

TOWN OF EGREMONT, MASSACHUSETTS
MEETING OF THE SELECT BOARD
MINUTES

Date: February 15, 2022
Time: 10:00am
Place: Via Zoom Meeting
Egremont

Present in-person were Chairman George McGurn, Vice-Chair Lucinda Fenn-Vermeulen, Board member Mary Brazie. Also present in person were Tom Reynolds and Peg McDonough. Others participating via zoom: Mary McGurn, Marian Faytell, Jim Noe, Eileen Vining, Ronnie Sacco, Juliette Haas, Joe Schneider, Chuck Ogden, Robbie Bogard, Robylon(?)

It was announced that the meeting is video and audio recorded.

MINUTES:

The minutes of the February 1 and February 3 meetings were accepted with minor edits.

COVID-19:

Board of Health Chairman Chuck Ogden has withdrawn his proposal to purchase air purifiers for town offices. Though cases are trending down, the Board of Health has voted to keep its mask directive in place and will reassess at their meeting on February 24, 2022. No changes were made to the current protocols in Town Buildings.

NEW BUSINESS:

The Board voted unanimously to approve expenditures in excess of the Snow & Ice appropriation as allowed by MGL, Chapter 44, Section 31D. Road Superintendent Jim Noe reported that to date the account is overspent by \$3,744, but there are additional invoices outstanding. A lot of salt has been needed for ice control this winter. He reported that salt is cheaper this winter per ton than it was last winter.

The Board talked about how valuable holding zoom meetings has been. There is currently a proposal in front of the legislature to extend the allowance to July 15, 2022 and to make it a permanent change to the Open Meeting Law. The Board will issue a letter to the Governor expressing its support of a permanent change to the Open Meeting Law allowing remote meetings.

OLD BUSINESS:

Buildings and Grounds Superintendent Thomas Reynolds attended to clarify for the Board the need for a new garage for his department and to gauge the support of the Board. Vice-Chair Vermeulen expressed her support but did not vote to include it in the expressions of interest (EOI) for the One Stop for Growth Program because it did not fit with the other grant asks nor did it share a common thread with the other EOI's. Chairman McGurn agreed that the building did not fit with the underlying philosophy of the EOI's filed which had a common theme of supporting economic development. He expressed his support and said that it will be back on the Annual Town Meeting warrant in May of 2022. Selectboard Brazie reiterated her support and clarified that the previous vote at Town Meeting failed to obtain a 2/3 required to borrow, the vote in fact would have passed on a majority vote. She pointed out that the One Stop for Growth program has a component specific to infrastructure and buildings separate from the other components. Vice-Chair Vermeulen asked that building be construction with energy efficiency measures and set up for solar, which is already in the plans. The Selectboard assured Tom that they will

move forward with his building project.

Discussion regarding the Greenagers proposal for upkeep at the Pollinator Garden was deferred to the next meeting.

The Board voted unanimously to approve the amended Buy Recycled Policy drafted by Board of Health Director Juliette Haas. The new policy removed any reference to Highway Department purchases and modernizes the policy as it references emails vs paper letters. The last policy was written in 1998.

Ronnie Sacco reported that the Dog Park Committee is having its first meeting the next day so will have more information for the next meeting. Vice-Chair Vermeulen is working with the Committee on edits to the current signage. Committee member Suzanne Taylor is working on the design for the Committee's requested two pages on the town's web page.

GRANTS:

American Rescue Plan Act:

Fire Chief Joe Schneider presented a request for \$49,829.91 to purchase a truck for his use in his duties as Fire Chief, i.e inspections, responding to calls, etc. The Board voted unanimously to approve.

Road Superintendent Jim Noe confirmed that there is an ARPA place holder for \$55,000 for matching costs for a culvert on Blunt Road that Housatonic Valley Association is applying for a grant under the Small Town Culvert program to replace.

The Board revisited and unanimously voted to rescinded its approval for \$5,000 for Construct to pay for consulting with the Housing Committee. Construct will be contacted to see if the need reimbursement of rental subsidy to Egremont residents, which is what the original request was for.

The Board deferred discussion of the additional components to the Web page as more information is being obtained.

Marian Faytell interrupted the meeting to express her frustration with the lack of action by Fiber Connect to get broadband to Brookvale and Hilltop Roads. Fiber Connect is not answerable to the Town as their contract is with MassBroadband Institute (MBI) who is funding the building out. Ms. Faytell, and her husband Joel Friedman, were referred told to contact MBI.

The Board discussed again the Municipal Fiber Grant program that opens in mid-March. Priority is getting broadband to the Water Plant. Mary McGurn will attempt to get an estimate from Fiber Connect for this work. The Water Department will be informed that the whole job, including the conduit, will be done by Fiber Connect, not piecemeal. Second priority is the digitization of town records, in particular building plans that have to be permanent record in the Building Inspectors Office. There is some question as the appropriateness of the proposal for a public WiFi network in the two villages.

Peg McDonough will follow up on a possible grant for removal of invasive plants in French Park through the Forest Management program.

SELECTBOARD ITEMS:

The Board will hold budget meetings on February 23 and March 9, at 1:30pm, jointly with the Finance Committee.

The Board will meet on February 17 at 1:30pm in closed session for strategy with respect to collective bargaining.

The Board's next regular meeting will be March 1 at 10:00am.

Vice-Chairman Vermeulen will speak with Mr. Sheldon about his concern with a paragraph in the last newsletter.

Vice-Chairman confirmed that the Council on Aging will be on the March 1 agenda to present details of their plans for recognition of citizens and distribution of walking vests.

Meeting adjourned at 11:20am.

Mary Brazie,
Office Administrator

minutes.22/feb15

The recording of the minutes is on record at the Town Hall for 90 days. Anyone who wishes to may obtain a copy or listen to the recording at Town Hall. Attachments are on file at Town Hall.