

Town of Corinth  
Board of Selectmen  
PO Box 461  
Corinth, VT 05039

Minutes of the Select Board Meeting  
August 12, 2019

Attending for the Board: Chris Groschner, Steve Long, Rick Cawley

Catherine Tudish, select board clerk

Others attending: Lee Porter, road commissioner; Joe Blodgett, road foreman; John Haney, Allegra Shumway, Rev. Kelly Ann Donahue, Lori Buik, Winnie Walker, Sarah Polli, Kendall Gendron, Julie Guenther, Lois Jackson, Melanie Del Frari

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.

The minutes of select board meeting of July 8, 2019, special meeting of July 22, 2019, and financial meeting of August 6, 2019 were approved.

Public Concerns

Several citizens of East Corinth attended in order to discuss what might be done in the aftermath of the arrest of Mark Mattiace, resident of 657 Village Road, for possession of methamphetamine and a hand grenade.

Rev. Donahue brought in copies of a Valley News article about the arrest, which notes that Mattiace, a convicted felon, is currently being held without bail due to the serious nature of his offense. In addition, Donahue said she was visited by Dan Mason of the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) on July 10 and that he took pictures of the dilapidated building where Mattiace has been living. She said Mason told her that since the unit is occupied by a family member (The building is owned by Mattiace's mother, who lives out of state.), it is not considered a rental property, according to the State of Vermont.

Sarah Polli, a close neighbor, said Mason stopped at her house also and told her it is extremely rare that the state ever permits holding tanks for a septic system, as is the case with 657 Village Road. Mason told Polli there would have to be changes made, given that holding tanks are not legal.

Lori Buik said she counted seven unregistered, defunct vehicles parked in front of the building. Buik expressed major concerns about the possibility of a fire and vehicles in the way of access for fire fighters. She noted that the school bus stop has finally been moved away from the building out of concern for the safety of students. Groschner said the select board has no authority to deal with parking on private property. He said there will be a legal process following the arrest, and that the town has to wait for it to play out.

Polli noted that the orange safety fence around the front of the building has mostly come down, adding to the safety hazard.

Cawley said that since 2007, the state has legal jurisdiction over septic systems on private property.

Groschner added that the select board had previously passed a dilapidated building ordinance that proved to be mostly unsuccessful.

Buik said she would like to see the town do something to mitigate the situation.

Del Frari asked if there had been an inspection of the building when the dilapidated building ordinance was in place.

Groschner said he looked at the building for a health violation, but did not find one. The state does not give the board the authority to go into a private building and tell people they can't live there, he said.

Groschner added that the fire department has developed a plan to deal with the protection of adjacent buildings.

Blodgett pointed out that the situation existed prior to the ordinance, so it was not legally actionable.

Groschner: "My hope would be in the process of dealing with the crime, there will be a situation where some of the town members will be able to buy the building." He wondered if there is money available in the community to purchase the building. Polli pointed out that a contaminated property could be expensive to own because of the cost of remediation.

Cawley: "It is a legitimate concern."

Buik said she has been told that the fire department cannot get into the space to work in case of a fire.

Polli said she has not had luck contacting the building owner.

Cawley said lack of a zoning ordinance means the town has no authority to intercede.

Groschner suggested going to the planning board and requesting a revote on the zoning ordinance.

Long: "We are all totally sympathetic to the situation, but we do not have the authority to do anything."

Cawley: "Nothing in the legal system will give the town the authority to act."

Groschner noted that if taxes are not paid, the building will go up for tax sale.

Cawley said the bank could seize the property if the mortgage isn't being paid.

Jackson said her understanding is that a property can be confiscated if it has been the site of drug dealing.

Kendall Gendron raised the issue of neighborhood dogs barking from 4 AM to 10 PM every day. When she contacted the town's animal control officer, she was referred to the select board. Gendron said the owner breeds and trains bear dogs, which are kept in a kennel on neighboring property. She has tried contacting the owner, but has not had any satisfaction after three years. Besides the incessant barking, the dogs get out and run onto her property. The owner lives in Bradford, she noted. Groschner said the town constable does not have the authority to ticket anyone. The Orange County sheriff or the state police have authority.

Gendron asked if anyone would follow up with her.

Long pointed out that Michelle Boyer, the animal control officer, does have the authority to issue tickets. Long said the select board would get in touch with her and find out why she hasn't issued a ticket.

Groschner asked Gendron to send the board a written summary of the problem and what she has done so far. She agreed to do so.

#### Road Report/Highway Concerns

Allegra Shumway raised a concern about the number of trees that were cut down on Hutchinson Road by Limlaw in agreement with the town. She said trees on her property were cut down, but she believes they were not affecting the road.

Blodgett said the land owner, Art Ruell, wanted some of the trees in question cut down. Limlaw was already cutting in the area and offered to take the trees down. Blodgett maintained that cutting the trees lining the road was necessary to mitigate the mud problem and the danger posed during snowstorms. The road has been dry since cutting the trees, he said. Blodgett noted that there is still work to be done by the road crew to ditch and replant. He assured Shumway that the affected areas would look much better once this work had been completed.

Groschner asked Blodgett if the landowners had been contacted prior to the tree cutting.

Blodgett said all landowners had been contacted and were aware of the plans for clearing.

Long said he had looked at the proposed project and agreed that it made sense to do Hutchinson Road, along with Taplin Hill Road.

Long added that the take-home message is to make sure the landowners are clear about what is going to happen.

Blodgett proposed getting written, rather than verbal, permission from each landowner in the future.

The select board agreed that would be a better procedure.

Groschner said he would like to have a form made up, in order to have a record of agreement before any trees are cut.

Long said he would work with Blodgett to make up a form.

Blodgett reported that the sand pile is about halfway done, paving on Brook Road has been completed, and ATV ordinance signs have been put up.

Long said the Hood Ice Cream sign at the entrance to East Corinth village needs to be taken down, as it is in violation of the state billboard ordinance.

Blodgett said the dealer the town is purchasing the new truck from would like to get the retiring truck in trade right away. The board agreed to this.

Blodgett said the road crew had a new John Deere grader in the yard to test out, in advance of purchasing a replacement. A benefit would be that the John Deere mechanic lives in town.

#### Fire Station Report

Haney has updated the construction budget. He said there should be as much in the contingency fund as possible and suggested 5%. Haney said that the town needs to work with the architect and the contractor to find reductions to the budget.

Long raised a few items, such as cabinets and countertops, that could be taken out of the budget. Also, painting at \$20,000 could be taken out. Haney asked who would do the painting, noting that it was not an insignificant job.

Cawley suggested contacting the fire department to see how much and what types of work they might be willing to do.

Haney said he will set up a meeting with Jason Yehle, owner of Hazen Hill Construction, and architect Christopher Smith to see what other items might be taken out of the budget.

#### Cemetery Commission/Green Burial

The select board tabled this discussion for a future meeting.

#### Other Business

Groschner presented preliminary drawings by architect Mike Curtis for a renovation of the Town Hall's south entrance.

The select board will proceed with obtaining construction estimates and will plan to add the item to the warning for next town meeting.

Following inspection of emergency lighting and fire extinguishers, the meeting adjourned at 9:20PM.