

Unapproved Minutes of Selectboard Meeting
Tuesday August 1, 2023

Attending for the board: Nick Kramer, Carl Demrow, and Holly Groschner. Anne Rosten Selectboard Clerk. Lee Porter, Road Commissioner; Joe Blodgett, Road Foreman; Norm Collette, Town Hall Facilities Manager; Linda Buermeyer, reporter for the Journal Opinion; Dick Kelley, town treasurer; Kelly Ann Donahue, town lister; Kerry DeWolfe, chair of the Planning Commission; Jeff and Sandy Spiegel from the Corinth Community Coalition; Katherine Lea, town building safety officer; Bob Fortunati, and Earl Kooperkamp. Attending via Zoom: Gary Apfel, Carol Freeman, Dina DuBois, and Bob Harnish and Norman Cohen from the state Declaration of Inclusion committee.

Board chair Nick Kramer called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

Approval of minutes of regular meeting of July 5, 2023 and financial meeting of July 10, 2023

Holly Groschner made a motion to approve the minutes of the regular selectboard meeting of July 5, 2023 and the financial meeting of July 10, 2023. Demrow seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Public concerns

Norm Collette noticed the pile of debris at the end of South America Road across from the Meadow Meeting House. Porter said he has tried to contact the landowner. Groschner volunteered to draft a letter from the selectboard asking the landowner to remove the debris.

Road Commissioner's report / Hwy. concerns / FEMA update

Porter brought the new dump stickers for Treasurer Kelley to mail out with the tax bills. Foreman Blodgett stated that the most urgent road damages caused by the July 10th storm have been fixed with more work to be done. There are several big jobs for which Blodgett anticipates submitting an application to FEMA for reimbursement. Although the culvert on Joe Lord Road has been fixed, more work needs to be done there to shore it up. The road crew is also working with the Topsham road crew on Claflin Road near Waits River as the bridge access to Rt 25 has been damaged. Blodgett said the state will be responsible for some of the cost but the town will pay the bulk. He asked the board to sign a contract for guardrails from the VT Servicing and Recreational Surfacing and Fencing Dept. (VSRSF) Demrow made a motion to approve the selectboard to sign the contract from VSRSF for the guardrails. Groschner seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Cemetery commission member Collette informed Blodgett of the storm damage to the different cemeteries in town. Blodgett stated he would connect with Collette to review the damage. He told the board that the bigger jobs will have to be put out for bid after they meet with a FEMA representative.

Declaration of inclusion

Norman Cohen read the Declaration of Inclusion and stated that 116 VT towns have adopted it so far which is 70% of Vermont's population. Bob Harnish said that the state's population is aging and more younger people are needed to move here and raise families. Groschner made a motion for the selectboard to adopt the declaration as written. Demrow seconded but thought that in addition to the board adopting the resolution the whole town should have a chance to review and discuss it. He also reminded everyone that the town officially adopted a declaration against racism back in 2020. Earl Kooperkamp offered to get a petition going to have it on the warning for next year's town meeting. The board then voted and the motion passed unanimously.

Presentation: proposed Unsafe Building Ordinance revision / Corinth Planning Commission & Corinth Community Coalition

Kerry DeWolfe went over the revisions to the Unsafe Building Ordinance that the Planning Commission drafted. She stressed the need for the town to have more power to take action on violators. Fines should be raised much higher than the existing \$10 to at least \$100 a day after landowners are duly warned and given a chance to correct the violations. The Planning Commission and Corinth Community Coalition have been working on revisions to the ordinance. DeWolfe stated the need to draft a revised ordinance in a more concise, clear, and readable language for anyone to understand.

