

MINUTES  
GUILFORD SELECTBOARD  
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2015 AT 6:30 P.M.  
GUILFORD TOWN OFFICE

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Meeting called to order at 6:30 p.m.

**II. RECOGNITION OF PUBLIC**

Town Officials and Staff Present: Anne Rider-Chair, Sheila Morse, Dick Clark, Troy Revis, Jr., Gabrielle Ciuffreda – Selectboard; Penny Marine – Town Clerk/Treasurer/Delinquent Tax Collector; Rebecca Stone – Town Administrator.

Others Present: Shaun Murphy, Steve Lembke, Dan Ingold, Ian Kiehle - BCTV

**III. NEW ADDITIONS**

Town Administrator wished to add a personnel matter. Selectboard will discuss in Executive Session.

**IV. CHANGES TO AGENDA ORDER**

None.

**V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Troy made a motion to approve minutes of August 24, 2015 meeting. Sheila seconded. Gabby abstained. Motion carried.

**VI. NEW BUSINESS**

Delinquent Tax Collector – Penny Marine

Anne explained that Penny was asked to come in to provide an update on tax collection efforts. Penny indicated she was appointed as the Delinquent Tax Collector in January 2015. She explained that after several months of research by her, Peter Hetzel, Elly Majonen, and attorney Jodi French (at no charge) that a policy and procedure manual is now in place to assist in collection of delinquent taxes. Penny explained that letters were sent to delinquent taxpayers explaining the need to set up payment agreements. As of October 2014, tax delinquencies totaled \$512,000. As of July 1, 2015, \$290,000 is outstanding. Information was given to taxpayers via a letter in January 2015. Penny noted that the penalty for non-payment is at 8%, but that the penalty goes to the town general fund, not to the Delinquent Tax Collector. Up until this year, the penalty fees went to the Delinquent Tax Collector. Penny explained that they have collected \$8,000 in penalties so far this year. Penny explained that delinquent tax lists are public information, however, individual payment agreements with landowners are not. Penny explained that monthly reports are available as well. Sheila asked what the previous practice was for collecting back taxes versus now. Penny said it was not enforced. Sheila wondered if the policy is on the Town website. Penny said she will view the website. Dick commented that considering the state of the economy, that a wonderful job has been done. Steve asked about the old policy, that properties would go for tax sale after a year, and if that is the case now. Penny explained the process and noted that it is at her discretion to work with the landowner, and that the town does not want to own properties. If an agreement is set up, and comes into default, then the next step will be taken. Steve noted that the Town Report shows who is delinquent and wonders if it is a realistic policy. Penny said she works with the landowners and that it is a work in progress. Penny explained that in January, 76 bills were overdue. As of July 1<sup>st</sup>, only 42 were overdue. Sheila commented that 40% of outstanding taxes have been collected so far and wondered about the other 60%. Penny said she feels pretty comfortable with the efforts to collect the remaining, noting she has written 10 agreements since July 1<sup>st</sup>. Steve noted that \$336,000 were outstanding in the 2014 Town Report and wondered how the outstanding went to \$512,000 in October 2014. Penny explained it went up because tax bills are due in October. Steve asked how much time is spent on these efforts. Penny could not give an estimate since she also

serves as Town Clerk and Treasurer. Becky offered positive remarks on the time Penny takes working with landowners in order to set up payment plans. Penny felt that the collection efforts are manageable.

#### Website Updates – Penny Marine

Discussed updating the Town website with policies adopted by the Selectboard. Anne asked Penny if she had any concerns with posting the policies. Penny explained that there is a fine line between Personnel Policies and other town policies. Dick not in favor of posting Personnel Policy on the website. Sheila said they should be on the website, that the Personnel Policy should be on the website, not individual personnel records. Dick expressed concerns with information that is available in the private sector versus public sector and that there is a fine line there. Gabby stated they are public documents approved at public meetings. Discussed posting the Drub & Alcohol policy and Penny agreed it can be posted. Penny indicated that once the policies are signed off by the Selectboard they can be put on the website. Penny remarked that the Town has a good website and that they she can add a Policy tab to it and the policies can be uploaded. It was noted the Penny is the Administrator of the website. Troy did not have any new comments about the posting of the policies on the website. Steve asked how many policies there were and it was noted there are twelve. Becky presented a list of adopted policies and two policies which are in draft form, an Investment Policy and a Debt Management Policy. Anne noted that in viewing the previous meeting minutes that the Selectboard has already approved getting the currently adopted policies posted on the website. Discussed the Delinquent Tax Collector Policy & Procedure. Sheila felt that the Selectboard should approve the policy portion of the policy & procedure that the Delinquent Tax Collector has in place. Anne felt more information was needed before the Selectboard could make a decision.

