

**TOWN OF CHARLOTTE
SELECTBOARD
MINUTES OF MEETING
NOVEMBER 21, 2011**

APPROVED

MEMBERS PRESENT: Charles Russell, Chairperson; John Owen, Ed Stone, Dennis Delaney. Winslow Ladue.

ADMINISTRATION: Dean Bloch, Selectboard Assistant.

OTHERS PRESENT: Richard Weed, Peter Joslin, Hillary Machaire, P B Machaire, Todd Smith, Gerald Bouchard, Robert Paul, David Pill, David Allen, Jonathan Fairbanks, Robert Bloch, Nancy Bloch, Gordon Brown, Dorothy Pellett, Sylvia Knight, Mary Mead, Jill Paul, Ellie Russell, Jenny Cole, Kathy Blume, Hugh Lewis Jr, Carrie Spear, Mary Illick, Bob Hyams, Margaret Foster, Jason Bacon, Nina Bacon, Jennifer Chiodo, Catherine Hughes, Carleen Tufo, Vince Crockenberg, Jeff Bradley, Bonnie Christie, Stephen Kernan, Robin Reid, Robbie Stanley, Dean Leary, Virginia Foster, James Foster, Jonathan Freese, Raven Davis, Paula Joslin, Erica Finlay, Robin Coleburn, Peggy Eastman, Rick Tonino, Andrea Hall Rogers, Robert Coleburn, Jane Lawlis, Jessie Bradley, Nancy Wood, Charlotte News; Carol Casey, Charlotte Citizen; and others.

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Russell, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

ADJUSTMENTS TO AGENDA

None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Knight, resident, reviewed a May, 2009 Selectboard letter to the Public Service Board regarding application of herbicide concerns at the Charlotte VELCO substation by VELCO. Studies were done to monitor herbicides in the wetlands. Herbicides were detected in the water in July. There are concerns regarding contamination of surface and ground water, said Ms. Knight.

TOWN SOLAR PROJECT ON THOMPSON'S POINT – Power Purchase Agreement with All Earth Renewables to buy or lease 14 solar trackers capable of producing 60 kW for three five-year periods, or lease land where trackers are located to All Earth Renewables – Discussion only

Ms. Davis, resident, spoke in support of utilizing small solar projects to produce energy for the Town and to move away from carbon producing coal energy.

Mr. Bacon, Thompson's Point camp owner and Charlotte taxpayer, asked if there was a better place to install a 'very in your face' solar array than on the Thompson's Point conservation land.

Ms. (Meg) Foster, Lime Kiln Road, asked if the Town knew who would own the carbon credits involved in the project. She understood that the carbon credits could be bundled and sold to energy polluters. The polluters would benefit from the carbon credits, so savings would be a wash, stated Ms. Foster. Mr. Bloch replied that All Earth Renewables would retain the credits. Ms. Chiodo clarified that the credits were renewable energy credits, not carbon credits. The credits would be sold to someone for green energy, stated Ms. Chiodo.

Ms. Knight spoke in support of the project, and asked the assemblage to re-examine their concerns for esthetic values in exchange for a local renewable energy project. She was installing a solar hot water heater. The equipment would be placed in her front yard where she could see it, but the idea of renewable energy outweighed the visual impacts. Concerns and values need to expand beyond pre-conceived notions, said Ms. Knight.

Mr. Machaire, a native Vermonter, read prepared statements related to the pros/cons of solar projects. It takes a lot of research to discover concerns/impacts regarding solar energy projects. There could be someone in Town that could volunteer 125 acres of land for the solar project versus on Thompson's Point. The solar panels, like the ones in Shelburne, are an eyesore, said Mr. Machaire.

Mr. Weed said that people should rejoice the use of non-polluting energy. He enjoyed driving up Route 7 in Shelburne and seeing the solar panels, said Mr. Weed.

Ms. Eastman, Thompson's Point resident, said she had passive energy at her home and enjoys solar energy. She also enjoys walking around Thompson's Point. The Town seems to be forcing the solar project down our throats. The Town should listen to Town's people, said Ms. Eastman.

