

TOWN OF ORANGE

SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES

December 9th, 2024

The Meeting of the Town of Orange Selectboard was called to order in person by Selectboard Chair Steve Simpson at 6:14pm in the Town Hall at Orange, Vermont. In attendance were: Selectboard Members Steve Simpson, Wayne Symonds, and Kevin Wilson. Other Town Staff present were Town Clerk Chelsea Magwire and Lister/Delinquent Tax Collector John McNeil. Members of the Public present were Tim Stone, Sheila Stone, Lisa Woodworth, Josh Woodworth, Ginny Raboin, Michael Raboin, Jr., Eric Holmgren, Gary Eggleston, Jim Wild, Ernie Wilson, and Sam Lash, representing Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission.

Approve SB Minutes

SB Vice-Chair Wilson moved to approve the Selectboard Minutes, both Regular and Special, for 11/25/2024, and the Special Selectboard Minutes for 12/04/2024.

* Discussion among residents regarding the posting of the 12/4/2024 Special Selectboard Meeting Agenda included concerns that the agenda did not appear on the website and that residents who had requested agendas in writing had not received them.

* Discussion occurred between residents and the Board regarding the appointment of a Town Treasurer without the involvement of residents of the Town.

Approve Agenda

- A. SB Vice-Chair Wilson requested to add an item thanking the gentleman who painted the Town Hall sign. He stated that he would like to make a motion to formally thank him and decide where the sign should be placed.
- B. SB Member Symonds stated that the Recreation Committee was not going to be on the agenda for this meeting to discuss policy revisions.
 - a. This item is to be moved to the 12/23/2024 Selectboard Meeting, after the Rec. Committee meets on 12/18/2024.

Guest, Sam Lash, Major MERP Grant and How it Works

- A. SB Chair Simpson shared that the Town was awarded approximately \$406,000.
 - a. These funds are to go toward three major places that were identified through the scoping study: the Town Hall, the Town Clerk's Office, and the Town Garage.
- B. Sam Lash presented briefly on the Grant, giving an overview of the function of Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission (CVRPC) and how the Grant works.
 - a. Orange is one of only seven other towns in the Region which received funding from this competitive Grant.
- C. Ms. Lash answered questions from members of the Board, including:
 - a. If a roof needs to be insulated and capped, will the town need to front the money?

- i. The Town should work closely with General Services to ensure expedient receipt of funding as work gets started.
- b. Does the Grant provide reimbursement for Project Management services?
 - i. The Grant provides for up to 10% to be used on Project Management.
- c. Does funding need to be split equally between the three buildings?
 - i. Funding can be split however necessary, although major plan changes should be communicated with General Services.

Major MERP Grant Approval

SB Vice-Chair Wilson moved to approve the MERP Grant. SB Member Symonds seconded.

Road Commissioner's Report

- A. Riddel Pond Culvert Project, completion
 - a. SB Vice-Chair Wilson shared that the culvert is completed, and the road is open.
 - b. The Town spent \$112,286.13 on the project, whereas a box culvert would have cost approximately \$280,000.
- B. SB Vice-Chair Wilson stated that he received a complaint regarding vehicles blocking George Street during a snowstorm.
 - a. Residents shared that this is a recurrent issue. Wilson will look into existing policy regarding this issue.
- C. Wilson shared that he had not checked on the trees to be cut on both Bennett's Mill and Trickle Brook Road, but will follow up.
 - a. SB Chair Simpson stated that per the Grant providing funds for the cutting, this will need to be completed by the end of the month.
- D. Wilson stated that the Town had brought in several loads of sand totaling approximately \$14,590.17.

Town Clerk Report

- A. Town Clerk Magwire shared that she has begun taking inventory of the vault and has contacted the State Archives (VSARA) for guidance on a retention schedule.
- B. The Board of Abatement will hear requests for tax abatement on December 16th, 2024, at 5:30pm.
- C. Due to a State fee increase, Dog Licenses will increase by \$3.00.
 - a. SB Member Symonds requested the Clerk to bring a new rate sheet to the December 23rd meeting.

