

Town of Eden
71 Old Schoolhouse Rd
Eden Mills, VT 05653

December 13, 2022 Selectboard Meeting

The Eden Selectboard met at the Town Office on December 13, 2022. Present: Ricky Morin, Clayton Whittemore, Tim Bullard, Freeda Powers, Tracey Morin. Also present: Alec Jones, Salvador Morales and Tori Hellwig (Lamoille County Planning Commission), Craig Kneeland, Matt Mitchell (Eden Energy Committee), Leslie White (Trustee of Public Funds) and Scott Griswold (Northern Emergency Medical Services).

1. Open Meeting: Ricky opened the meeting at 6:03pm.
2. Additions and Deletions to the Agenda:
 - a.) Under #16: Town Health Officer's Monthly Report for Nov.
 - b.) Under #11: MRPG Annual Fee
3. Citizens Input: Craig Kneeland came before the Board saying he would like to see the Selectboard appoint an acting Town Clerk. The Board explained the current state of affairs as they pertain to the positions in town office. At this time, there is no legal reason or path for the Selectboard to appoint a new Town Clerk as Candace remains the acting Town Clerk & Treasurer while she is out on medical leave. There is a newly hired Assistant Town Clerk & Treasurer, Melissa Whitcomb who began October 31st and an interim Assistant Town Clerk & Treasurer, Tracey Morin, appointed on October 11th, who will assist in the office until Town Meeting Day unless circumstances change. Any business to be conducted at the Town Office at this time can be done.

Craig also asked the Board to reconsider allowing nonresidents to serve on committees as the EEC continues to seek new members. He said he has been in touch with the Secretary of State's office and understands there is not a statute requiring residency for committee members. There is an Eden community member who would be ideal to serve on the EEC and a great asset, but cannot due to the fact that he lives here only part of the year and is not a voting resident. The Board explained that this individual is welcome to join the EEC but can not be a voting member of the committee. The Board requested that Freeda draft a letter to express this to the individual inviting them to participate in the EEC if they so choose. Ricky voiced his perspective on this issue, giving value to his experience growing up in Eden and the strength that gives in his desire to preserve this special place. Community members help foster this sense of a unique Vermont place with pride because they, too, are tied to the area.
4. Eden Energy Committee: Craig Kneeland and Matt Mitchell from the Eden Energy Committee (EEC) came before the Board with an update on the proposed solar installation

at the town owned property across from Lake Eden Rec Area. The EEC members provided quotes for a 14.7 KW solar array from two companies: Green Mountain Solar and Sterling Mountain Solar. The quotes show an estimated cost for the solar array at roughly between \$40,000-\$45,000. Craig said these quotes are estimates only but gives us some guidance on the RFP to be drafted. He estimates the return on investment to be about six years but said that is unknowable for certain. He said anticipated locations to receive energy produced by this array would be the LERA campground, the Town Office and the Town Garage. If the array generates more power in a given month than the accounts use, that additional energy can be “held” for up to one year.

Tracey said she believes the town utility accounts are already benefiting from net-metering from the Old Deuso Road solar site as part of Eden 3E. Craig indicated he thought that was a different type of solar distribution altogether, called community solar which differs from net-metering. This led to some discussion about the different types of solar power distribution and what the rules around utilizing multiple solar credits are. The Board noted that the quotes provided do not include additional costs of the project including excavation/trenching/backfill, building permits as required, maintenance costs etc. and asked that the EEC come back to them at a future meeting with more details including a full cost estimate, a timeline of rate of return for the project and an annual maintenance plan. They estimate the total cost of this project at \$90k or more and said this must go before the voters for further discussion and a vote. The EEC will need to work with town office staff to draft an article for inclusion in the annual Town Meeting Warning. Craig said the EEC may request another meeting to further discuss the site itself. He inquired about the Good Neighbor Fund and requested that fund balance information be shared with him as the EEC also consider potential funding sources.

To accommodate those present, the Board went to Agenda item #6 next:

6. LHMP: Representatives from the Lamoille County Planning Commission (LCPC) came before the Board with draft updates to Eden’s Hazard Mitigation Plan, due to be updated by June 2023. The Board offered input and changes to be made by LCPC staff. The updated changes will be provided for the Board to review again at the 12/27/22 meeting. Public comment period is slated to begin in January.

Returning to the agenda:

5. NEMS: Scott Griswold came before the Board to answer any questions about the proposed FY23-24 Northern Emergency Medical Services (NEMS) budget. The budget increase of 3% is primarily due to increased costs in health insurance, medical supplies and fuel. They are seeking \$57,333 from Eden. Scott explained that looking at the numbers and data, they can see they are losing out on a great deal of revenue to mutual aid and lost transport opportunities. He explained again about unbillable calls, saying presently they cannot bill for 26.3% of all calls as they do not transport anyone. For this reason, they are adding a second night crew on Thurs, Fri and Sat.; they have always had two crews on day shifts. Scott explained where COVID related funds have been spent over the past year;

paying off the ambulance balance, replacing the NEMS building roof and additional building repairs. They are still receiving COVID related money and foresee an increase in those revenues in the future as they are now also authorized to distribute the COVID vaccination to those 6 mos. – 5 yrs. Scott reviewed the service numbers to date with the Board, noting that a final accounting and report will be submitted for inclusion in the Eden Town Report. To date, they have taken 1,596 calls this year compared to 1,436 total for all of last year. The Board thanked Scott for his time and for the useful data he is able to share.

