

# MONKTON SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, April 22nd, 2025

Approved April 29th, 2025

**The meeting was called to order by Jessica Demeritt at 7:00pm.**

Members in attendance: Jessica Demeritt (Chair), Walter Crandall (Vice-Chair), Joe Szarejko, Sam Peisch, John Dunham

Members absent: None

Others in attendance: Stan Wilbur (Town Administrator), Shane Lawrence (Road Foreman), Jaime Schulte (Acting Recording Secretary), Tom Steadman, Adam McGowan, Janet Fairchild, Clinton "Yogi" Alger, Randy Charboneau, Shonda (on Zoom), Theresa Schwegel, Cindy Wolcott, Debra Sprague, Lisa Burns, Spencer (on Zoom)

## **HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT PART TIME EMPLOYEE**

Interview - Executive Session

- **J. Demeritt moved to go into Executive Session to evaluate and discuss a hiring decision per 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3) and invite Stan Wilbur, Shane Lawrence, and Clinton Alger to join the Board. J. Szarejko seconded. The vote passed 5-0-0.** Entered Executive Session at 7:02pm.
- **J. Dunham moved to exit the executive session at 7:17. S. Peisch seconded. The vote passed 5-0-0.**
- **W. Crandall moved to offer part-time work, not to exceed 23 hours, in support of the road crew to Clinton Alger. S. Peisch seconded. The vote passed 5-0-0.**

## **LANDSCAPING SERVICES BID OPENING**

The Town Administrator put forward a request for proposals for landscaping at Town Hall, the island by the old Town Hall, and four cemeteries in Monkton. One bid was received from Rockwell Mowing & Trimming. The board discussed whether to wait for additional bids to come in. The scope of work would need to be changed to extend the due date for bids.

**J. Dunham moved to receive the bid for landscaping services and refer it to the Town Administrator to check references. J. Szarejko seconded. The vote passed 5-0-0.**

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

None

## **ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS FROM THE AGENDA:**

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J. Szarejko would like to move up the Items in Town Right of Way and the Jockey Lane ROW permit agenda items to be considered with the Highway Update to make best use of Road Foreman Shane Lawrence's time with the Board.

J. Schulte said the Town Forest Committee is requesting a signature on a corrected Interim Report form SF-425 for the federal Community Forest Program grant, previously signed by the Chair on March 25th, 2025. This will be taken up under Other Business.

**REGULAR BUSINESS:**

APPROVE APRIL 8, 2025 SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES

**S. Peisch moved to approve the minutes of April 8, 2025 as written. W. Crandall seconded. The vote passed 5-0-0.**

REVIEW AND APPROVE CHECK WARRANTS

**J. Szarejko moved to approve Accounts Payable Check Warrant #50411 in the amount of \$3,385.89. W. Crandall seconded.** Primary amounts are for Acker Waste Management, State of Vermont, automotive, etc. **The vote passed 5-0-0.**

**J. Szarejko moved to approve Accounts Payable Check Warrant #50421 in the amount of \$21,787.14. J. Dunham seconded.** Primary amounts are for Capital One, DuPont, GMP, Home Depot services, Iroquois Manufacturing. **The vote passed 5-0-0.**

**W. Crandall moved to approve Payroll Check Warrant #50421 in the amount of \$14,924.26. J. Szarejko seconded. The vote passed 5-0-0.**

REVIEW AND APPROVE OVERWEIGHT PERMITS, ETC.