Mr. Crockenberg, resident, said he supported Mr. Weed's points. He walks Thompson's Point and would take pleasure if a sign was put up that 'this project generates power for the Town buildings'. This is a no-cost and risk free way to reduce energy costs for the Town. There are no guarantees, but sometimes you have to take risks, said Mr. Crockenberg.

Ms. (Virginia) Foster, said she was not worried about Thompson's Point individuals, but there are plenty of places where a solar project could be placed.

Ms. Paul, resident, noted that her family has lived in Charlotte for 100 years, and read a written statement regarding the location of the project. The Town should seek other options, said Ms. Paul.

Mr. Joslin, Charlotte Planning Commission member, reviewed that the Planning Commission consideration of the proposed solar array project was guided by the Town Plan and Land Use Regulations.

Mr. Joslin read a written report regarding the opinions of three Planning Commission members that the project was not consistent with the Town Plan, Sections 4.4.5, Natural Resources, 4.5.4, Thompson's Point (page 71), Charlotte Tomorrow, 5.5.1, 5.5, Natural Resources, 5.5.3, 5.8.12, utilities and 5.10, Energy.

Ms. Russell, Charlotte Planning Commission member, said that the other three Planning Commission members felt that the solar panel project was suitable and acceptable at Thompson's Point. There were no adverse impacts of high public value. Two members were not enthused about the project location, but suggested moving it further south. One member thought that the proposed location was satisfactory. Views at that site would not be impacted seriously. The Town has a moral obligation to reduce emissions as a goal, said Ms. Russell.

Ms. Lawlis, resident, thanked Mr. Joslin for the Town Plan points brought forth that the Town voted on in 2008. The three Planning Commission member's opinions should hold weight. The project should not be put in a conservation district, said Ms. Lawlis.

Mr. Hyams, Conservation Commission Chair, read a written report regarding the process the Conservation Commission took to evaluate the proposed project upon the request of the Selectboard related to issues of high public value impacts. The commission conducted site visits and found habitat, agricultural and watershed impacts were minimal. The commission voted 5 in favor and 1 abstention, said Mr. Hyams.

Mr. Leary, resident, read written statements and questions regarding what goals the Town wanted to achieve, speculation of electric rates, and if the Town has explored other sources of energy and costs. What were the performance requirements, asked Mr. Leary.

Mr. (Robert) Bloch, Thompson's Point camp owner, reviewed the values and assets at Thompson's Point. He has a vested interest on Thompson's Point. The Burns property is ideal except the Town needs Land Trust permission. Plouffe Lane needs a power source, and the Town Hall property could be used, but has wetlands. The Town should follow the Town Plan. The Town doesn't need the project right this second, said Mr. Bloch.

Ms. Blume, Transition Town Charlotte Chair, spoke in support of bringing the community together regarding reduction of carbon. Climate change is a challenge globally, and it will get worse. We need to transition to renewables and the Town needs to join the discussion, said Ms. Blume.

Mr. Weissbalm thanked the Selectboard for trying to do something. People read about saving energy, and yet switch on their cars, lights and all contribute to the carbon dioxide loads. He supported the project, but more could be done. Time was short and subsidies go away. There may be more programs next year. There is so much land in Charlotte that a less visible place could be found. He hoped that those in opposition would take their energy and apply it to finding a solution, said Mr. Weissbalm.

Mr. Tonino, Thompson's Point, read a written statement in favor of solar, but at a better site, such as at Lane's Lane, and reviewed historical points/visitors to the area.

Mr. (Dean) Bloch thanked the assemblage for the discussion which was conducted in a civil and respectful tone.

The Selectboard would meet on Friday, November 25, at 3:30 p.m. for further consideration of the proposed solar tracker project.

(The Selectboard Chair called a break from 7:01 p.m. – 7:15 p.m.)

MINUTES

Approval of minutes was deferred to the next Board meeting.

GRANTS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING FROM THE CHARLOTTE HOUSING TRUST FUND – action under consideration: approve \$30,000 construction grant to Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity

Ellie Russell, Gordon Brown, and Alan Jordan, Charlotte Housing Trust Fund, and David Mullin, developer, appeared on behalf of a grant request.

MOTION by Mr. Ladue, seconded by Mr. Owen, to approve a \$30,000 construction grant from the Charlotte Housing Trust Fund to Green Mountain Habitat for Humanity as presented.