7. Sign orders: Eight (8) orders were reviewed and signed.

At this time, Ricky made a motion to go into executive session under 1 V.S.A. § 313. The Board entered executive session at 7:25pm. The Board exited executive session at 7:37pm. No decisions were made.

8. Minutes: The Board reviewed the minutes of the 11/22 & 12/7 meetings. Ricky made a motion to approve the minutes of 11/22/22 and 12/7/22 as written. Tim seconded the motion. The Board voted 3-0.

9. Finance Update: Leslie and Tracey offered updates on the following items

a.) VMERS, the VT State retirement fund, offers a range of options for employees to enroll at different percentages. This had previously not been being offered to employees of Eden as it should be, and all employees were being assigned the same plan. Going forward, all employees will be shown the options offered by VMERS and select the plan that best works for them. Additionally, percentages matched by the State had previously been misstated in documents such as the Town Report and new employee paperwork. These corrections will be made to reflect accurate rates/percentages.

b.) Review of wages: Unemployment rates change Jan.1st. The increase in 2023 will put several positions in the Town of Eden below the legal minimum rate of pay. Since budget discussions are already taking place in December and January, it is advisable to begin reviewing employee wages for Town employees at this time as well rather than in June as we have done in the past. This allows us to be in line with State minimum wage laws and increase accuracy in budget prep. The Board agreed and will now review annual wage changes at the time of budget preparation.

c.) KBS: The Town's outside audit by Kittle Brannigan and Sargent is completed and the final report has been received; no major deficiencies were discovered. The audit did bring to light the importance of keeping all assets and funds fully secured, something the Trustees of Public Funds has been working to ensure going forward.

d.) Funds Investment: Leslie updated the Board on the status of funds investment plans with Edward Jones. She discussed interest rates, security and other banking partnership items with Community Bank as well.

e.) ARPA: American Rescue Plan Act funds, which the Board had been considering allocating to a new town office building, will no longer be spent in that way. With changes taking place in the town office, reconsideration was given to the need for a new building. At this time, we will now focus on remaining at the current location at 71 Old Schoolhouse Road, with funds going towards improved energy efficiency and potential expansion of the

existing building and improvements to the town garage. Details will be discussed at future meetings.

10. FY 23-24 Town Budget: The Board received a draft of the budget and a budget status report for review. This item will require additional time at a special meeting. The Board agreed to meet on Dec. 20th at 5pm to bring the proposed budget for FY23-24.

11. Road Commissioner's Report:

a.) From late additions: The MRPG Annual Fee is due; this is a state mandate regarding storm water runoff from town roads. Ricky made a motion to approve and sign the MRPG annual notice of intent form for submission to the State along with the fee of \$640. Tim seconded the motion. The Board voted 3-0.

b.) Ricky offered an update for the Highway Department, saying they have been clearing dead and fallen trees, cutting wood and burning brush. The new heating system has been installed in the Town Garage. They are currently awaiting the final contract to sign for the new town truck.

With plowing season upon us, the highway department requires residents to keep the town road right of way clear of vehicles and other items to allow the trucks and plows to pass without damaging either town or personal property. A property on Camp Road currently has a truck and a cement block in the plow path; the residents will be notified by letter requiring the items to be moved out of the ROW.

12. MRPG: This state mandate requires compliance with a percentage of road segments to be brought up to standards regarding features affecting storm water runoff (i.e., crown, berms, ditches). The first deadline for this newly implemented mandate is Dec. 31st 2022. We are on track to meet this deadline.

13. FEMA: The Board reviewed a draft agreement between CCS (bridge construction team) and the Town regarding remaining work on the Blakeville Road bridge replacement project. The Board offered changes to the document; Freeda will relay those changes to Stone Environmental (engineers on the project) for revision and the Board will revisit this document at a special meeting on Dec. 20th. Items to be completed next spring will be done at no additional cost to the Town and final payments for work on this project will be cut by Dec. 31st as per the FEMA agreement.

14. Grants:

a.) BBR FY23 application successfully submitted for Griggs Rd. culvert replacement.

b.) ANC FY23 application successfully submitted for Greeter Program 2023.

c.) MRPG FY22 finalized, successfully submitted for S. Pond Rd. work completed.

d.) RFPs: The Board discussed when and to whom the following request for bids should go out:

i. Blakeville Rd. BR15 concrete work

ii. Boy Scout Camp Rd. culvert replacement

iii. Albany Rd. culvert replacement: Force labor and Phil Morin will complete this work in 2023, so no further RFP solicitation is necessary.

15. Ratify Additions and Deletions of 11/22/22: None.
16. Other Business:
 - a.) The Board set 12/20/22 as a Special Meeting for budget review.
 - b.) From late additions: The Board received the Town Health Officer's November report.
17. FYI:
 - a.) Lamoille County draft budget provided; finalized Jan. 9th
 - b.) Town Report: Status update; we are in good shape with the draft report. Printing will take place the second week of February.
 - c.) Dog Bite Report received from Copley Hospital; no action required.
18. Adjourn: Ricky made a motion to adjourn. Clayton seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 9:25pm.

Minutes Approved as written on 12/27/22 by Ricky Morin, Clayton Whittemore, Tim Bullard.

Freeda Powers, Town Administrative Assistant