



1
2 **Selectboard Regular Meeting Minutes**

3 **Thetford Town Offices**

4 **Monday October 8th 2018 at 7:00pm**

5
6 Stuart Rogers called the meeting to order at 7:05pm.

7 Selectboard members in attendance: Stuart Rogers, Cathee Clement, Richard Krzal,
8 Li Shen, Douglas Stone. Community members in attendance: John Bacon, Tara
9 Bamford, Sue Tallman, Curtis Richardson, Chris Senger, Sarah Martel (Town
10 Moderator), Joanne Kirsten, Tracy Borst (Town Clerk).

11 **Public Comment:** John Bacon reported that brush needed to be cut back on the
12 corner of Tucker Hill Road and Rt 132. There is also no Stop line where Tucker Hill
13 Road meets Rt 132 so traffic cuts the corner.

14 Chris Senger said that the minutes of September 10th do not reflect what was said at
15 the meeting regarding Hauger Road and wondered if the Selectboard had received
16 her email. Stuart Rogers said he would listen to the recording of the meeting and
17 correct the minutes.

18 **Correspondence:** The Town's annual dues to TRORC have increased to \$1.49 per
19 capita. The total comes to \$3,856 for Thetford.

20 The Town received a letter requesting an appropriation to the VT Family Network.

21 This year's appropriation payments to social service agencies will go out on
22 November 1st. Stuart Rogers reported that he had researched the records on the
23 Sayre's Bridge on Tucker Hill Road. The historic reconstruction in 2007 dictated that
24 fire retardant, fungicide and insecticide be used on all wood parts. He will ask the
25 Daniels Company to comply with that standard. It will add somewhat to the cost of
26 the present repairs.

27 **Tax Penalty Waiver Request:** The board received a letter from Barbara Knauff
28 requesting a waiver of late penalty on Homestead Tax filing. Tara Bamford

1 explained that the forms were filed on time but they were printed double-sided,
2 rather than single-sided as requested, so the information on the back of the sheet
3 was not viewed. Tracy Borst said that because the forms were not sent
4 electronically, evidence to show that they were sent on time was lacking.

5 **Motion** by Cathee Clement, with amendments by Tracy Borst and Stuart Rogers to
6 waive the 8% penalty fee on parcel # OT0035.8 with information as amended.

7 Seconded by Douglas Stone; **Vote 5-0-0**

8 **Discussion of Timothy Frost Church Tour:** Cathee Clement said that a decision for
9 the Town to take over this building should be made in the context of an overall plan
10 for the community, and that the Selectboard should not get bogged down in details,
11 such as the future costs of renovations. Stuart Rogers commented that the Town has
12 no capital plan for emergency and other spending. In that context the Thetford
13 Center Cemetery will pass into Town ownership next year and will require
14 maintenance. Cathee Clement said it is only a matter of time before more expansion
15 of Town Hall will be necessary, and there is no more space on the Town Hall lot. Li
16 Shen said that the Timothy Frost Church is a landmark historic building in a
17 prominent location and it is a part of the Town's heritage. If it were to fall
18 under the control of an outside group (even if it were a non-profit) there
19 could be many issues. It would be better if it were under Town control.
20 Douglas Stone said that the Town would regret it if we didn't accept the
21 building and if another entity owned it there would undoubtedly be parking
22 issues. Li Shen said it could eventually become part of Town Hall, but that
23 would not be in the near future. Regarding more immediate use as a public
24 space as requested by the church board, Li Shen observed that there does not
25 seem to be a lack of public space in Thetford, so what would make this 'public
26 space' special and desirable? We do not have a plan of how to pay for the
27 upkeep of the church or the improvements needed to make it useable as a
28 public space. The church needs bathrooms for a start. In absence of any other
29 revenue the taxpayers would pay for this. The Town could establish a

1 charitable fund to which residents can donate for the upkeep of the church. A
2 similar fund was established to help care for Treasure Island and Li Shen was
3 curious to know how much money came into that fund this year. Li Shen
4 reported that residents have made suggestions for use of the building,
5 including a Health Care Center, a Senior Center, a 'Maker Space' for expansion
6 of small, homegrown businesses or a performance space with good acoustics.
7 Joanne Kirsten asked when the church would need major renovation and how
8 much would that cost? Stuart Rogers noted that Town hall is six years older
9 than the church and upkeep of the exterior would be similar. Richard Krzal
10 asked whether the interior paint was lead paint, and does the paint that is
11 peeling contain lead? Curtis Richardson replied that the whole interior had
12 been repainted in 2003 with non-lead paint and that the plaster is original.
13 Douglas Stone commented that the restoration costs would depend on how
14 the building is going to be used and whether there are historic preservation
15 rules. Stuart Rogers said that historic preservation only governs exterior
16 appearance, as exemplified by the renovations of Town Hall. Regarding lead,
17 if the plaster substrate were removed along with the paint, lead would not be
18 an issue as it would only constitute a fraction of the overall material removed.
19 Insulating the building would necessitate removal of the plaster layer.
20 Stuart Rogers said that if the Town votes to approve transition to a Town
21 Manager then the workspace in Town Hall would need to be re-examined.
22 Curtis Richardson informed the meeting that Sally Atwood had bequeathed
23 money for the upkeep of five Thetford steeples. The Timothy Frost Church
24 receives \$3,000 every five years for this. Stuart Rogers said the Town would
25 need to create a special fund to handle this bequest. Curtis Richardson said
26 the church had never pursued historic preservation funds because of the high
27 expense of fulfilling historic requirements. A move some years ago to make
28 Thetford Center into a Historic District was defeated by a Town vote.

