

## **MINUTES OF THE DORSET SELECTBOARD**

### **SPECIAL MEETING MARCH 29, 2016**

**PRESENT:** H. Chandler (Chair), M. Thörn, J. Stannard

**ALSO PRESENT:** R. Gaiotti (Town Manager), G. Squire, R. Squire, B. Menson, J. Menson, L. Sullivan, A. Sullivan, L. Ruffa, T. Smith, R. Haines, C. Lennox, D. Green, L. Hardy, M. Kinney, R. Fox, L. McGinnis.

H. Chandler called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. First item on the agenda is to interview 4 Selectboard candidates: Tom Smith, Richard Haines, Allan Sullivan, and Liz Ruffa. H. Chandler thanked all the candidates for applying and was impressed with everyone's credentials. H. Chandler called T. Smith up to conduct the first interview.

#### **Selectboard Interview – Tom Smith:**

T. Smith explained that he and his wife Sylvia have run Mad Tom Apple Orchard for the past 17 years and really enjoy the Town and its residents. He explained that he grew up for a time in East Dorset, then the family moved to the Champlain islands to operate an apple orchard. He also spent time in the military and worked for many years in the Atlanta area in the machine, tool, and engineering sales business. H. Chandler asked what brought him back to Dorset? T. Smith answered that his mother was still running the Mad Tom Orchard until 1997 and they moved back to re-open the orchard to keep the family business running. He has also served as a trustee and official of the United Church of Dorset and East Rupert. He mentioned that he was part of the Church budget committee and worked with budgets during his career, and felt that he could positively contribute to the Town in this manner.

H. Chandler asked what he saw as positives and negatives in Dorset during his time here. T. Smith stated that it's been great to see some of the young families that have moved into East Dorset during the last 10 years or so. He also mentioned that this can be tough because housing values in Dorset are high and sometime out of reach for young families. He also mentioned that Dorset has gone through zoning and land use discussions during his time here, from the ridgeline discussion to the recent village commercial discussion. M. Thörn asked what business trends have been seen during your 17 years here? T. Smith answered that with the onset of the internet he's been able to grow the business and advertise in a real time manner that gets people to come visit the orchard soon after information is posted to Facebook or the mad tom orchard website. H. Chandler asked how he would envision Dorset in the next 5

to 10 years. T. Smith responded that it would be great to continue to have more young families in town, and that there is a need for employment in the area to be flexible and provide better pay scales to allow people to work and live in the area. He felt that the internet and infrastructure will play a big role in making this possible.

#### **Selectboard Interview – Richard Haines:**

R. Haines spoke about the fact that he has lived in North Dorset across from Emerald Lake for over 35 years and really loves the Town. His career spanned 40 years with GE as a quality control manager and he was responsible for very detailed control work with aviation products manufactured in the Rutland, VT GE plant. H. Chandler asked about his involvement working with the State of Vermont and assisting disadvantaged kids in the area. R. Haines mentioned that he and his wife made their home available and helped offer a safe/ normal place for kids that can be going through very difficult times with their own home lives. Often times the parents of the children have problems that keep them from providing for the children, and that he hopes to show the children what a stable and normal lifestyle looks like. He mentioned the difficulties with modern technology and that kids can have a hard time interacting. He has cared for as many as six kids during some months working in this capacity. M. Thörn asked about the kind of change that he has seen in Dorset over the years. R. Haines mentioned that he really like that fact that in 35 years, nothing much has really changed. Some new homes have been constructed and some new businesses, but he likes that Dorset has pretty much been able to stay the same during this time frame. H. Chandler asked he would envision Dorset in the next 5 to 10 years. He mentioned that there is a need for more young families to live in town and there should be an eye toward similar growth patterns of the past. J. Stannard stated that it has been difficult for young families to find reasonable building lots for forty years, and how would it be done? R. Haines state that there is a need for jobs to support the ability to live in the area and that there should be some potential for light industry with better paying jobs to make this possible.

#### **Selectboard Interview – Allan Sullivan:**

Allan and his wife Linda live on McNamara Road in Dorset, and have been residents for around 3 years. H. Chandler mentioned that his resume was impressive but would there be time to commit to this position and still work as general counsel for AHS in Montpelier. A. Sullivan felt that he could set up his schedule to be flexible and allow for attendance of the meetings. He mentioned that he has been attending other public meetings during his tenure working for AHS. H. Chandler asked what brought him to Dorset 3 years ago. A. Sullivan mentioned that he grew up in Boston and his wife grew up in Manhattan. He attended Northeastern University and then took a job with the Department of Justice in South Florida, and ended up staying in S. Florida for nearly 30 years working both as a prosecutor and as a