The following new permits were reviewed and approved by W. Crandall:

BACON TRUCKING  
BLAIRS FORESTRY HAULING  
BRADFORD'S TRUCKING  
DAVID NEWTON  
DELPHIA EXCAVATING  
DENNIS W CASEY EXCAVATING  
DRISCOLL BROTHERS  
IRON BOX  
J+J PINNELL TRUCKING  
PAUL FOURNIER  
ROX ASPHALT

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S DENTON  
T PALMER EXCAVATING

## FACILITY USE REQUESTS

An individual is asking for use of the Community Room on a Saturday morning for a jazzercise class (paid class). W. Crandall noted that Saturday mornings are a busy time for the room, but it may be possible to accommodate the request. J. Demeritt asked if activities for profit have happened in the past. Apparently not.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was offered.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

### AUDITOR'S FUNCTION

J. Demeritt asked R. Charboneau, the only auditor present, if he was expecting to speak on the topic tonight. S. Wilbur recommended that the topic be postponed until all three auditors were available.

R. Charboneau noted that the elected auditors are an independent entity and do not report to the Select Board. He has been working as an auditor for the town for 4 years. R. Charboneau asked if there was an abatement board hearing held in January. W. Crandall believes there was. Could the minutes be shared with the auditors? R. Charboneau provided specifics to W. Crandall, who will look into it.

J. Demeritt would like to follow S. Wilbur's recommendation to defer the conversation until the three auditors are available. R. Charboneau had the impression that the board wanted to provide direction to the auditors. J. Demeritt clarified that this is a new Select Board and they are only trying to learn more about what each role/function in town does, to improve relationships and interactions. R. Charboneau appreciated the clarification.

### HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT UPDATE

S. Lawrence shared that the road crew has been doing a lot of road grading and some ditching. J. Demeritt asked about Ivor Hughes' concern from a recent meeting that the Vermont Gas line crosses Old Stage Road in three places. Is that a concern for road work? S. Lawrence said the line is about five feet down, so it is not in conflict. J. Demeritt asked if the road crew has training for working around gas lines. S. Lawrence said that they have taken DigSafe courses and are in communication with Vt Gas about work.

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He applied for the Class 2 Municipal grant from the state for paving and spoke with the Department of Transportation. Scope of work has been created for areas that need work on the Vergennes Rd. to the south/west of the salamander crossings.

S. Lawrence is staying on top of the work related to FEMA funding. There are four separate projects, but no funds received yet. Data has been provided in support of the hydraulic study of Piney Woods Rd.

The road crew is clearing brush from ditch lines, planning to finish Old Stage Rd., and do some work on the Tyler Bridge Rd. culvert as part of the FEMA project. J. Dunham asked if that culvert failed. Yes, both lanes are sagging and some work is needed as a temporary measure. J. Dunham noted the culvert is the same age as the ones replaced recently on Mountain and Church roads.

J. Demeritt asked if any help could be provided for the FEMA process. S. Lawrence feels that it is difficult to delegate because of his first-hand knowledge of the information FEMA needs. J. Szarejko noted some challenges and back-and-forth with the FEMA process.

### ITEMS IN TOWN RIGHT OF WAY - HOLLOW ROAD

This item was moved up from Old Business. With regard to the concerns of Travys Cousino, noted in the prior meeting minutes, S. Lawrence did some initial ditching at the location to improve drainage. T. Cousino does plan to have gravel delivered to improve surfaces on his property and will continue efforts to remove items in the town ROW. S. Lawrence noted that Waitsfield Champlain Valley Telecom has a line in that location at the depth where ditching should occur. He has coordinated with WCVT and they will come to lower the line depth when the primary ditching work occurs.

### JOCKEY LANE RIGHT OF WAY PERMIT

S. Lawrence and J. Szarejko looked at the location of a proposed ROW permit of John McCaffrey & Loralyn Bothwell at 767 Jockey Ln. to put in a culvert due to water washing out the road. The residents will do the work and S. Lawrence recommends a 15" culvert.

**J. Szarejko moved to approve the ROW application of John McCaffrey at 767 Jockey Lane. W. Crandall seconded. The vote passed 5-0-0.**

### OVERWEIGHT ORDINANCE

J. Demeritt noted that details need to be filled in to the ordinance so it can be accurate and enforceable. S. Lawrence does not have the specifics on hand at the moment. Postponed to next meeting.