#### Industrial Park Solar Project – Dan Ingold

Dan came before the Selectboard and presented a diagram and layout of the land in the Exit 1 Industrial Park at the end of John Seitz Drive for the proposed solar project, referencing several landowners in the area. Dan stated that the initial site for the project moved from land in Brattleboro to land in Guilford on property which will be leased from BDCC. Dan note there are 3.5 acres of BDCC land, 3.3 acres of which are in Guilford with .2 acres in Brattleboro. This being the case, Guilford will get the tax benefits. Dan explained access to the site is limited since you can no longer access it from Partridge Road as that has grown in past the Young property leaving only a foot path. In July this year, legislation for solar projects requires a 50' setback from property lines and if on a municipal road, it is 100'. Because this is not a municipal road, the 100' setback does not apply. The Guilford line does not meet the 50' setback requirement, however, specific to the net metering law, solar projects are allowed by statute to ask for a resolution/variance to the setback requirements. Dan offered that he has already had an aesthetic report done and there are no adverse effects. Gabby asked for an explanation on the map of where the Guilford/Brattleboro line is. Dan commented that he sites projects in locations where they will have no visual impact. Dan presented Vermont state statute. Steve asked about the timeframe of the project. Dan noted it is based on a 25 year span. Dick made a motion to be it further resolved, that in connection with the net-metered solar electric generation facility proposed by GLC Powersmith Solar, LLC for 380 John Seitz Drive, the Guilford Selectboard agrees to waive the 50-foot setback from the northern property boundary, which abuts the Exit One Industrial Park, consistent with Title 30, Section 248(s)(3)(B) of the Vermont Statutes Annotated. Sheila seconded. Unanimous. Motion carried.

Blanchard Hill Solar Project: Dan noted this solar project is going through the Section 248 process, through the Department of Public Safety and said that no concerns have been expressed, and he referenced the Agency of Natural Resources requirements and comments.

Options for Guilford Residents: Dan has written an article for the *Guilford Gazette* explaining options for community solar and solar projects in general and hopes that it answers any questions people may have. He encouraged people to contact him if they do have questions. Selectboard thanked him for making the information available to everyone.

### Conservation Commission Appointment

Received a note from Linda Hecker, Chair of the Conservation Commission, indicating Gordon Little is interested in serving on the Conservation Commission. Troy made a motion to appoint Gordon Little to the Conservation Commission. Sheila seconded. Unanimous. Motion carried.

### FY16 Budget Process/Establishment of Finance Committee

Anne asked to have the concept of establishing a Finance Committee on the agenda as a budgeting mechanism and wants to know how other members feel, pros and cons. Dick indicated that he thought two farmers since they are on fixed incomes, one member of the road crew and the Town Clerk should be on the Finance Committee. Sheila thought that it makes a lot of sense to have a Finance Committee and she spoke to the capital and operating budgets. Since Shaun had expressed an interest in serving on a finance committee, the Selectboard asked if he had any comments. Shaun indicated that he currently serves on the school board and is on a finance committee which has already begun budget discussions. Discussed the operating budget versus the capital plan budget and the role the Finance Committee may play. Since the Selectboard will be reviewing the operating budget and establishing a capital planning budget, Sheila felt that having extra help with budgeting would be good. Gabby expressed that having a Finance Committee would be beneficial and may provide for consistency if Selectboard members change or if there are staff changes. Shaun commented on town building upgrades since he had expressed concerns earlier this year and that nothing has been done going into the heating season. Anne said that capital planning and building maintenance items are moving forward going into the next budget cycle. No improvements to town buildings had been built into the current budget so they could not be addressed this fiscal year. Dick and Gabby talked about the role of a Finance Committee and process. Anne felt that one member of a Finance Committee could include one Selectboard member. Becky highly recommended establishing a five-member Finance Committee, acting in an advisory capacity to the Selectboard, and spoke briefly about the benefits. Selectboard to explore more, draft role of Finance Committee, check with VLCT in preparation for the next meeting. All were in agreement with the concept of establishing a Finance Committee.