1 Doug thought that other uses would spoil the church's acoustics. Curtis
2 Richardson wondered if the Town Recreation Department could organize
3 concerts and performances at the Church. For public uses there would have to
4 be a second door for emergency exit. The Fire Marshall will need to evaluate
5 the building and advise the Town about public safety requirements.

6 **Review of Special Town Meeting and Special Selectboard Meeting:** Sarah
7 Martel was pleased by the question-and-answer period following the vote, so
8 people did not leave dissatisfied, and that Selectboard members shared their
9 experience of serving on the board. Tracy Borst expressed disappointment
10 that some people left immediately after the vote and felt it should have been
11 emphasized that they stay for the discussion. Stuart Rogers said it was
12 challenging to know how to best inform the public and quoted a resident who
13 said it was the civic duty of people to be informed of Town matters. Stuart
14 Rogers also noted that the same questions have been asked repeatedly, even
15 in the same meeting. Cathee Clement said the publicity about the question-
16 and-answer session after the vote had been insufficient and that perhaps a
17 Selectboard member should be available at recycling to answer questions.
18 John Bacon asked who was to blame if people were not informed because
19 they were away on vacation. Douglas Stone thought that there had been many
20 opportunities to hear about the Town Manager discussion. Joanne Kirsten
21 asked that if the Town Manager discussion had been ongoing for 'several
22 years' as claimed, had it been a warned agenda item in that time period? She
23 also questioned the process by which funds towards a partial Town
24 Manager's salary had appeared in the Town budget. Stuart Rogers replied
25 that a consideration of Town Manager governance has been a regular agenda
26 item for some time. John Bacon added that it had been discussed at Town
27 Meeting three years in a row. Cathee Clement said it was wise to allocate
28 some funds even if they went unused and that this action might induce people

1 to enter the discussion. Joanne Kirsten asked if the Selectboard agenda could
2 be posted on the Listserv, since most people do not look on the Town website.
3 Sarah Martel said that much about a Town manager's position is not
4 determined at the local level and that it is easy to get preoccupied with details
5 and not look at the broad questions. Regarding a Selectboard member being
6 available at recycling to answer questions about Town Manager governance,
7 Stuart Rogers said that it was questionable whether single board members
8 could appear in public to represent the whole board. Cathee Clement thought
9 that an individual board member could answer certain questions but would
10 have to draw a disciplined line beyond which they could not give information.
11 Regarding the lack of public enthusiasm for serving on the Selectboard, Stuart
12 Rogers noted that the time required by Selectboard work is reflected in the
13 fact that almost all current board members are either retired, not working, or
14 self-employed (only Douglas Stone has a full-time job.) Richard Krzal said it
15 was physically impossible for a working person to serve on the Selectboard.
16 Cathee Clement presented a draft of information to publicize the next hearing
17 about the Town governance question. Tract Borst suggested it be amended.
18 Sarah Martel thought the text should also address what the outcomes would
19 be following either a 'Yes' vote or a 'No' vote on November 6th. Tracy Borst
20 said, if there was a 'No' vote, it would not be clear whether people did not
21 approve of changing to Town Manager governance, or just did not have
22 enough information to confidently vote 'Yes.' Li Shen thought it would be
23 helpful to provide a summary comparing and contrasting Town governance
24 under a Selectboard vs a Town Manager. Stuart Rogers said he would provide
25 a summary of a Town Manager's job description as defined by law. Joanne
26 Kirsten said it should be clear that this is the minimum description, and not
27 necessarily the final job description (that would be advertised.) Stuart Rogers
28 said there was a problem with the Town Manager salary estimates given by

1 the Town Manager Committee in that they were not consistent with figures
2 reported by VLCT for Town Manager compensation and benefits. Sarah
3 Martel said that she was concerned over what the process would be following
4 a 'Yes' vote and how town personnel would be re-shuffled. Tracy Borst agreed
5 that this topic is what people need information on from the Selectboard. For
6 instance, that the Town should work with the people already employed at
7 Town Hall and not bring in additional staff. The only addition should be the
8 Town Manager. However, this scenario would require the support and
9 cooperation of all personnel to succeed. John Bacon said that Thetford has
10 been stuck 'in limbo' for too long due to the Selectboard being perpetually
11 overloaded. Major issues such as planning for the future and high property
12 taxes have never been addressed, however the town is far from 'broken.'

