 19, 2017, the district was notified that as of July 1, 2017, the town would no longer be providing snowplowing services for the Ferrisburgh Central School.

(b) Discussion of PACIF insurance claim (probable executive session).

8:00 p.m. . Jim Benoit made a motion to find that premature general disclosure of attorney-client communication regarding a PACIF insurance claim would put the town at a substantial disadvantage. Steve Gutowski seconded. All voted in favor. MOTION PASSED.

8:01 p.m. . Jessica James made a motion to go into executive session to discuss attorney-client communication of a PACIF insurance claim under provision of Title 1, Section 313 (a) 1 of the Vermont State statutes. Steve Gutowski seconded. All voted in favor. MOTION PASSED. Rick Ebel announced the board would recess for a brief discussion. Everyone except members of the board adjourned to an outer hallway.

8:19 p.m. . Steve Gutowski made a motion to come out of executive session. Jessica James seconded. All voted in favor. MOTION PASSED.

8:20 p.m. . Jim Benoit made a motion to reconvene the regular selectboard meeting. Jessica James seconded. All voted in favor. MOTION PASSED.

Rick Ebel announced no action was taken by the board.

8. Correspondence

(a) Mary Lou Ivey — Long Point Corporation — email correspondence. Rick Ebel read the order dated August 15, 1935, which described the laying out of Long Point Road. By email, John Bull confirmed that Long Point Road is classified as a Class 3 road.

(b) Vermont League of Cities & Towns (VLCT) — 2019 VLCT PACIF insurance coverage documentation. The documentation, received by mail, is available.

(c) University of Vermont — 2019 Town Officers Education Conferences. By mail, the board was notified that these conferences would be held on April 4, 2019, in Fairlee, Vermont, at the Lake Morey Inn and on April 11, 2019, in Rutland at the Holiday Inn.

(d) New Haven Selectboard copy of letter to Vermont Agency of Transportation. By letter, the board was informed by the New Haven Selectboard that it supports only the option that constructs a westerly bypass to reroute truck traffic away from downtown Vergennes.

(e) Vermont Land Trust — re: Acquisition of Development Rights, Larrow Farm. By letter, the board was notified that the Vermont Land Trust would be closing on the purchase of 259 acres of land located on Botsford Road.

(f) Waterbury and Strafford Selectboards — highway aid and taxes on gasoline and diesel fuel. By mail, the board received a memo from the selectboards of Waterbury and Strafford encouraging it to show support for this tax by contacting local government representatives on the House and Senate Transportation Committees.

9. Selectboard to approve or sign

(a) Global Montello Group Corp — Jiffy Mart 2019 Liquor License renewal application. Jim Benoit made a motion to approve the 2019 Liquor License renewal application for Jolley Associates, LLC. Steve Gutowski seconded. All voted in favor. MOTION PASSED.

(b) Basin Harbor Club — 2019 Liquor License renewal applications. Jessica James made a motion to approve eight 2019 Liquor License renewal applications for Basin Harbor Club. Jim Benoit seconded. All voted in favor. MOTION PASSED.

(c) State of Vermont — 2019 Certificate of Insurance Highway Mileage. Board members signed the certificate tabled at the last regular selectboard meeting on January 15, 2019.

(d) Selectboard warrant. After review, Jessica James made a motion to approve the selectboard warrant, which details town expenditures, for a total of \$44,951.02. Steve Gutowski seconded. All voted in favor. MOTION PASSED.

10. Adjourn

Jessica James made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:09 p.m. Jim Benoit seconded. All voted in favor. MOTION PASSED.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Silveira