

Grand Isle Select Board
Minutes of the Meeting for
Monday, December 20th, 2021 at 6:00pm at Grand Isle Town Office and via Zoom

I. CALL TO ORDER

Board Members Present: Jeff Parizo – Chair; AnnaMarie DeMars – Co-Chair; Ron Bushway; Adam White; Eric Godin

Community Members Present: Josie Leavitt; Emily Clark; Joe Longo; Melissa Boutin; Lucille Campbell; Elise Whittemore; Sean Kio; Colleen Bushway; Scott Brown; Kristina Botala; Colleen Bushway; Tim Routh

Board Members to Amend Agenda for Matters not Listed:

Fiberworx moved up to guests – Jeff
DRB Members Terms – New Business
Planning Commission and ZAO terms – New business

II. GUEST OPEN COMMENT

Scott Brown would like to add '6 Sloop Update' to Old Business

Sean Kio – Fiberworx: Sean Kio from Northwest Fiber Worx came to the meeting and gave a presentation on what his organization is doing. Sean says that their organization is working to provide fiber optic telecommunication infrastructure to communities around Vermont. Sean says that they collaborate heavily with the State, and there is no cost to the town to join. Sean says that as of now, 30% of households do not have adequate connectivity. Sean says that his organization's goal is to serve every household with less than 100mbps up and 100mbps down for bandwidth. Sean says that they are hoping to start construction on infrastructure in 2022. Sean says that his organization is all Vermont based and hopes that their work will help stimulate competition in the broadband market in Northwestern Vermont. Sean says that his organization is using fiber optics because fiber doesn't degrade, and the infrastructure rarely if ever has to be replaced, and provides superior speeds to typical coaxial connections. Sean says that the infrastructure Fiberworx installs would be open access, meaning there would hopefully be multiple providers using the infrastructure to provide robust competition in the community, hopefully driving down prices. Adam White asks when rollout would happen in Grand Isle County. Sean says there is still uncertainty as to the timeline, and that design is still in the works. Sean expects that several projects will be ongoing at the same time. Sean says Fiberworx plan is to have everything implemented in 4-6 years. Adam asks what Fiberworx would need from the town. Sean says that Fiberworx has no plans to ask municipalities for financial support, as all their funding is coming from federal and state dollars. Emily Clark asks Sean to speak to the issue of the state is disseminating all of it's broadband dollars to communities through CUD's like Fiberworx.

III. REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 6TH MEETING

Item is tabled until next meeting

IV. HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT/BUILDINGS FACILITIES MANAGER UPDATE

Ron Bushway says employee Mike Gover was injured on the job, but was patched up and still working. Ron goes on to say that patching has been completed on Quaker Rd. Ron says during the wind storm last Saturday, there were 3 roads closed due to trees being down. Ron says that he got a call from Vermont Electric Co-op, and they will be coming up to take the lines off the old garage when they have time. Ron says that the town does not have a spare circulator motor for the furnace at the Annex, and suggests that due to the difficulty in getting parts, the town should consider ordering one now. Ron also says that the furnace at the Annex should have glycol in it, especially considering that the building is unoccupied at this point. Jeff asks how many circulators are in the Annex. Ron says he believes there are two, and they are older models, so they might be hard to find. Ron says that the Board should have quote for the services at the next meeting. Ron says that he has met with Jennifer Morway, who is speaking with Nadeau's Daycare about the possibility of moving a location into the Annex. Ron says that he will let Jennifer reach out to the Select Board if they would like to move forward. Josie Leavitt asks if there are multiple bids put out for the furnace parts. Adam says that the bid process kicks in at \$10,000, and there is a list of providers that Ron uses for basic maintenance.