DISCUSSION:

Ms. Russell reviewed two previous applications funded by the Charlotte Housing Trust fund that included three units at the Steven Davis development on Hinesburg Road. Mr. Davis requested an additional \$10,000 for a fourth unit, but it was denied. A \$5,000 request by Alan Jordan for a feasibility study for five Habitat for Humanity units has been approved by the Trust Board. The Trust Board recommends that the Selectboard approved the request.

Mr. Mullin, Green Mountain Habitat Executive Director, explained proposed site plans for three single family units and one duplex unit. The first unit built would be a single family. The units would be an air tight configuration that would be 80 percent comparable to a passive energy efficient home. To have passive would be \$30,000 each added.

Mr. Stone said that he had reviewed with Ms. Russell why the Selectboard had started the Charlotte Housing Trust Fund. There were people who lived in and/or worked in Charlotte that could not afford an apartment here, such as teachers, or fire fighters. Then Mr. Davis came to the group with plans to build more affordable homes. He was given \$30,000 to put in better grades of windows, furnaces, etc. But that was not the reason we did the program. He didn't agree to give \$30,000 for housing for people outside of Charlotte. Would Mr. Mullin agree to give one house for a Charlotte family, asked Mr. Stone. Mr. Mullin said he could not guarantee

that affordable housing would go to a Charlotte resident. Mr. Stone said that was why he could not approve the request.

Mr. Mullin explained that Habitat for Humanity had an open application process, and families were chosen based upon need. If a Charlotte, or Vergennes family applied and had the need, then that family would have a better chance. We help families get out of sub-standard housing, said Mr. Mullin.

Mr. Delaney spoke in support of the program. Charlotte families that work in Charlotte should be a plus in the decision process, said Mr. Delaney. Mr. Mullin said he agreed 100 percent that would weigh heavier in the decision process.

Mr. Mullin said that one of the three homes would go to a Charlotte family. There were two other families that didn't qualify, reported Mr. Mullin.

Mr. Stone reiterated that the Town voters voted to provide funds for Charlotte residents to put in affordable apartments on their properties. Habitat for Humanity can get funding elsewhere, pointed out Mr. Stone. Ms. Russell stated that there was grant money available for apartments, but there were no applications this year.

Mr. Stone said that with the tight economy the Housing Trust Fund might not receive more funding this year at Town Meeting. The money was for Charlotte families, said Mr. Stone.

Mr. Owen asked if the \$56,000 remaining in the Trust Fund budget was for new requests. Ms. Russell replied yes, and reviewed that the Trust would seek advertising money to try and get word out to Charlotte residents.

Mr. Ladue noted that the Town had changed zoning to create more affordable housing, and made other adjustments. The Housing Trust committee should check back with the Selectboard regarding the program for adjustments and re-evaluation, noted Mr. Ladue.

There was further discussion regarding funding for the Habitat for Humanity project, and concerns that no affordable apartments were being built for Charlotters.

VOTE: 4 ayes, 1 nay (Mr. Stone); motion carried.

Ms. Russell reviewed that Nancy Sabin has a commitment for a 5 acre density transfer, but has requested an extension for her application.

The Selectboard would add Nancy Sabin's request to the November 25, 2011 agenda.

BUDGET REVIEW

Charlotte Housing Trust Fund Committee

Ms. Russell reviewed a proposed FY2012 budget that included a \$500 request to upgrade and distribute a brochure and \$30,000 for the Trust fund at March Town Meeting.

Mr. Stone asked Ms. Russell if the committee had contacted the Fire/Rescue departments and the school. Ms. Russell replied she has not done so. Mr. Brown said he would talk to the Fire Department and the school.

Ms. Russell said that a second \$10,000 would be needed for Ms. Sabin's second apartment next year. Also, the Selectboard would need to appoint a Housing Committee.

Road Commissioner

Mr. Lewis reported that dirt road upgrades were completed this year, with the exception of Thompson's Point Road, which was a seasonal road. The gravel pit was covered over and gravel would now be taken from Shelburne or Ferrisburgh pits.

There was discussion regarding road line stripping for safety, the need to post roads related to the recently passed 35 mph ordinance at a cost of \$100 per sign, and two bridges that need repairs. Mr. Ladue said that the bridge repairs have been discussed. There were grants to study and to repair/build the bridges, said Mr. Ladue.

