



**Town of Berlin
Municipal Office Building
108 Shed Road**

**Berlin, VT. 05602
Regular Select Board Meetings
1st & 3rd Thursday of Each Month**

**Monday, April 6, 2020
7:00 PM**

Selectboard Members: Bradley Towne, Chair; Flo Smith, Co-Vice Chair; Justin Lawrence, Co-Vice Chair; John Quinn III, Secretary; Angelina Capron. Present: Dana Hadley, Town Administrator; Diane Isabelle, Town Treasurer. All items are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

UNAPPROVED MINUTES

Call Meeting to Order

Co-Vice Chair Smith called the meeting to order. Towne joined the meeting at 7:25 p.m. The meeting was held on line via Zoom video meeting using either audio or audio/video.

Changes to Agenda

Town Administrator Hadley asked to add a short discussion on the road grader to the agenda.

Public Comment

None.

Treasurer's Report

Town Treasurer Isabelle discussed receiving a phone call asking if tax payments, due May 15, will be delayed. She informed that resident that at this time no adjustments are made. After reviewing other town websites, Isabelle concluded that other towns are not offering a delay. Montpelier is not delaying the due date but is delaying when the penalty and interest will begin (June 15 instead of May 16). Hadley found out that the town is not able to change the due date because the date is voted on. The penalty and interest date is also voted upon, Hadley has inquired about whether that date can be changed. Isabelle reviewed the precautions she is taking when receiving cash payments, which includes exchanging the money outside her office and while wearing gloves then returning to her office to prepare a receipt. She reviewed ways that residents can pay without having to go to the town offices. The bank would not allow scanning of checks or venmo payments. Isabelle reached out to credit card companies to relax credit card fees, which the companies refused. The town could opt to absorb the fee but that could prove costly because the fees are up to 2.5%. Another question that came up was what will happen with swim lessons and if the town is willing to contribute as in the past. Quinn moved to discontinue the \$25 per child contribution to swim lessons for this summer. The motion did not receive a second. Decision tabled for the next agenda.

Approval of Licenses, Permits, Vouchers, and Applications

Hadley asked how the warrants will be signed. Isabelle explained that after the minutes are approved and signed she will attach the warrants to the minutes as approved. Quinn asked if the town could purchase a

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DocuSign license so they can be signed electronically. Isabelle explained that she is currently working on setting up that software.

Quinn moved to approve. Seconded by Lawrence. Passed unanimously.

General funds accounts payable warrant 20g18 with checks 20105-20139 in the amount of \$65,786.67; payroll warrant 2020 for the payroll from March 15, 2020 – March 28, 2020, paid on April 1, 2020, in the amount of \$46,877.83.

Public Works Board – Discussion on Allocation

Nobody from the Public Works Board was online in attendance of the meeting but Lawrence discussed decisions recently made by the Board that he disagrees with. Lawrence asked Hadley how the town currently pays for fixed sewer division expenses. The division is self-funded by user fees, approximately \$350,000 are paid for in fixed fees. Isabelle explained that she did not have the budget with her but that the division normally breaks even. The allocation money is in a different fund and fees used to pay expenses is in another account. Allocation fees are not used for general expenses. Isabelle discussed fixed general expense costs that are unavoidable, including collection through Montpelier (about \$35,000 per month) and bond fees (about \$7,000 per month). The rest of the expense tends to be repairs and maintenance (\$65,000 per year contract). Lawrence was concerned about the finances and capacity to allocate since 150,000 gallons are unallocated usage and at the last Public Works Board meeting the Board passed an item to charge per gallon for unconnected allocation. Hadley suggested waiting to have representatives of the Public Works Board to provide more thorough answers on the thought process of the Board and that item.

Appointment of Board and Committee Liaisons

Previously, Hadley discussed having a select board liaison to committees. This is not something the town has done before but is a suggestion made by Hadley. The committees currently are: Cemetery Commission, Conservation Commission, Development Review Board, Economic Development, Planning Commission, Public Works Board, Recreation Committee, and a liaison to the Berlin Fire Department. Smith asked if there are members of the select board interested in being a liaison for any of the committees and, if so, which ones. Quinn expressed interest in the Economic Development Board. Smith moved through the list asking for interest in the various boards. Lawrence expressed interest in the DRB and the Public Works Board. Lawrence also brought up that the board had discussed having a liaison for the Highway Department and Police Department and he is interested in the Highway Department. Lawrence said that, in addition to the Highway, he could handle being liaison for either DRB or Public Works. Quinn asked how the select board or administrator negotiates the contract with the police department. The contract was drafted by committee that included one board member, the town attorney, town administrator, and 2 from the police department. The contract then went before the whole board for approval. The contract goes through 2021 so there will likely be re-negotiation beginning at the end of the year. There was no express interest from board members on acting as liaison for the Police Department. Smith and Lawrence both reported expressing an interest in the Berlin Fire Department. Motions tabled to the next meeting.