V. NEW BUSINESS

Mask Mandate Discussion: Adam White asks if the public has anything they would like to say on the issue. Josie Leavitt said she raised the issue because she wanted to know how the townspeople field. Josie says that she has noticed an increased number of people not wearing masks when she goes shopping, and that per VTDigger, Grand Isle County is at the highest risk level for spread. Adam says that he has thought long and hard about this issue, and that he feels that he thinks it should be up to the local businesses, as well as individuals to decide to mandate masks. Adam says that he noticed lots of unmasked people in town when he was shopping, and noted that in Williston, you can be fined \$50 for not wearing your mast. Adam says that the problem is enforcement. The town of Grand Isle does not have anyone who could be tasked with enforcing a mask mandate. Josie says that as a resident, she chooses to shop elsewhere because there is no mask mandate and she has a pre-existing condition. Josie says she wonders if we pushed a little harder, if we could keep our residents a little safer. Ron says that he spoke to the owner of a local shop and was told that if the town passed a mask mandate, they would have to provide someone to enforce the issue, because they would not force customers to wear a mask. Emily Clark voices concern about the owners and employees of the business being blamed for mask mandates, and says it's preferable to have the governing body as the responsible entity. Emily says that she hopes this conversation continues as the situation develops. Jeff says that we will revisit the issue on the second Monday of the month. Josie asks if there is going to be a vote. The Board indicates they are not comfortable changing things from the way they are

now, and it is decided to discuss the issue at the second meeting of the month moving forward.

Scribe Position: Select Board Scribe Eric Godin says that recently his job workload has increased and he has been having difficulty getting minutes done by the deadline. Eric asks if there are any community members available who would be willing to take over the position. Eric says that in the absence of any letters of interest, he will continue to perform the duties as scribe to the best of his ability. Jeff asks if Eric can get the position advertised in the Islander, on Front Porch Forum and on the town website. Adam says that the pay rate should be advertised. Eric says that the pay rate is currently \$5,000 per year. Jeff says that he feels the position should be administrative in nature, performing the contacts to VLCT and Northwest Regional and organize all the footwork and bring it to the Board for meetings. Jeff notes that South Hero has someone in that sort of position and it would be very helpful, as all the Board members work regular jobs in addition to Select Board duties.

ZAO Nomination – Planning Commission: Emily Clark says that the Planning Commission recommends that Scott Brown be re-appointed as the town’s Zoning Administrator. Emily says that she also wanted to update the Board on the ARPA process and to explore the designation of a ‘village’ designation for the town of Grand Isle. Emily says that Planning is deploying a survey to engage the community in regards to priorities regarding the use of ARPA funds. Emily goes on to say that she thinks the town should explore the possibility of a ‘village’ designation for the town of Grand Isle, saying that a rep from Northwest Regional Planning had suggested it at a meeting. Emily says that there are virtually no downsides to the designation and significant benefits. Emily says that unallocated funds at the state level, and likely infrastructure money that will be coming in are going to be focused on supporting infrastructure within village centers, and we could miss out on these funds if we don’t get this designation. Emily says that the Select Board will need to eventually vote on the idea of a village designation. Jeff says that there are 5 Mondays in January, and there should be a joint meeting of the Select Board and Planning to discuss the issue. Emily and the rest of the Select Board agree. ***Ron Bushway moves to appoint Scott Brown as the Zoning Administrative Officer for the Town of Grand Isle, with a term beginning January 1st, 2022 and expire on December 31st, 2024. AnnaMarie DeMars seconds. No further discussion. Jeff calls the vote, which passes unanimously.***

Cannabis Town Meeting Ballot Item: Adam White says that this item has been on the Planning Commission’s radar for a while, but has been tabled. Adam says that he reached out to an attorney with VLCT for more information and some questions regarding retail cannabis. Adam says that townspeople have to vote to opt-in to allow individuals to sell cannabis. Cannabis retailers will be regulated at the state level. The only other option is for the town to take no action, which means cannabis sales will remain outlawed in the town. Eric Godin asks if there is any retail framework for retail sales. Adam says that there is a framework being developed by the state to regulate

retailers. Adam notes that Alburgh and South Hero's voters have opted in to retail cannabis sales. Adam says he feels that it's time to bring it to the voters and let them make the decision on the issue. Jeff asks if there is wording for the ballot item. Adam says that VLCT has provided wording for a ballot item. AnnaMarie asks if our state representatives would be able to speak to the issue at town meeting. Emily Clark says that Planning's only hesitation is that at this point, there is no guidance as to what would be approved. Emily says that the whole process was kind of done in a rush, but the vote can be taken at any time. Emily goes on to say she believes that the town will be able to institute more stringent rules than the state does if desired. **Adam White moves to be put on the March 2022 town meeting ballot the item 'Shall the town authorize cannabis retailers in town, pursuant to 7 VSA subsection 8-63. AnnaMarie seconds.** Tim Routh says that as a father of two children, he asks if there is any way to test if someone is under the influence of marijuana while behind the wheel. Tim says that he is concerned that the community is put at risk because we don't have a way to determine if someone is under the influence. Eric Godin says that he has read some materials that indicate that currently there is no reliable way to test for intoxication for cannabis. Eric goes on to say that there is a saliva-based test being developed, but the technology is still in it's infancy. Eric says that there are a lot of obstacles when it comes to testing for cannabis, as the drug stays in users systems for up to 30 days, so a positive drug screen doesn't necessarily indicate the user was under the influence at a given time. Josie Leavitt asks if there is any tax gain for the town of Grand Isle if there were to be retail cannabis sales. Eric says he doesn't think there's any solid information at this point. Adam said that there would likely be licensing fees and permits that the town would receive. Jeff points out that he doesn't believe that towns get any tax money from liquor sales through the state, and says that cannabis will likely be handled the same way. **No further discussion. Jeff calls the vote, which passes unanimously.**