Mr. Russell suggested establishing a policy regarding buried utilities.

Mr. Lewis said he had no worries regarding a salt supply.

The Selectboard thanked Mr. Lewis for his report.

Energy Committee

Ms. Hughes and Ms. Chiodo, Energy Committee representatives, reviewed a request for matching funds in order to apply for grants. The committee was working on a Dark Sky initiative, which was a UVM program, and a PACE program. A solar project analysis was done, said Ms. Hughes.

Mr. Russell said that the Land Use Regulations need clarity regarding lighting standards.

Mr. Ladue said that the Charlotte Library furnace replacement was a candidate for an Energy Committee project. Could geo-thermal heating be possible for the Town buildings. The committee should contact Larry Becker, State Geologist, suggested Mr. Ladue.

Ms. Chiodo said that if the solar project did not go forward, then the committee could research alternate options with a focus on how the Town Plan addresses renewable energy.

The committee would continue to track energy use at the Town buildings.

Intramurals

Ms. Stone reviewed a spreadsheet draft of the Intramural budget.

Mr. Stone said that an individual had asked the Town to add \$900 to accommodate private use of a gym or school space. Ms. Stone said that those requests were not a part of her budget. There was a scholarship fund for Charlotte youths. The fund could be used by adults as long as the donors knew it was for Charlotte children and adults, said Ms. Stone.

Lewis Creek Association

Ms. Illick and Ms. Raven reviewed a summary report of last year's budget and a projected draft budget. Volunteers were needed to continue controlling the Frogbit infestation. Each town would need a coordinator. The Conservation Commission would be the Town's overseer of the project, and fund it through their budget. The Lake Stewardship portion was \$4,000, and \$600 was for the annual project budget, said Ms. Illick.

Mr. Delaney pointed out that the Park Oversight Committee was considering the use of correctional center inmates for park projects. Ms. Illick explained that there was a list of volunteers. Two Frogbit problem areas were identified and if the Town will support the Frogbit control project, then the program could be expanded, said Ms. Illick.

Mr. Ladue would contact Mr. Hyams, Conservation Commission Chair.

The Selectboard thanked Ms. Illick and Ms. Raven for their presentation.

EMPLOYEE HEALTH INSURANCE – action under consideration: approve plan(s) offered to employees to go into effect on January 1, 2012

Mr. Russell briefly reviewed two employee health insurance plans options for consideration to replace the current plan that was no longer available.

There was discussion regarding the Vermont League of Cities and Towns plan, a \$11,900 deductible to be paid by the Town, a total cost that would remain relatively the same as the current plan, and separate dental benefits that staff had researched.

MOTION by Mr. Stone, seconded by Mr. Owen, to approve the VACE 90-10 plan offered through Vermont League of Cities and Towns for Charlotte employees to go into effect on January 1, 2012.

VOTE: 5 ayes; motion carried.

WAITSFIELD AND CHAMPLAIN VALLEY TELECOM – REQUEST TO REPLACE 100 FOOT SECTION OF CABLE NEAR THE INTERSECTION OF GUINEA ROAD AND SPEAR STREET – action under consideration: approve request

MOTION by Mr. Owen, seconded by Mr. Ladue, to approve a request by Waitsfield and Champlain Valley Telecom to replace a 100 foot section of 12-pair cable in line with existing pedestals 38 and 38-1 near the intersection of Guinea Road and Spear Street.

VOTE: 4 ayes, 1 nay (Mr. Stone); motion carried.

Selectboard members signed the documents.

SELECTBOARD UPDATES

Mr. Owen asked if the Selectboard would be conducting employee evaluations. Mr. Russell suggested adding evaluations to a February agenda

Mr. Ladue asked if the Town was interested in participating in an air photographic program. Mr. Bloch replied he was not sure there was interest. A question was if the Town wanted to pay for the photographic updates, said Mr. Bloch.

APPROVAL OF BILLS AND WARRANTS

The Selectboard signed bills and warrants.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Mr. Stone, seconded by Mr. Owen, to adjourn the meeting.

VOTE: 5 ayes; motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Kathlyn Furr, Recording Secretary