### Capital Improvement Plan & Budget

Sheila commented on the draft memo and project request form that Becky gave to the Selectboard for review at the previous meeting that will be issued to staff requesting capital projects and five-year projections. Sheila wants not only projects listed from departments, but assets as well. She felt the memo should be issued to town administration, highway, and library, not to all town officials. Sheila felt that the draft project request form for departments to submit back to the Selectboard was actually mixing capital and operating budget expenses. Troy felt that they already had in place the list of assets. More discussion needed. Sheila to follow up with Becky to finalize the memo and project request form. Tabled.

## **VII. OLD BUSINESS**

### Wellness Programs – Vermont League of Cities & Towns

In follow up to the presentation by VLCT staff at a recent Selectboard meeting, Anne received feedback from the Road Commissioner that they are not opposed to having someone come in to talk with staff about wellness programs. Becky sent an email to other staff for their comments about the programs and received no response. Selectboard in favor of inviting Heidi Joyce from VLCT to set up an orientation session with staff.

Flood Plain Administrator: Steve Lembke announced that he had attended a recent Flood Plain Administrator training and asked if the Selectboard would prefer a written report or a meeting with him. Selectboard asked him to set up a time on a future agenda. Steve will also forward a report to the Selectboard via the Town Administrator in preparation for their meeting with him.

## VIII. HIGHWAY

### General Update

Dick provided an update. Mowing continues. Dick stated that 400' of Guilford Center Road is going into the brook and that work on the road needs to be done as soon as possible. Projected costs are unknown. Dick also noted the bottom has fallen out of a bridge on Hale Road and it is a top priority to get fixed as well with a possible estimate of \$200,000 to \$250,000. Troy explained that it is a one-lane, corrugated bridge. Selectboard asked about involving VTrans staff and whether it is a hazard mitigation project. Anne will be following up with Dan. Gabby asked if a plan is in place for addressing these issues. Per Dick, engineers are working on cost estimates. Becky commented that Dan had told her a few weeks ago that the paving that was approved for Guilford Center Road a month ago is not happening due to the erosion and that the paving was going to be done somewhere else in town. Dick stated the paving would be done on Weatherhead Hollow Road instead.

## IX. FINANCE

### Payroll & Expense Warrants

#### Warrants:

○ PR 08/30/2015	\$ 4,874.95
○ PR 09/06/2015	\$ 5,936.07
○ PR 09/13/2015	\$ <u>6,472.22</u>
Subtotal	\$ 17,283.24
○ Warrant #1605	\$ 26,289.21
○ Warrant #05DP	\$ <u>93.50</u>
Total	\$ 43,665.95

Troy made a motion to approve warrants as presented. Dick seconded. Dick had a comment, as a point of interest, for announcing in more detail during the meetings what the warrants were paying for. Discussed if there were large warrants, the Board could comment on specific items. Selectboard in agreement and thought it was a good idea to begin this practice. Unanimous. Motion carried.

## X. COMMUNICATIONS

- VT Agency of Natural Resources (ANR), Office of Planning & Legal Affairs – GLC Powersmith Tinker Hill Solar LLC – ANR comments and conditions on the project
- Sweet Pond Celebration – Saturday, September 19<sup>th</sup> from Noon to 3:00 p.m. at Sweet Pond State Park (rain date Sunday, Sept 20<sup>th</sup>). Anne made the announcement. RSVP to Linda Hecker.
- Town Health Officer – received copy of letter as sent by our Town Health Officer regarding 111 Johnson Pasture
- Windham County Humane Society – August Report

## XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Sheila made a motion to enter into Executive session at 7:43 p.m. to discuss a personnel matter and invited the Town Administrator to join. Gabby seconded. Unanimous. Motion carried.

Open session resumed at 7:52 p.m. Anne read a letter of resignation received from Rebecca Stone as Town Administrator effective October 2, 2015. Troy made a motion to accept with utmost regret and appreciation. Gabby seconded. Unanimous. Motion carried. Anne thanked Becky for her service to the town and for getting caught up on various items and helping to get policies in place.

Troy made a motion to adjourn at 7:54 p.m. Dick seconded. Unanimous. Motion carried.

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Anne Rider, Chair

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Sheila Morse

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Richard Clark

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Gabrielle Ciuffreda

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Troy Revis, Jr.