DRB Member terms: Jeff Parizo says that he has 3 letters of interest for the DRB seats whose terms are up this year. Joseph Steffen for a 1-year term, and Joe Longo and Josie Leavitt as alternates, both for a 1-year term. **Jeff Parizo moves to approve all three nominations for the DRB. Ron Bushway seconds. No further discussion. Jeff calls the vote, which passes unanimously.**

Planning Commission terms: Jeff Parizo says that there are 2 members whose terms are up and being reappointed. Both Howard Demars and Shawn Mercy are nominated for 2-year terms, expiring December 31st, 2023. **Jeff Parizo moves to approve both nominations for the planning commission. Adam White seconds. No further discussion. The board votes unanimously for Shawn Mercy, and passes 4-0 for Howard Demars, with AnnaMarie abstaining.**

VI. OLD BUSINESS

Curb Cut – 1 Town Line Rd: Ron Bushway says that according to the information that he received, the permit had already been paid for. Ron says that he has a copy of the check dated November 18th. **Ron Bushway moves to approve the curb cut permit for**

Adrianna Kirby at 1 Town Line Rd. Eric Godin seconds. No further discussion. Jeff calls the vote, which passes unanimously.

6 Sloop Rd Update: Scott Brown says that he visited the property last week and a substantial amount, Scott estimates about 40% of the debris has been removed. Scott says that the town attorney has filed the official complaint with environmental court. Scott says that he has met with the property owner, and was informed that the tenants lease has expired and that he has begun eviction proceedings. Scott indicates the property owner indicated he wants to finish the cleanup and sell the property.

Budgets: Jeff says we have received updated highway and library budgets.

Library: Colleen Bushway says that the library is working very hard to keep their operating budget level funded. Colleen says some of the money has been moved around, such as E-books being taken out, as they have no cost and reallocating that money. Colleen says they will be recommending the 3% COLA raise the town implemented for the librarian. Jeff notes that they are asking for \$11,000 less due to their income offsets. Colleen notes that they are not only answerable to the town, and that they have to do annual reports to the state every year showing their expenses and incomes. ***Jeff Parizo moves to approve the library's request of \$65,797 for the town appropriations to be raised by taxes to operate the library from July 1st 2022 to June 30th, 2023. Eric Godin seconds. No further discussion. Jeff calls the vote, which passes unanimously.***

Highway Department: Ron Bushway says the Vermont state aid has been added to the budget, and that the blacktop has been increased by \$10,000. Ron also notes that for the first time, the budget is reflecting the fish hatchery money that comes in every year. Ron says that the payment for the Kubota tractor was removed, as previously discussed. Ron says that the total on hand in the highway fund would be \$123,817. Ron says that they did get a quote on a new truck, and the cost would be \$230,000. Ron says that the Highway Department will be asking the Select Board to increase the capitol equipment fund from \$30,000 to \$50,000. Ron points out that the dump truck that is being considered for replacement would have a trade in value of \$70,000 right now, but that the town needs it for the winter. Ron says that even if a new truck was ordered today, it wouldn't be delivered for over a year. Melissa asks if the plan is to put money aside to purchase a truck outright, or to put a large chunk down and finance the rest. Melissa points out that the last truck was financed for 7 years. Melissa asks what kind of timeframe the truck would be needed. Jeff points out that because of the \$75,000 bond payment for the new garage being included in the highway budget, the total numbers for the highway look inflated. There is discussion about how the individual budgets can be voted down and the bond payments have already been approved by the voters and MUST be paid and can't be voted down. Melissa says there isn't a good answer, as the items can't simply be moved into their own line item. Melissa says that when you ask the voters to put money into a reserve, you only vote on it once. Melissa goes on to say that it has to be included in the budget, but they aren't voted on individually, and that the voted-on amount should be the budget, less the amount of the

bond payments. Adam asks what should be done about the \$25,000 truck payment in the budget. There is further discussion about the capitol equipment fund, and whether an increase would be necessary. Ron points out that the town is growing, and says it might be advisable to keep the older truck as a backup against the need for a third plow driver or one of the other trucks breaking down. Ron says that the town is going to need new equipment and he feels that the town should have a chunk of money set aside to prepare for these needs. The Board determines to increase the capitol equipment fund to \$50,000 and keep the truck the payment in the budget as well, and the voters can decide whether to approve it or not. **Adam White moves to approve the fiscal year 2023 budget for the Highway Department for \$461,000. Eric Godin seconds. No further discussion. Jeff calls the vote, which passes unanimously.**

Listers: Adam White says that the listers budget is still in the works, and they are making some changes. Joe Longo says that the budget has been updated, but they were waiting on a decision from the Select Board on town wide appraisal. Adam says that when the last appraisal happened, it cost \$200,000. Melissa says that the number was inflated due to legal challenges during the process. Adam says that the appraisal fund is sitting at \$130,000, and asks what an appraisal will cost. Joe says that South Hero was paying \$22,000 per year for 5 years to reappraise the town. Adam says that at that rate, the town already has enough for a reappraisal. Joe Longo agrees. Adam asks if the current level of \$10,000 per year for reappraisal is adequate. Joe suggests adding another \$5,000 per year. Adam says that he will reach out to Sue Lawrence about the issue and see what she has to say. It is determined that the Lister's budget, the DRB budget, the fire department and the general town budget were left. Jeff says we will revisit those at the next meeting.

Personnel Policy – Additional Cost of Review: Jeff says that the town's cost for the review of the documents was going to be \$750. Jeff says that once we approve the payment, VLCT will put the document together. **Jeff Parizo moves to approve the payment of \$750 from the general fund for review of the town's personnel policy. Eric Godin seconds.** Adam White notes that there needs to be further discussion about the unrestricted general fund to look at the additional costs of an unanticipated audit and legal fees. Jeff notes that the attorney fees have gone down in the last few months. **No further discussion. Jeff calls the vote, which passes unanimously.**

VII. REVIEW AND APPROVE WARRANTS

Ron Bushway asks about an item for #2 fuel from Rowley Fuels for \$4,199, and says he thinks it should be for the Annex. It is determined that this is for the diesel fuel. Melissa and Ron say that Rowley fuels need to fix the address, as it is incorrect on the bill. **Eric Godin moves to have Chair Jeff Parizo sign the warrants. Ron Bushway seconds. No further discussion. Jeff calls the vote, which passes unanimously.**

VIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION – ZAO CONTRACT: Jeff Parizo asks if the Board wants to go into executive session. Eric Godin says he doesn't feel they need to go into executive session, as they are discussing a publicly available pay rate. Adam White says that the

ZAO is currently making just less than \$21,000 per year, and he is requesting \$26,000, which is roughly a 20% increase. Adam notes that this raise is included in his budget, and asks how this relates to the ongoing pay scale discussion. Adam voices his concern that this could set a precedent for employees demanding pay rate increases. Ron says that there are some towns that pay more than Grand Isle, and some that pay less. Ron says that based on what other towns pay, and the work that is done, he doesn't have a problem with approving the increase. Eric agrees, saying that the last few weeks have shown the position to have a degree of stress involved. Melissa Boutin points out that the ZAO reaps no benefits from his position, as it's part time, and he takes no insurance or retirement. It is agreed that Scott has done an excellent job in the position and has handled some sensitive situations. Adam notes that the zoning budget was altered to show the purchase of the large document scanner, rather than a lease, as it was determined to be less expensive. ***Eric Godin moves to approve the 2023 zoning budget for \$35,414. AnnaMarie DeMars seconds. No further discussion. Jeff calls the vote, which passes unanimously.***

IX. ADJOURNMENT

AnnaMarie DeMars moves to adjourn the meeting at 8:01pm. Ron Bushway seconds. No further discussion. Jeff calls the vote, which passes unanimously.

Select Board Scribe: _____
Eric Godin

Select Board Chair: _____
Jeff Parizo