Committee Appointments or Re-Appointments

New appointments:

Wendelyn Bowles of 68 Plateau Drive. She has attended meetings and is in the Vermont Master Naturalist program in training and has worked on trail crews and in the master gardener program. She has conducted surveys on the Ash Borer issues and others.

Towne entered the meeting at this point.

Quinn moved to appoint Wendelyn Bowles to the conservation commission. Seconded by Lawrence. Passed unanimously.

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Re-Appointments:

Liaison to the Central Vermont Fiber Committee – Jeremy Hansen;
Economic Development Council – Jeremy Hansen, Roberta Haskin, Ture Nelson, Jami Stewart;
Citizen liaison to the Fire Department – Jerry Diamantides;
Town representative for Central Vermont Regional Planning – Robert Wernecke, alternate – Karla Nuissl;
Town representative on the Central Vermont Regional Planning Transportation Board – Robert Wernecke.
Town moved to approve these re-appointments. Seconded by Lawrence. Passed unanimously.

Road Grader

Tim spoke to Hadley about the road grader and someone from Caterpillar is going to look at the machine. Tim provided an estimate of \$50,000. The report after bringing the machine to Caterpillar will provide an additional estimate for repairs. New tires will cost about \$8,000. Towne suggested waiting until hearing the Caterpillar estimate. Quinn asked what is wrong with the grader. Hadley explained that there are possible multiple repairs needed but the machine is currently operational.

Discussion of Possible Extension of Gravel Purchase Contract and Bid

The gravel last went to bid in 2017 and one bid was received at that time with the option to extend. Northeast has offered to hold the price of \$8.95 per ton for another year. Quinn and Lawrence asked that Hadley research prices accepted in other towns. Motion tabled.

Discussion of Possible Extension of the Town Lawn Maintenance Contract - 2020

The lawn maintenance was put to bid last year. Orange County Lawn Maintenance offered to continue this year for the same price. The price last year was \$2,000 for the season. It is under \$5,000 so does not need to go to re-bid. Lawrence expressed interest in continuing with that company given the low dollar amount. Towne moved to accept the extension of the current contract. Seconded by Quinn. Passed unanimously.

Approval of Selectboard Minutes – 3/12/20 & 3/16/20

Towne moved to approve. Seconded by Capron. Passed unanimously.

Town Administrator Report

Hadley provided a report of procedures currently in place for COVID-19 precautions. The town offices are open but not for residents to come into the building. Most business is through email and phone. Hadley advised that the Police Academy is suspended for the time being. The town has 2 candidates at academy and there will be accommodations to allow them to continue as part time officers.

Roundtable

Towne asked if a liaison for the police department had been added to discussion. Hadley affirmed that it had and will reappear on the April 20 agenda.
Lawrence explained that he thought there would be other agenda items and asked why they were removed (the class 4 to 3 road discussion). Towne explained that the agreement reached with the Dauts and Walkers was for one year and he thought that in the meantime, over the summer, a new road reclassification policy will be drafted and that dispute will be handled under the new policy. Lawrence explained that he thought a discussion of the policy was going to be on the agenda. Towne explained that he thought the previous agenda item was to discuss Black Road specifically so had removed the item. A discussion of the reclassification policy will be added to the next agenda.
Quinn discussed whether the town should consider a spending freeze because the local businesses do not have traffic and will have difficulty paying bills and taxes. Quinn acknowledged that the budget was set in

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March but also that circumstances have changed. He believes the board and town should look at ways to cut the budget by 10%. The discussion continued about planning for FY 21 and making changes to next year's budget to prevent an increase to the tax base in light of COVID-19 changes and interruptions to business. Towne noted that there is currently a \$500,000 surplus in the budget. An open discussion will be added to the next agenda. Hadley noted that, as of now, the budget is set to increase about 9.61%. Smith also asked about incentivizing payment of taxes since there is concern about payments. Towne expressed an opinion that it is already provided for through the penalty schedule.

Executive Session

None.

Towne moved to adjourn. Seconded by Quinn. Passed unanimously.

For the Select Board:

Bethany A. Towne