13 Richaed Krzal noted that the roads have practically all been fixed since the
14 July 1st 2017 storm and did not seem bad at all. Tracy Borst reminded the
15 meeting that 85% of property taxes go towards education in town. Cathee
16 Clement and the Selectboard discussed how to get a mailing out to voters in
17 time for the October 17th informational hearing on town governance. Joanne
18 Kirsten noted that the Selectboard form of governance has been used for
19 about 250 years and a Town Manager would be a big change. Cathee Clenent
20 said that direct governance would still be in effect as there would still be a
21 Selectboard. Sarah Martel wondered if having her moderate an informational
22 question-and-answer meeting would be too formal and inhibit discussion.
23 Stuart Rogers said that the Town moderator may facilitate a special meeting.
24 John Bacon thought it should be left as an informational Selectboard meeting.

25 **Selectboard Liaison List Updates:** The Selectboard filled the liaison
26 positions that were left vacant by the departure of James Dixon. The need for
27 a member of the public to serve on the TriTown Commission (that consists of
28 two Selectboard members and one resident) was discussed. Two names were

1 suggested and Cathee Clement offered to ask those people.

2 **Storm damage Lines of Credit:** There was a discussion of the FEMA and
3 FHW lines of credit to pay for the July 1st 2017 storm damage. The FEMA line
4 of credit has a lower interest rate than the Federal Highway Fund line of
5 credit. The latter is administered through VTrans who would like to close out
6 the Town's account. The FEMA line of credit will be completely used up (and
7 then some) because the Stevens Road repair will cost several hundred
8 thousand dollars.

9 **Minutes and Warrants:**

10 Review of last two weeks' payroll ending 10-06-2018

11 # 42.1 \$69,095.69

12 #43.1 \$1,939.78

13 **Motion** by Stuart Rogers to accept warrants as presented. Seconded by Li
14 Shen. **Vote 5-0-0**

15 **Motion** by Stuart Rogers to approve the minutes of Monday September 24th
16 as amended. Seconded by Li Shen. **Vote 5-0-0**

17 **Motion** by Stuart Rogers to approve the minutes of Monday October 1st as
18 amended. Seconded by Li Shen. **Vote 5-0-0**

19 The minutes of the Special Town Meeting were approved by the Moderator
20 and the Selectboard Chair.

21 **Motion** by Stuart Rogers to approve the minutes of the October 3rd Special
22 Selectboard Meeting as amended. Seconded by Douglas Stone. **Vote 5-0-0**
23 With input from Tracy Borst the board decided that it would be most effective
24 to send out informational postcards to announce the public question-and-
25 answer meeting on Town governance on October 17th. Cathee Clement and Li
26 Shen will work on the postcards. The timeline for postcard production and
27 mailing was discussed. Tracy Borst will work on the bulk mailing. The
28 meeting will also be publicized on the Listserv.

1 Stuart Rogers and Li Shen will meet to work on finalizing the update of the
2 Town Committee handbook. Due to multiple changes in state law the Town
3 Personnel Policy also needs to be updated.

4 **Correspondence Continued:** The board received email from two residents
5 requesting that the Town do some work on Colby Road South, which is a Class
6 4 road. Stuart Rogers stated that this falls outside of the duties of the Town. If
7 the Town were to work on a Class 4 Road it would have to be brought up to
8 State standards, a costly proposition for Colby Road South as extensive road
9 widening and removal of bank material would be necessary. At this time the
10 board took no action.

11 Cathee Clement left the meeting at 10:50 pm.

12 Li Shen read excerpts from an email sent by a resident. Stuart Rogers
13 responded to a statement in the email that a Selectboard member may not
14 write part of a Town Plan and later vote on that Plan. Stuart Rogers knows of
15 two towns where the head of the Planning Commission is also a Selectboard
16 member. Li Shen read an email from Gwynn Zakov, a lawyer at VLCT, that
17 stated "It is perfectly fine that a selectboard member contributes to the town
18 plan and votes on it" and that Selectboard members are *ex officio* members of
19 the Planning Commission. Stuart Rogers responded to a complaint in the
20 email that Mark McMahon had been inappropriately contacted about
21 applying for the vacant seat on the Selectboard. Stuart Rogers said he would
22 welcome a discussion about this.

23 Regarding the distribution of a handout by a Selectboard member during the
24 Special Selectboard Meeting, Stuart Rogers said that the separation between
25 roles of Selectboard member and private citizen must be clear and emphatic
26 and that the handout should have been presented from the floor.

27 **Motion** by Stuart Rogers to adjourn at 11:21pm. Seconded by Douglas Stone.

28 **Vote 5-0-0**