The process for violations should be stated as to dates, actions, etc. Building Safety Officer Katharine Lea asked that a copy be sent to her to review. She felt that determination of a property's status with regards to the ordinance should not fall to a single individual, and suggested that the authority be shared between the building safety officer and the fire chief or a designee. Community Coalition Chair Spiegel said the coalition made some recommendations and still has questions regarding the draft submitted by the planning commission. Demrow thanked the commissions for their hard work and stressed the need for a broader level of communication between the selectboard, Community Coalition, Planning Commission, Building Safety Officer, fire chief, and the state fire marshal. Groschner stated that she has a background in land use law and is familiar with the public process. Kramer agreed that a point person from each commission should be appointed to work together and come up with a new draft for the ordinance. Groschner suggested setting a time limit and having a revised draft from the two commissions at next month's meeting. The goal is a revised proposed ordinance by October.

Corinth Quarterly Newsletter - request from Corinth Community Coalition

Spiegel shared a proposal from the Corinth Community Coalition to restart publication of the Corinth Community Newsletter. The Coalition was offering to pay an individual to compile the newsletter, but was looking for the Town to pay for postage. Kramer asked whether the Coalition had an estimated cost for publication. Spiegel indicated that they did not. Kramer asked who would distribute and who would submit information? He stated that the former town clerk would invite the different committees to submit information. Groschner asked about having it on the town website. Spiegel felt the issue should be brought up at the next town meeting. Bob Fortunati said he would rather have a paper copy than read it online and Dina DuBois felt the same. Collette said the newsletter was valuable in getting out news from the various commissions, church and school functions, road crew news, meetings, town events, et.al. More discussion is needed. Demrow suggested making an appropriation request to the budget committee which will meet in a few months.

Corinth Law Enforcement Study Committee recommendations

The Law Enforcement committee, after having two meetings and conducting research sent the selectboard three proposals:

1. Not have a contract with Orange County Sheriff Dept.(OCSD) and rely on the state police who are not close by.
2. Increase compensation for a Constable to \$30 per hour plus reimbursement for travel and other expenses.
3. Advertise and hire a police officer.

Kramer commented that since the time the study committee submitted their recommendations, the town's constable had resigned. Demrow felt that the town did not budget enough funds for town police protection and even the originally proposed \$13,000 was not enough. If the town signs a contract with OCSD they would patrol Monday through Friday, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM leaving Corinth without a law enforcement presence nights and weekends. Groschner contacted the Hartford VT police chief whose force is covering five towns. He gave her some recommendations for the board to consider. One is for community engagement with police and for a candidate to intern with a local police dept. Groschner suggested writing up a job description. Kramer said that the issue was one the board was actively working on, and that the discussion will be continued.

Town Hall updates

Collette said that Levaggi's bid will not work for the removal of the meeting room floor material and he would not dispose of the waste. He recommended going with Catamount Environmental's bid for an extra \$50 and they will dispose of the waste. Demrow made a motion to contract with Catamount to remove the hazardous flooring. Groschner seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Other business that comes before the board

Treasurer Kelley received the final numbers from the listers on Monday to finalize the tax rate. The board and treasurer went over all the numbers for residential, nonresidential, homestead, Common Level of Appraisal (CLA) as well as property exemptions. Demrow made a motion to set the FY24 tax rate at 0.7056; up 2.36% from FY23. Kramer commented that although any increase is unfortunate, 2.36% did not seem unreasonable given the 8-9% inflationary environment over the past several years. Groschner seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Lister Donahue told the board that she will wrap up a meeting with the film company after inspecting the East Corinth Congregational Church. Kramer said he is waiting for Blodgett's confirmation on the East Corinth bridge inspection.

Gary Apfel offered to post more than agendas on the LRN such as ordinances, documents, etc. Kramer expressed his appreciation to Gary for his offer.

Correspondence

The board sent out three certified letters to landowners concerning the August 4th meeting to take place regarding the discontinuance request for town trail 13. Two letters were "Returned to Sender" but Kramer indicated that he had been able to make contact with both owners by email.

The trail list and date for the Norumbega and Montshire Trail Riders event was read and acknowledged for Sunday September 9th, 2023.

Executive session

Groschner made a motion for the board to go into executive session. Demrow seconded and the motion passed unanimously. The board entered executive session at 9:33pm and exited executive session at 9:45pm. The board took no action.

Groschner made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Demrow, and passed unanimously at 9:46pm.