partner in a law firm there. During his time at school in Boston he traveled New England and very much fell in love with Vermont. When it was time to think about relocating from South Florida and coming to the north they visited Vermont, drove through the Dorset area and other areas, and settled on the Dorset area. A. Sullivan mentioned that he is very interested in giving back to the community and serving to help “make things better” and use a collaborative approach to build consensus and transparency. H. Chandler asked how Dorset looks now 3 years later and living here? A. Sullivan mentioned that the people are very friendly and that he loves the area even more now and very much calls it home. M. Thörn asked about what he envisions for Dorset in the next 5 to 10 years? He mentioned that he appreciated the recent regional approach to economic development and that Dorset needs to think about what it right for the community to allow organic growth. He also mentioned that some proactive branding and a center for sustainable or environmental studies could be a great asset to the area that would attract good jobs, but there is a need for a critical mass of employees to achieve this. H. Chandler asked about the a flyer that was disturbed during the village commercial zoning debate and expressed concern that A. Sullivan had comprised a document that was not well received and included some pictures and challenging statements. A. Sullivan mentioned that he took ownership of the document and understood that some residents did take offense to it and that he hadn’t wanted to offend anyone. He mentioned that he sent a 7 page letter to Selectboard Chair Chris Brooks explaining the intent of the flyer. He felt that his basic argument was an important statement that needed to be made because of the concern for what the possible zoning changes would to the Town. H. Chandler asked if during the 3 years living in Vermont what impressions he now has of the area. A. Sullivan mentioned that Vermonters are quiet and nice and tend to listen very well, but are often reserved. M. Thörn asked about country mentality vs. city mentality, and A. Sullivan stated that this was certainly something new residents have to be aware of and that the town is a small close knit area.

### **Selectboard Interview – Liz Ruffa:**

Liz lives in Green Peak Orchard with her family. She has a background in marketing and specializes in networking. She worked in NYC for 10-12 years in that capacity and then moved to Dorset; she now works as a nonprofit consultant, works for the VT Arts Council, and also Northshire Grows, a local nonprofit that strives to involve local food into the local economy. Liz and her husband were engaged in Vermont and after 9/11 were deciding where to live, and decided to make a go of it in Vermont. They purchased land and built their home in Green Peak Orchard, and love everything about the area. She has served on the Boards of the Weston Playhouse and the Maple Street School. She really understands and appreciates just how special our part of Vermont is, and she spends much time traveling the State for work. H. Chandler asked about how she would envision the area in 5 to 10 years, and L. Ruffa responded that she hoped for a healthy and happy population that enjoyed the quality of life in the area and that there would be more opportunities to enhance local food systems and the local

economy. She mentioned that currently there are a great group of businesses with environmental ties. Agro tourism is something that the area could really take advantage of and grow, and that there is a need to knit things together and reboot tourism to work with the times. H. Chandler asked how she would “market” Dorset? L. Ruffa stated that people could visit Dorset to unplug and take a nice long walk. She mentioned that the area had really grown on her and has a lot of assets to take advantage of, which could be grown. She stated that with all the outdoor activity that is available that the community could capitalize on local amenities to enhance the economy. J. Stanndard asked about how she would envision Dorset 30 to 40 years down the road. L. Ruffa stated that she thought over time people will begin to desire returning to a “sense of place” and that future generations will have challenges that come from growing up with electronics. She predicted that regional New England could become a hot bed for agriculture, producing large amounts of food. She also mentioned that climate change will have to be adapted to, and we will have to protect current assets to assure the quality of life in the area stays in place. She envisions all the brick buildings in the downtowns of river towns to be places where food is processed, sold etc, and that will help make the area sustainable. She also mentioned that there is a need to make the area a better place for young people, and to pay it forward. She stated that Dorset should have a role in the regional economy and could look to take advantage of opportunities in agriculture and the environment. She also stated that more could be done to stop visitors and get them to come back.

H. Chandler thanked all those who interviewed and stated that everyone was very qualified and that picking two people is going to be a difficult task. M. Thörn moved to go into executive session to discuss making the appointments. J. Stannard asked about waiting and going home to think about it for a while. Discussion ensued about the timing of making the appointments, and that it would be good for the board to discuss it while it is fresh in their minds. **M. Thörn restated the motion and J. Stanndard seconded to go into executive session to discuss Selectboard appointments. Motion passed 3-0. At 8:12pm the Selectboard entered into executive session to discuss appointments.**

At 8:35pm the Selectboard returned from executive session. H. Chandler state that the board had come to a conclusion on the appointments. **M. Thörn moved and J. Stanndard seconded to appoint Tom Smith and Liz Ruffa to the two vacant seats on the Dorset Selectboard, motion passed 3-0.**

#### **Other Business:**

Next regular meeting of the Selectboard will be April 12<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm, it is anticipated that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday schedule will be followed in the future.

**The Selectboard approved the weekly payroll and accounts payable by consensus in the form of reviewing and signing the warrants.**

R. Gaiotti presented a memo about organizing funds in advance of the Gettysburg Quarry land purchase, and that Town will be reimbursed by the grants after the closing. M. Thörn moved and J. Stannard seconded to approve the memo relative to arranging funds for the land purchase.

Discussion ensued about the Board appointment process. M.Thörn suggested the following:

- 1) Post & Publish a notice each time a seat term expires (annually and upon vacancy)**
- 2) Inquire with returning Board member about continuing service.**
- 3) Interviews:**
  - a. Designated Board (PC/ZBA etc) interviews candidates and makes a nomination**
  - b. Selectboard interviews all candidates and makes ultimate decision about appointment**

Discussion ensued about making sure that the Board appointment process was fair and available to anyone interested in serving. J. Stannard stated that sometimes the Board appointments end up being a lifetime appointment and it would be good for all to have a chance to serve.

**M. Thörn moved and J. Stannard seconded to adopt the suggested board appointment process moving forward, motion passed 3-0. R. Gaiotti should implement the process in the manner outlined above.**

**There being no further business to discuss the meeting stood adjourned at 8:55pm**

Respectfully Submitted,

Rob Gaiotti, Town Manager