

SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES  
NOVEMBER 6, 2024

Present: Noah Bond, Heather McElroy, Greg Manning, Mike Testut, Pierre Gervais, Annie Budrewicz, Jamie Budrewicz, Charles Pronto, Jeffrey Johansen, Alan Pratt, Weston Martin

Attending Virtually: Jeanne Gervais, Mike Strait, Joel Cope, Mercy Manning, Ed Barber, Bruce Webster

The chairperson, Jeanne Gervais, called the meeting to order at 4:30pm.

Pledge of Allegiance: All attendees stood for the Pledge.

Updates to the Agenda: Noah Bond requested that the following items be added to the agenda: public comment; Small System Capacity - VT Bond Bank, Newport Ambulance; other business.

Public Comment: Jamie Budrewicz questioned the Board on their decision to move Selectboard meetings from 5:30pm (first and third Wednesdays of each month) to 4:30pm. Pierre Gervais said he made that motion because meetings were running late. Mr. Budrewicz noted that the earlier time made it more difficult for the public to attend. Heather McElroy said the Board would discuss this during "Other Business."

Green Lantern Solar: Alan Pratt and Weston Martin from Green Lantern Solar spoke to the Board about the solar array on Creamery Street. Green Lantern has obtained a Certificate of Public Good and expects to start generating electricity and credits by end of year. As an off-taker, the Town could realize savings of \$5000 - \$5900 with no expenditure. They provided the Board with a contract. The Board tabled this matter pending review of the contract.

Newport Ambulance: Jeffrey Johansen and Charles Pronto from Newport Ambulance presented the Board with their request for an increase of \$4104 for the 2025 budget. This increase includes dispatching. The request would increase expenditures for this service from \$69,706 to \$73,810. Mr. Johansen noted that Newport Ambulance responded to 143 to date in 2024 and were fully staffed 24 hours/7 days/week. Heather McElroy moved to authorize Noah Bond to sign an agreement, including budget increase, with Newport Ambulance. Seconded by Greg Manning. All in favor; so carried.

Appointment for Town Moderator: Pierre Gervais made a motion to appoint Tom Donnellan as Town Moderator for the November 18, 2024 hearing and for March 2025 Town Meeting. Seconded by Heather McElroy. All in favor; motion carried.

Small Systems Capacity - VT Bond Bank: Mike Strait told the Board that the liners in the reservoirs needed to be replaced. He noted that there is significant leaking in the south plant, and relining could not wait. He asked for authorization to pursue a grant through the Vermont

Bond Bank Small System Capacity & Resilience program. Pierre Gervais moved to authorize Mike Strait to apply for this grant. Seconded by Mike Testut. All in favor; motion carried.

Memorial Park: Noah Bond told the Board that two bushes in Memorial Park were overgrown and obstructing stop sign visibility. He asked if they wanted the bushes to be trimmed or removed. Pierre Gervais asked if this would be covered within the downtown revitalization project. Mike Strait advised that it would. The Board requested Noah Bond to “heavily trim” the bushes.

Forest Parks & Rec Grant: Joel Cope requested authorization to pursue a grant through the Land and Water Conservation Fund to assist with repairs to the tennis courts. Greg Manning moved to authorize Joel Cope to pursue the LWCF grant to update the tennis courts. Seconded by Pierre Gervais. All in favor; motion carried.

Safety Grant: Noah Bond discussed the placement of a lighted crosswalk sign (funded with grant monies). The Board indicated that they wanted it placed at the crosswalk by the Dollar General store, which leads into Pavillion Park.

Board Opinion on North Country Hospital: The Board voiced their support for North Country Hospital continuing to provide ER, in-patient, and related services. Heather McElroy will draft a letter on behalf of the Board, to be signed by the Board and Noah Bond, and sent to North Country Hospital.

Scope Creep Discussion: Noah Bond followed up on the scope creep discussion from the previous month. He indicated that he will conduct a quick survey about tasks they may be asked to do that fall outside of their job descriptions. No action taken.

Throwing Up Roads: Noah Bond advised the Board that two residents on Paquette Street (one of the five suggested for throwing up) were upset with this plan. He cautioned the Board against proceeding with the plan, given the extensive time and cost it entails. Joel Cope noted that it did not seem to meet the “public good” standard. The Board agreed to communicate with residents on the affected streets and seek a right of way to allow plow trucks to turn around.

November Performance Evaluation: Heather McElroy presented a yearly evaluation form for Noah Bond to the Board and requested that they meet in executive session to discuss. Pierre Gervais suggested that the Board put this on the agenda for the next meeting. No action taken.

Gym Use Policy: Noah Bond asked the Board if they would like him to continue pursuing the memorandum of agreement with Brighton Elementary School, allowing for reciprocal use of their space and the Town Hall Gym without charge. The Board indicated that they would like him to continue with the MOU. Noah Bond also informed the Board he was still waiting on a basketball schedule from BES’s Athletic Director in order to coordinate and schedule Town Hall Gym Use.

Budget: Noah Bond presented the Board with a draft version of the 2025 budget. Board members discussed expenditures for the Town Clerk/Treasurer, as well as expenses related to health insurance for employees. No action taken.

Town Manager's Report: Noah Bond updated the Board on the MERP grant. Funds must be dispersed by December 31, 2024. This would provide the Town with up to \$500,000 for energy efficiency updates and improvements. He also informed the Board that the Road Crew is working on several projects, including hauling/spreading gravel to strengthen roads and surfaces, reshaping shoulders to address flood damage, installing marker whips to assist with snow plowing, and preparing for winter.

Additionally, Noah told the Board that he is responsible for "buy-outs" related to the July 2024 flooding. He works with two affected residents to assess the condition of their flooded houses and submit a report to the state. FEMA is finalizing aid for the December 2023 flooding. After meeting with Noah Bond and conducting a final assessment, they will determine financial assistance amounts.

Pay Orders: The Board reviewed and signed the pay orders for the road department expense account and the general expense accounts.

Other Business: Heather McElroy told the board that the change from 5:30pm to 4:30pm meetings were difficult given her work schedule and added that it makes it challenging for community members to attend. Greg Manning concurred, asking the Board to reconsider. Heather McElroy moved to change the meeting time to 5:00pm. Seconded by Pierre Gervais. All in favor; motion carried.

Mike Strait informed the Board that the bid for wastewater treatment facility upgrades came in higher than expected (\$9.3 million), leaving the town approximately \$2 million short for this project.

The Board discussed the Christmas tree in Memorial Park, agreeing that it needed to be trimmed and new lights purchased. Noah Bond agreed to oversee this task.

Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting: There was no motion to approve minutes

Executive Session (Personnel/Contract): Pierre Gervais moved to enter executive session at 7:05pm for updates on the water system. Seconded by Greg Manning. All in favor; motion carried.

Adjourn: