

Grand Isle Select Board Special Meeting Minutes for August 26th, 2022 06:00 PM

I. CALL TO ORDER

Board Members Present: Josie Leavitt (vice chair), Couper Shaw, Jeff Parizo, Eric Godin

Community Members Present: Michael Inners, Trever Boutin, Todd Boutin, Melissa Boutin, Janine Banks, Joe Longo, Jean Prouty, Rachael Griggs, Kristina Botala

Board Members to Amend Agenda for Matters Not Listed: None

II. GUEST OPEN COMMENT None

III. GUESTS

Larrow Dog Matter

Todd: Historically, there has been a place to bring at large dogs that have been captured. There have been instances recently where dog(s) have either been dropped off or picked up and left at Todd's house. Todd is asking the selectboard to find a place that these dogs can be brought (such as a vet) after being caught. He does not want the dogs to stay at his house. He is concerned about transmission of mites, mange, and fleas to his pets. Eric mentioned if the dog is aggressive, then it is also a safety issue. Josie asked if anyone has spoken to the Milton Vet's office (Sleepy Dog Kennels). Eric responded that when this issue was addressed years ago, and he is pretty sure Sleepy Dog Kennels wanted nothing to do with vicious dogs. He said it wouldn't hurt to call and check, but he knows that previously calls were made to kennels within a 30-mile radius. Todd responded that the vicious dog was years ago and the dogs they have helped recently are not vicious dogs. Josie asked if there was a place to keep dogs before. Todd responded that there were previously 3 places that dogs could be taken to. Josie asked if the police department would take dogs and keep them in a holding cell. Eric responded that he didn't think that it would be feasible, and Josie contributed that the sheriff dept. hours might not be conducive to keeping dogs.

Todd brought up the reoccurring nuisance escaping dogs, stating that prior to the 2 dogs that are getting loose now, the dog owner's father had a dog that was frequently loose. One of the dogs currently frequently at large had a litter of puppies, there are now 2 puppies that are getting loose from the litter for a total of 4 nuisance dogs. Todd has asked the dog owners not to enter private property looking for their dogs. Josie said she does applaud the dog owners for trying to get their dogs back, but doesn't feel they approached it in the correct way.

Trever: Trever has gone with Todd numerous times to bring the Larrow dogs back to their home when Todd was constable. This summer beginning in June the dogs were loose on Route 2, and it has continued to be a problem at least weekly. In 2 months, Trever has had 14 instances where someone had either noticed the dogs on their personal property or where he

had to pick them up. Trever submitted a list of property owners, dates, and where the dogs were found to the select board. Josie stated that she has received 3 phone calls this week regarding these dogs.

Todd: if these dogs cause an accident or someone gets hurt, it will be the owner's fault. Eric responded that there will be scrutiny on the select board if something happens as well. Josie asked Trever if he has received his ticket book from the Judiciary. Trever responded yes. Josie asked if this now allows him to write a fine that will now go through the judicial system and to explain the process. Trever responded that he is now able to write out a ticket for an offence and proceed 'that way with it'. He doesn't see how this will end this issue.

Todd stated that this was discussed when he was constable, and wanted to know if a decision had been made on what the fines should be for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd offenses. Jeff mentioned Trever would have to be available to go to court Thursdays. Jeff had the animal control ordinance (approved in 2017) that states 1st offense: \$100.00-150.00, with a waiver fine of \$50.00, for the 2nd offense: \$150.00-250.00, with a waiver fine of \$150.00, for the 3rd and subsequent offenses: \$250.00-500.00. Michael Inners provided that the waiver fine is when the dog owner doesn't want to contest the fine and just wants to pay it. Josie asked what backs the fines up, Jeff responded a lien on the dog owner's property. Josie asked if anyone attended the VLCT dog ordinance education, the board members responded that they did not, they were working. Jeff brought up that if the dogs aren't registered, the dog owners can't be positively identified- so it might be difficult to put a lien on their property. Josie asked Todd and Trever if they know what other towns in the islands do for similar issues. Todd and Trever responded that other towns surrounding Grand Isle don't typically have this problem. Huskies that were chasing horses got put down.

Josie asked if this family has been issued a fine for their dogs previously. Todd responded no. Josie responded that Trever should start issuing fines, the selectboard will discuss the issue with VLCT. Todd mentioned that this process will be over and above what was set for Trever's pay scale, Jeff responded that this is correct and Trever will need to be compensated for going to court.

Josie reiterated that she wishes Trever to safely issue a ticket, and then the board will see this process through. This way the board will have an example of the amount of extra time spent attending court, and compensation can be discussed based on the initial ticket. The selectboard will review the 2017 Dog Ordinance, Jeff will get the VLCT training materials for dog ordinances, and based on that information, the select board can rework the Dog Ordinance and present the information to Todd and Trever. After Todd and Trever review, they can bring feedback to the board and they will edit as needed.

Todd returned to the issue of where to bring the animals. Josie responded that Adam has been working on it. Eric responded he will do some research on this issue as well to see if he can find a place for the dogs. Eric asked if Trever had to drive 50 miles to drop off the dogs if it would

negatively impact Trever's employment. Trever responded it would not. Melissa asked if the old highway department with a kennel in it could be used. It was brought up that the building is condemned. Josie asked if a kennel could be kept in the fire department, rescue department or any town building. Couper asked at what point do the dogs not get given back to the owner and when will discussions about putting the dogs down begin. Josie explained that dogs can only be put down if they attack a person, another dog or livestock, or for vicious behavior. Josie asked if there is a humane society in St. Albans, Michael explained that they have cut back.

Todd mentioned that the kennel he has been using is broken.

