

Minutes from Selectboard Retreat, April 11, 2008

Selectboard Members Present: Chairman Gerard Chapdelaine, Ed Childs, Alison May, Suzanne Lupien and Sarah Nunan.

Audience members: Virginia Close, Anne Garrigue, Betty Barba, Liz Tuggle, and briefly Stephen Soares.

Meeting Opened at 4:03PM

1. **Discussion about Selectboard Minutes Procedure:** After discussing the past history of the minutes in Norwich and stating what the Vermont Statutes required, it was agreed upon that the minutes would:
 - a. The draft would be written by Nancy Kramer.
 - b. It would be emailed to ALL (every SB member) with a deadline.
 - c. Any issue, addition or alteration must be replied to ALL.
2. **Discussion on Agenda Procedure:** After a discussion of how past Selectboards have handled the agenda it was agreed:
 - a. Town Manager Soares and Chairman Chapdelaine would create agenda on the Wednesday before the meeting
 - b. The draft agenda would be sent out to the other Selectboard members on Thursday for suggestions or additions.
 - c. The agenda would be made public on Friday.
3. **Discussion on Length of Meetings:** suggestions on how Chairman Chapdelaine could keep the meetings to a reasonable length included upholding the 3 minute speaking rule, setting reasonable time limits on known presentations, and setting presentations with a specific time on the agenda with the hope of completing business scheduled on the agenda before the set time. It was noted and agreed by all Selectboard members present that the intent of these suggestions was not to curtail public comment or input, but to run a more efficient meeting. It was suggested that the executive session could be conducted on a separate day or before the meetings, and after a review of what each Board member preferred it was decided that no change would be made other than trying to run the regular meeting in a timely fashion.
4. **Discussion on addressing public questions:** Lupien asked what kind of a policy the board could agree on to address pointed questions from the public, since she felt that often questions were met with silence and not answered during the meetings. A discussion ensued regarding whether or not all members should reply to the question or whether or not the board should reply as a board. Childs made the point that it often was not possible to answer with out looking up fact, but he felt that it was important to acknowledge all questions. The board agreed that there were different kinds of questions and that they should be handled differently:

- a. If the question was informational: the board will ask the person to write a letter or send an email to the Board and the Town Manager. The Town Manager would then look up the information, and the letter/email would be placed under the correspondence at the next meeting. The Selectboard would then discuss the letter and come to a decision as a Board and reply, with the help of the Assistant to the Town Manager, in writing.
 - b. If the question was confrontational: then the issue being raised would be placed on the agenda of the next Selectboard meeting (and if necessary researched by the Town Manager).
5. **Discussion regarding Correspondence on Agenda:** Lupien asked if a synopsis of each letter/email under the Correspondence could be given by one member of the Board at each meeting. The Board agreed and delegated that responsibility to Nunan. It was also discussed that the letters could not be placed on the website before the meetings, because they had not yet been received by the Board (by vote). Also regarding the agenda it was suggested that Chairman Chapdelaine always say the next item number on the agenda and describe the nature of the item.
6. **Discussion on Pending items on the Agenda:** The memorandum (dated 4/11/08) regarding setting dates for the Pending items on the Agenda was discussed. It was agreed that the "Other" monetary articles be switched from September 24, 2008 to June 11, 2008. It was suggested by May that a Kendall Station update should be given at every meeting. Childs recommended that the two items regarding the Public Safety Facility and the Capital budget/Strategic planning should be combined into one separate and special meeting. May stated the Board would need to have a directional discussion for the public to weigh in on. The date of the meeting was not chosen, but it was agreed on that this meeting should occur either at the end of May or beginning of June 2008.
7. **Discussion regarding BCA:** Chapdelaine referred to the sheet that Jack Candon made up last year that was to help organize citizens who were unfamiliar with the process. Concerns were raised about the unprofessional manner of the process, unprepared applicants, lack of education on the BCA's part. It was suggested that the informational/organizational sheet be given to the Listers with the intent that they mail it out with the decisions, so that the tax payer has a clear and immediate understanding of how to appeal. The amount of money spent this past year on legal fees was discussed and there is a desire by the Board to see the breakdown on that figure to see how much was on tax appeals. The manner in which assessments are conducted was discussed. It was agreed that an organizational meeting with ALL members of the BCA members would be helpful, and that someone should very respectfully ask the Town Clerk to set this up. It was also suggested that the scheduling of the appeals be made immediately, that choosing a date should not be deferred, since that appeared to lead to problems last year.
8. **Discussion of BOA:** A brief discussion defining the role of the BOA was followed by the suggestion that Board should be more firm and consistent this coming year.

9. **Discussion of Committees:** A discussion on the rules regarding committees was started by defining listing the differences between a Town Manager Committee and a Selectboard Committee. Lupien raised the concern of a Selectboard member's role when on a committee. Nunan raised the issue of proper process and how "grey areas" lead to future conflict with the public regarding transparency.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:17PM

Approved by the Selectboard on May 28, 2008.

Minutes submitted by Sarah Nunan 4/16/08

Gerard Chapdelaine
Selectboard Chair