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## SOUTH WING

J. Demeritt invited the library trustees to join the board to discuss the South Wing. The previous Select Board sought bids for work and Red Lion has now completed that work and there is an outstanding invoice. The Treasurer has asked the Select Board how to pay the invoice. The outstanding bill is for some \$4,527.

J. Fairchild spoke as a member of the subcommittee that worked on the renovation of the space. The committee included two members of the Library Board, two members of the Selectboard and two members of the Monkton Museum and Historical Society (MMHS). J. Fairchild's understanding is that the Town was to cover the cost of construction and the library and MMHS would cover the cost of fit-up of their portions of the space. Red Lion submitted the lowest bid in 2024, for \$45,277, which was within the town's budget of \$50,000. Diligence was done on the bid, the town entered into the contract and it has now been fulfilled. The actual total incurred was a little over \$44,000.

Cindy Wolcott, Treasurer of the library, agreed with the understanding that the library's responsibility was to fit up the space above and beyond the Red Lion contract. She described the library's budget for the project and that their fund had some \$15,000 available at one time. With the budget challenges the town faced recently the library reduced their planned request of the taxpayers by \$10,000. The remaining funds were focused on fit-up of the space. At this time there are not available funds from the library to help cover this construction invoice.

J. Demeritt said the Monkton Treasurer has noted a remaining balance in the Municipal Building Fund of \$583, so sufficient funds are not in the Fund for the remainder of the construction. The intention was to complete the work out of the Municipal Building Fund and the Select Board is interested in whether the library or MMHS can assist. The town will need to sort out paying the bill and may need to have a small deficit in the short-term. T. Schwegel noted that additional fundraising is possible and could cover the difference over time.

T. Steadman offered a comment that as of last year the Municipal Building Fund had \$41,000. It was clarified that the work was done at the end of 2024. W. Crandall noted that the work was done satisfactorily and on budget. T. Steadman asked where the deficit would be charged to. The Select Board will work with the Treasurer on that. S. Peisch would like to know more, but recognizes the need to pay the bill.

S. Peisch asked what the lesson to be learned is. J. Demeritt thinks the former Board made a decision and didn't follow through to manage that decision in a

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clear enough way to establish expectations and a budget line for the contracted work. There was an understanding that the \$41,000 and \$7,500 from the library combined would make up the budget for construction, but that was not clearly documented.

There was discussion of how town budgets work with the cycle of annual taxes.

T. Steadman would like to know the bank balances of the town. There was discussion that knowing the bank balances does not clarify whether it is an adequate balance to support the budget. The Board was unclear whether the current bank balances can or should be shared with the public. J. Dunham would like that question clarified before sharing numbers.

J. Schulte commented that with outstanding taxes, pending FEMA amounts, and dozens of factors, simply knowing the current bank balances, absent all of that context, does not tell you much about whether the town's finances are healthy or not. There is value in improving tracking of budgeting for known expenses, such as the South Wing project, however.

R. Charboneau stated that there are only a couple of bank accounts for the town. There is a sweep account and checking account for the town, etc.

L. Burns added that terminology is very important. As with businesses the town does not have separate bank accounts for every general ledger item. There are three primary accounts that pool funds. Those funds are allocated to many things in the budget.

J. Demeritt stated that overall town account balances are not relevant to the question at hand, which is paying the invoice from Red Lion. J. Dunham asked if the specific fund needs to be determined tonight. S. Wilbur said no, the Treasurer will handle that and the Municipal Building Fund can have a temporary deficit. It is the overall budget bottom line that matters and funds can be moved from another line in the future.

### ASSISTANT TREASURER DUTIES

The Treasurer has put together a job description for an Assistant Treasurer. J. Demeritt asked that S. Wilbur review the job description and asked him whether to include a rate of pay. Other towns seem to pay a rate of approximately \$20 per hour. S. Wilbur recommends putting in a range of pay and expected hours per week. The budget line of \$5,000 would only allow for about 5 hours per week. Is this sufficient to attract a qualified candidate? There was discussion of how many hours are needed to meaningfully help the Treasurer. The work might be cyclical in nature, peaking during November due to taxes, for instance. The Board would

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like more information from the Treasurer on what would be helpful. S. Wilbur will follow up with the Treasurer.