Jeff motioned to have the constable/dogcatcher, for lack of a better term, Trever Boutin to spend up to \$300.00 for a large dog crate. Couper seconds. No discussion. Jeff Parizo, Couper Shaw, Josie Leavitt, and Eric Godin approve. The motion passes

Josie asked Jeff if he would go to VLCT and ask for help with this issue, and see if they have suggestions for dog placement. Eric will put out feelers to see if he can locate a kennel service. Jeff mentioned that someone should email Adam and ask him to talk to the town attorney about this situation, to see what they advise. If a towns person captures an at large dog, they are required to attempt to find the owner of the puppy. Eric advised Todd and Trever not to keep the dogs at their house if they are captured. Josie stated that if someone (a towns person) captures the dogs, ask them if they are in a position to keep it overnight. She suggested writing something in the Islander, asking dog owners to place a tag with a phone number on their dogs. Todd responded that dogs are supposed to be collared and licensed and have the tag on their collar. Todd responded if there is no tag on the dog's collar, the dog can be taken.

Josie mentioned that it is expensive to vaccinate dogs for rabies. Josie is going to look into getting a clinic for rabies vaccines. Todd replied he would talk to Adam to see if they can set up a clinic in South Hero. Couper asked if the dogs were licensed if kennels would take them, Eric responded that yes, if they had the history on the dogs (with regards to vaccines). Couper stated that he feels that the board should locate a kennel that will take dogs with known vaccine history and the town should take the dogs until they are licensed. Trever will talk to the dog owners about getting the dogs licensed, he says that he has previously, but the owners did not follow through. Couper feels that fining the owners will get the ball rolling, but if the fines don't work the town has another thing they can do.

Melissa was asked the cost of licensing dogs, she mentioned that unfixed dogs were \$15 but they missed the due date in April, so it would be \$20. The dogs need proof of vaccination to get licensed. Jeff asked if the dog owners have presented proof of vaccination for the dogs, Trever stated they did not.

Josie asked Trever to issue the tickets, the selectboard will research how to handle this issue further, and she invited Trever and Todd to attend the September 19th meeting to provide an update on how the ticketing went. Eric stated if he finds a kennel, he will email the board and Trever to let them know. Couper asked if this would be a first offense ticket, Eric responded

yes. Josie recommended the ticket be issued with the maximum penalty for the first offense. Melissa provided Trever with a copy of the Dog Ordinance. Josie wants to put something on the website and Islander providing the ordinance and safety information for if townspeople encounter at large dogs. Todd recommended that townspeople not pick up at large dogs, stating the danger of bites. Josie mentioned that some kennels might require a small annual fee to reserve a spot for captured dogs, and board members agreed that it would be worth the cost. Ray (the sheriff) has a microchip reader to identify chipped dog owners. Michael Inners provided that Franklin County Animal Rescue is has been taking cats at this time, and recommended checking there for kenneling services.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

Fire Department Field Use Request

Jeff motioned to allow the fire department to use the field to whatever they were going to use it for, for parking. Eric seconds. No discussion. Jeff Parizo, Couper Shaw, Josie Leavitt, and Eric Godin approve. The motion passes

V. OLD BUSINESS

Tax Rate

The new Municipal tax rate is going to be .3361%

Melissa: Every year the budgets that were voted on are reviewed. Anticipated revenues are reviewed, the listers finalize the grand list, some juggling happens between homestead and non-residential depending on filing. Sometimes people file an extension, they have until October 15th to file, which doesn't change the value of their homestead so the grand list stays the same.

Tax Rate= $\frac{\text{Anticipated Expenditures} - \text{Anticipated Revenues}}{\text{Grand List}}$

Veterans are granted over and above the \$10,000 exemption. Education needs to be made up on either side, whether non-residential or homestead.

0.3361% is a change of 0.0422%

Josie asked what the overall tax rate is with the municipal and education.

Melissa responded that both combined, homestead is going down 0.1097% and non-residential is 0.0456%. Every \$45254 of expenses on the town side the rate increases by a penny.

Jeff motioned to approve the tax rate of 0.3361. Josie seconds. No discussion. Jeff Parizo, Couper Shaw, Josie Leavitt, and Eric Godin approve. The motion passes

Cancel September 5th Meeting

Eric motions to cancel the September 5th meeting due to it being a holiday. Josie seconds. No discussion. Jeff Parizo, Couper Shaw, Josie Leavitt, and Eric Godin approve. The motion passes

VI. REVIEW AND SIGN WARRANTS

Jeff motioned to allow, if there is no discussions about the warrants, but I will make a motion to allow the vice chair to sign the warrants. Couper seconds. No discussion. Jeff Parizo, Couper Shaw, Josie Leavitt, and Eric Godin approve. The motion passes

Melissa brought up that the town was notified by the Vermont bond bank that the bond for the fire station building had proceeds of \$3,434.05 that were unused. They need direction as to what to do with the money. Melissa suggested to put the money toward that bond for that project. Jeff stated that this could go to a special meeting if it needs to, and Josie asked Melissa to find out when the decision is due by.

VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION: LCT DISCUSSION

Eric motioned that the board appoint Jeff Parizo as the point person speaking to the town attorneys regarding the Lake Champlain Transport Company issue. Josie seconds. No discussion. Jeff Parizo, Couper Shaw, Josie Leavitt, and Eric Godin approve. The motion passes.

Jeff will forward everything to the board going forward, and the selectboard will go into executive session if they need to.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Josie motions to adjourn the meeting at 6:43. Eric seconds. No discussion. Jeff Parizo, Couper Shaw, Josie Leavitt, and Eric Godin approve. The motion passes