

Dorset Selectboard Meeting Minutes

February 20, 2024

7p Town Offices & Via Zoom

Members Present: Megan Thorn, Henry Chandler, Jim Salsgiver, Liz Ruffa

Members Absent: Frank Parent

Other Present: Rob Gaiotti (Town Manager), (GNAT-TV), Bob Thompson, Roger Goldstein, Cathie Goldstein, Kit Wallace, Lindy Bowden, Susan Dortch, Pete Wyman, Billy Brownlee, Bill Drunic, Jim Hand, Kathie Dillman, Cliff McKinney, Mark Anders (BCRC), Emily Lewis (Dubois & King), David Poindexter, Sherri S, Charlie, Moto 6x, Ray Chen, Iphone, Justine Cook, Gay Squire, Roger Squire, Tyler Yandow (Zoning Administrator), Curtis Taylor, Maurie Hill,

Approve Meeting Minutes:

Jim Salsgiver noted that the meeting minutes should be amended to include the approval of the FY25 Town Budget to be sent to the voters at Town Meeting, on page 4. Jim Salsgiver moved and Liz Ruffa seconded to approve the January meeting minutes as presented, motion passed 4-0.

Public Comment:

None.

Dorset – Manchester Path Scoping Study (Dubois & King):

Emily Lewis presented the scoping study that was done for the Town as part of the bike/pedestrian grant program through VTrans. The concept for the study is to determine the feasibility and cost to connect Dorset Village to the Manchester Rail Trail via Route 30. The study came up with 2 options, one using solely Route 30 and North Road and one using Route 30, Morse Hill Road, Kelleher and Squires Roads. The grant funded \$45,000 of the \$55,000 study. Emily presented the different construction options from the preferred 10' wide path with a 5-8' grass buffer, path with a barrier, and bike lanes etc. The full cost estimate for the on Route 30 path was \$14.3 million, and the cost estimate for the Route 30 – Morse Hill/ Kelleher option was \$8.3 million. She noted that the only construction on Kelleher & Squires would be the connector trail, the rest would have signage added. She also noted that the costs were high because in parts of the project area, the centerline of Route 30 was being shifted to make space, which means the road would be reconstructed in this area. Discussion ensued as the public was able to ask questions and comment on the study. Justine Cook asked about costs and winter time

maintenance plans. Rob Gaiotti noted that the Town would have to determine which phases were the most suitable and how to pursue it. He noted that winter time maintenance would likely be in the form of a sidewalk plow. Mark Anders noted that there were two funding paths that the Town could look at: pursue grants with VTrans for design and construction, which would cover around 80% of the costs but could take 5-7 years; or fund the project locally and pursue design and construction on a phase that the Town thought most beneficial. Discussion ensued about the section from HN Williams Store to Raptor Lane. Jim Salsgiver asked whether the Town could break out certain sections to see the cost for each. Emily Lewis noted that the estimates included a per foot costs for each type of construction, so this could be done. Emily Lewis also noted that the Town could opt to take over part of Route 30 as a Class 1 highway, which would make some of the design and construction more flexible. Discussion ensued about overall costs and how to best review and approach the next steps for the Town. Mark Anders noted that good examples were the Stowe recreation path, Montpelier path, and the path on Route 67A in Bennington.

Rob Gaiotti noted that the Selectboard would need to formally approve the study in order to be eligible to move forward with VTrans grants for phases of the project. Jim Salsgiver moved and Liz Ruffa seconded to approve the Dorset – Manchester Path Scoping Study, motion passed 4-0.

Town Meeting Preparation:

Rob Gaiotti presented information related to the Board's presentation at the upcoming Town Meeting. Topics to present on include: FY25 budget, Town Office construction, Housing Task Force progress, Short Term Rental Ordinance, Zoning Bylaw Update, Infrastructure projects, Internet availability, and the Dorset – Manchester Path. Jim Salsgiver noted that the Board should thank the PC member at the meeting, because the Bylaw revision was a ton of work. Discussion ensued about which topics to elaborate on at the meeting.

Housing Task Force Update:

Liz Ruffa gave a brief overview of the meetings held thus far. The group will meet at least 4 more times in 2024. The central items being worked on are: 1. Regulation/Infrastructure, 2. Housing Trust/funding, 3. Raptor Lane options, 4. Messaging around housing in Dorset. She noted that the progress thus far had been very good and the Town is lucky to have such a good group of people working on such an important topic.

Short Term Rental Ordinance Draft:

Rob Gaiotti presented the draft STR ordinance. The document attempted to put together the aspects of the Manchester Village ordinance with aspects of other from around the State. In summary the document sets up a registry for the Town to better understand how many and the potential impacts of STRs. The document is very light on regulation, as it defers to the State Fire/Safety codes etc. Discussion ensued about the ordinance. It was noted that possible language around parking could be added, timely trash removal, and that the registration does

not run with the property/when a new owner purchases a new registration is required. Megan Thorn noted that the section on liability should be reviewed again by the Town attorney for clarification. Susan Dortch noted that she owned an STR in Dorset and had traveled to attend the meeting. She thanked the board for not proposing heavy handed regulation and that generally she thought the document was good. Discussion ensued about the timeline to adopt and getting an updated draft at the March meeting.

Sign Ordinance:

Rob Gaiotti presented the amended sign ordinance. He noted that the only changes were edits related to the naming of the zoning district references. This was due to the zoning bylaw changes from August 22nd. Jim Salsgiver moved and Henry Chandler seconded to approve the Sign Ordinance amendments as presented, motion passed 4-0.

Old Business/New Business:

New Town Office

Continue to work with Maclay on items that come up as they prepare for bidding etc. We expect to receive input from Naylor & Breen soon related to the bidding packages that are going out to vendors.

Read Farm Lane

The State instructed us that FEMA has indicated the updated Chantecleer application will likely be approved soon. The Town has conducted the title search for the property and awaits further instruction from the State.

The work to replace the railroad bridge has begun.

Route 30 & Route 7:

We are planning on having BCRC update a speed study in East Dorset again to see how the median speed is looking and will be in touch with VTrans about paving plans for Route 7 in hopes that the area north of Jiffy Mart can get a "road diet" (narrowed shoulders).

Little Mad Tom/ Tennis Way:

We have 2 of our 3 permits and a willing vendor. We are waiting for issuance of the USFS special use permit. After that the vendor will schedule to work to rebuild the berm. Long term weather looks decent. Hopefully this will be resolved before the next SB meeting.

Upper Hollow Lot:

Test Pits were positive, will begin to look into local permits to confirm site feasibility.

New Business:

Road Naming:

We have received a request from the Morrissey family off of Route 30 for a new road name.

Because there are 3 units, the State is requiring the road be named even though they are owned by members of the Morrissey family.
Name Options are: Morrissey Lane (preferred), Owls Head Drive, Wood Duck Lane. The Board will have to approve one option. Morrissey Lane should be fine as it doesn't conflict with other names already in use. Henry Chandler moved and Liz Ruffa seconded to approve the name Morrissey Lane, motion passed 4-0.

Finance Report:

Delinquent Taxes:

\$97,515 as of 2/15/24 (1 account is \$63,791), last year \$119,204

FY24:

We are 68% expended at the 64% mark in the fiscal year. Large invoices from Town Office project that will be reimbursed from the bond (\$110,000). Monthly expense like payroll, insurance, utilities.

Sinking Fund Balances:

ARPA: \$582,000 **Reappraisal:** \$195,044

Equipment: \$195,044 **Highway Paving:** \$203,388

Unemployment: \$50,882 **Land Records:** \$30,533

Town Buildings: \$11,383 **Highway Bridges:** \$10,141

Debt: Equipment Loan: \$0 2021 Town Office Bond: \$3,600,000 (bond rate: 4.01%)

Assets: 10 acres Upper Hollow Road / 308 acres Raptor Lane

Jim Salsgiver moved and Henry Chandler seconded to approve the monthly finance report, motion passed 4-0.

Manager's Report:

Highway:

- Winter Road treatment total so far: 18 (this covers anytime we plow or put down salt/stone on roads). Typically around 30-40 events in a winter.
- Equipment maintenance

Misc.:

- DFD is applying for construction permit to possibly add 500-750k in additional work to the current project. This will allow them to maximize grants.
- PACIF meetings in Montpelier
- Housing Committee Meetings – group is making good progress. Next meeting is February 21st.
- FY25 Budget work/ Town Meeting preparation
- Conservation Commission meeting related to land conservation and landowner workshop that the group is planning.
- Planning for 2024 Mountain Bike work and continued partnership with NATs
- We have been assisting the Vermont Huts Association, US Forest Service and Velemont Trail staff on landowner outreach and planning related to the Velemont Trail (see attached map). There is a movement to acquire and conserve up to 2,000 acres to help facilitate the trail and protect the environment.
- FEMA reimbursement work continues for the July storm. Total damages are around \$30,000.
- Drafting STR ordinance and research related to STRs.
- Taxes due March 12th.
- Rachel is planning out trails crew recruitment and work for the 2024 season.

Payroll & Accounts Payable:

It was the consensus of the Board to approve the weekly payroll and accounts payable warrants.

Other Business:

It was the consensus of the Board to sign the annual Highway Mileage and Roads/Standards documents for 2024.

Liz Ruffa moved and Henry Chandler seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:50pm, motion passed 4-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rob Gaiotti, Town Manager