T. Steadman suggested that the Assistant Treasurer could also be the Delinquent Tax Collector, to improve the number of hours and shift work from the Treasurer.

### APPOINTMENTS

The Chair of ANAC, Laura Farrell, has recommended Peter Huber to the open position on the Committee and he has expressed interest to the Board.

J. Demeritt noted that a letter of interest was received from Cassandra Corcoran for the Town Forest Committee. The Town Forest Committee would like to discuss the candidate first and make a recommendation. The Board will wait for the Town Forest Committee to take the next step.

**W. Crandall moved to appoint Peter Huber to the Agricultural & Natural Areas Committee to the balance of a 3-year term ending in 2027. J. Szarejko seconded. The vote passed 5-0-0.**

### COMMUNITY SIGN

W. Crandall is working on next steps.

### SELECTBOARD RULES OF PROCEDURE

J. Demeritt described the purpose of such a document, which helps to clarify and demystify the role of the Board for the public and would be a valuable reference for the Board as well. VLCT has a template for this kind of document and a previous Select Board rules of procedure, but didn't adopt them. S. Peisch and J. Szarejko supported the idea and thought it would be helpful for the Board and the public.

The Board will consider the VLCT template and keep this item on the agenda.

### VERMONT RURAL SCHOOL COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

Information was emailed to the Board. The legislature is looking at options to make schools more affordable. This community alliance appears focused on finding a way to keep rural schools open while being financially responsible. Is this of interest to the Board? J. Dunham has reviewed the material and would like to hear from our School Board members as the next step.

Select Board meetings sometimes conflict with School Board meetings. W. Crandall will follow up with the School Board members from Monkton on scheduling.

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### **OLD BUSINESS:**

#### VERMONT GAS SYSTEMS

The deadline of April 9th, discussed recently, was to register as an intervenor with the Public Utility Commission (PUC). Monkton was already an intervenor, so there is some time. Attorney Cindy Hill represents New Haven and has inquired whether Monkton might want to work with other towns on a request to the PUC. J. Demeritt suggests the Board review Monkton's Memorandum of Understanding with VT Gas, which can be found on the website.

J. Demeritt noted Ivor Hughes' recent remarks about the pipeline crossing roads as a key point. She would also like to hear from the fire department about preparedness for potential incidents.

There is potential cost to the Town to be involved in the proceedings. W. Crandall stated that this is just a cost of running the town and we should listen to experts like I. Hughes. J. Dunham stated that it is important to do diligence on the issue and feels the Board has a responsibility to do so. The Board is interested in working with C. Hill. Monkton Town Attorney Jim Carroll is aware of this topic.

### **OTHER BUSINESS:**

#### TOWN FOREST COMMITTEE INTERIM REPORT

J. Schulte described that the Town Forest Committee submitted an interim report on federal grant progress in March to the USDA Forest Service, which was signed by the Select Board Chair. The form processor has requested a correction to one field that shows the required amount of non-federal matching funds. On the form submitted in March we provided the minimum required amount but the request is to show the total non-federal funds budgeted (and actually raised), which is higher than the minimum amount. The form has now been revised as requested and needs a new signature to be resubmitted.

**J. Dunham moved to approve the Chair signing the revised SF-425 form for the Interim Report to the federal Community Forest Program grant. W. Crandall seconded. The vote passed 5-0-0.**

#### DETERMINE TIME/DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Tuesday, May 13th, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

No additional Executive Session was needed.

### **ADJOURNMENT:**

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**W. Crandall moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:20pm. J. Szarejko seconded.  
The vote passed, 5-0-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Jaime Schulte