VT State Ethics Commission and Requirements

- A. Per Act 171, the Town is required to appoint someone as a liaison, to serve as a point of contact for communication with the State Ethics Commission. SB Chair Simpson proposed appointing Town Clerk Magwire as said liaison.

SB Member Symonds moved to appoint the Town Clerk. SB Chair Simpson seconded.

Warrants/Payroll

SB Member Symonds moved to approve payroll warrants for 11/30/2024 and 12/7/2024. SB Vice-Chair Wilson seconded.

SB Member Symonds moved to approve the Accounts Payable warrant for 12/09/2024, with the exception of the warrant for Kevin Wilson for \$26.49. SB Chair Simpson seconded.

SB Member Symonds moved to approve the warrant for Kevin Wilson for \$26.49. SB Chair Simpson seconded.

Finance Report

* SB Chair Simpson presented a report of the last three years (FY22-FY24) for review, and asked the Board if the format presented was acceptable to work from. The Board suggested changes to allow for greater functionality of the worksheet.

Establish Del. Tax Policy, 2nd Reading

- A. Eric Holmgren expressed opposition to creating a written policy. He later inquired if delinquent taxes are more prevalent than in previous years.
 - a. Delinquent Tax Collector McNeil stated that there are few properties currently being considered for Tax Sale and shared that Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) recommends a formal policy be drafted by the Selectboard before beginning the Tax Sale process.
- B. Lisa Woodworth requested clarification on the language in point 4 and about a form letter to be used (point 7c). She also inquired as to what percent of delinquent taxes collected is paid to the Delinquent Tax Collector, and if there are currently any properties in Orange up for Tax Sale.
 - a. John McNeil shared that he receives 8% after taxpayers miss the November 15th payment, but no interest on top of that.
 - b. Mr. McNeil stated that there are currently no properties up for Tax Sale, but some are close due to the length of time taxes overdue and a lack of responsiveness.
- C. Ms. Woodworth cautioned the Board regarding the timeliness of creating a Policy which would cause more properties to be considered for Tax Sale.
 - a. Members of the Board and the Delinquent Tax Collector clarified that there are opportunities to create a payment plan or to request tax abatement.
- D. Tim Stone inquired about current tax collection practices.
 - a. Mr. McNeil stated that he sends letters in December after the missed November 15th payment.
- E. Jim Wild inquired as to how the funds are split when a property goes to tax sale. He later inquired if the payer would have to go through the process outlined in the Policy each year, and if the Policy holds up legally.
 - a. Mr. McNeil clarified that the balance goes to the property owner, the Town only retains what it is owed, which is principal, interest, penalty, and 15% for legal fees. He also explained that the property owner has a year to redeem their debt to

whoever bought it at auction through the Town.

- b. Mr. McNeil stated that the Policy assumes that residents will be paying current taxes along with a payment plan. He also shared that the Policy is based in State Statute.
- F. SB Vice-Chair Wilson shared that when land is put up for Tax Sale, the owner is “out” the difference between the value of the property and the amount of taxes due.
- G. Ginny Raboin expressed that language in the Policy could use clarification before approval. General discussion between residents and the Board worked to clarify some of the language in question.
- H. General discussion between residents and the Board worked to discuss other methods of communicating the proposed Policy and to determine if it should be brought to Town Meeting.
- I. The Board announced that they will bring the Policy to a third hearing at the December 23rd Selectboard Meeting.

Public Comment

- * Jim Wild inquired about the funding for the new gazebo and the status of the roof.
- * Three residents requested to be emailed a copy of the budget spreadsheet.
- * General discussion regarding the potential of a lawsuit against the Town brought by a former employee led to reiteration by SB Chair Simpson that there currently is no lawsuit against the Town.
- * Eric Holmgren read to the Board 24 V.S.A. § 901(b) and expressed concerns regarding Open Meeting Law. General discussion occurred between the Board and the residents in attendance pertaining to this.
- * Ginny Raboin inquired about the logistics of the Town Treasurer position.
- * Tim Stone inquired as to the status of the budget item for legal fees for FY24. He also provided feedback on the grading of Cutler Corner Road.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:41pm by motion of SB Vice-Chair Wilson, seconded by SB Member Symonds.

Respectfully submitted,
Chelsea E. Magwire, Town Clerk