



Village of Manchester, Vermont

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MINUTES

**Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees
Tuesday, September 12, 2023 at 4:30 pm
Village of Manchester Offices
45 Union Street, Manchester, Vermont**

In Attendance: President Tom Deck, Trustees: Jim Lewis, Peter Mull, Anthony MacLaurin, Clerk Donald Brodie, Treasurer & Tax Collector Sarah McClintock, Village Administrator Missy Johnson, Zoning Administrative Officer Deborah Towslee

Public: Mariane Haines

President Deck opened the meeting at 4:31 pm. The agenda was approved with the addition of two discussions under Old Business: Discussion and possible approval of the Draft Short Term Rental Ordinance and a review of goals and priorities for the board for the coming year. Ms. Johnson removed her discussion on the Village Complaint/Concern Policy and stated the topic would be added to the October agenda.

President Deck pointed out that there was some discrepancy in what was heard during the motion for two grants (an Energy Grant and a supplemental grant for \$4,000) both presented by the Planning Commission at the August 2023 meeting. He asked the board what their recollection was regarding the wording of the motion and their intended vote. After some discussion, and mention that Trustee Mooney was not present at this meeting, and Trustee MacLaurin was not present at the August meeting, and hearing a comment made by Ms. Johnson regarding her impression of what was said, it was decided that a separate confirmation vote would be needed on these matters. The BOT then heard this matter, as an agenda item, under "Old Business." The ZAO provided a verbal summary on both grants. President Deck moved to approve the request to apply for both the Energy Grant and the Four-thousand-dollar supplemental grant. Trustee MacLaurin seconded the motion, and a majority of the board voted in favor.

Trustee Mull then moved to approve the Draft Minutes from the August BOT meeting with the corrections noted as mentioned above. Trustee MacLaurin seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

Treasurer McClintock sought on the record approval of the setting of the 2023/24 tax rate. She provided the rate of .1424 previously approved by administrative/email vote. Trustee Mull moved as requested. Trustee MacLaurin seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

Ms. Haines spoke on the Village holiday décor. She mentioned that the wreaths were aging, and she would like to find out how the Village would like to move forward. She asked to have assistance and approval with the following:

- Address the challenge of hanging wreaths from lampposts not already retrofitted to hold the wreaths;
- Approval to order additional wreaths, bows and new lights;
- Approval to either replace or start to replace materials that are looking worn;
- Approval to seek donations for this project.

Ms. Haines mentioned that she would look more into the expected costs of the upgrades and would get back to the board with that figure. That said, she estimated that she thought she would be able to obtain donations for the materials. She proposed a plan of taking the wreaths to her home for work prior to the

Village Road Crew hanging them. She proposed a timeline for hanging (before Thanksgiving) and taking down (after MLK weekend) the wreaths.

Trustee MacLaurin mentioned that he liked the longer tails on the bows and that additional bows would be needed for the new wreaths. He mentioned he would like to see the project done right. Promotion for donations was discussed. A donation jar at the Village Office was suggested and approved. Adding information to the website and sending out emails was also discussed. It was agreed that the road commissioner would discuss the plans with the road crew. It was determined that no vote would be needed at this time, but that there was consensus that Ms. Haines had the BOT's approval to proceed with her immediate plans.

Trustee MacLaurin expressed his desire and moved to have the Village BOT Meetings available on Zoom. He pointed out that the needed equipment was available in the office and that with a minor purchase of a movable table, the set up for the meetings would be minimal. President Deck stated he was not opposed to the idea but was concerned about people who refused to identify themselves during Zoom meetings. Mr. Brodie commented on how Equinox on the Battenkill was using Zoom under similar requirements to the BOT. A suggestion to add a segment to the agenda for introductions was made. It was clarified that the village administrator would administer the Zoom meetings. Trustee Mull seconded Trustee MacLaurin's motion and all voted in favor.

The board then reviewed the Special Events Permit Application for Green Mountain Dock Dog at Orvis on October 7-8, 2023. The parameters for the event were reviewed. Concerns were voiced about the noise level of these events and concern over the amount of traffic. It was asked that stipulations be added to the approved application. Trustee Lewis moved to approve the application with no stipulations. Trustee Mull seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

Trustee MacLaurin spoke on behalf of the Planning Commission and outlined the need for a Bylaw Modernization Grant. President Deck provided background on recent changes in state law for development and the need to update the Bylaws immediately. He explained the need to work closely with the Bennington County Regional Commission (BCRC) to expedite the process and bring it to conclusion. Trustee MacLaurin provided an overview of the Bylaw changes, how they were taking place and where the project would go from this point forward. He made clear that the PC was asking for approval to apply for this grant and that if the grant was awarded to the Village, the BOT would be approached for approval to accept the funds and to provide the matching funds. The amount of the grant and the Village match was confirmed (\$13,000 with match of \$1,300.) President Deck moved to approve the application for the Bylaw Modernization Grant. Trustee Lewis seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

President Deck provided an update on potential uses for the Northshire Courthouse Building and gave the BOT information on a recent meeting he and Trustee Lewis had with representatives from the Town of Manchester. The importance of this building to both the Village and Town was discussed. It was confirmed that Village interests and concerns were expressed during the meeting with the Town. At this time the Town is looking for a proposal (for their approval) from the Village. President Deck would like to see a committee formed to determine the feasibility of the Village taking over the building. He asked for committed people in the Village and the Town of Manchester to contact him. Ideas and known challenges were exchanged.

Ms. Johnson provided that she did not have a report this month and that every spare moment was being used to process tax payments.

Ms. Towslee provided an update and mentioned that she had received two rather substantial permits for accessory buildings in the last couple of weeks. Questions on these projects were asked and answered.

Road Commissioner and Tree Warden Jim Lewis provided a road and tree report. The paving of the Seminary Avenue area is finished. The line stripping, parking spaces and cross walk work are next. President Deck motioned that he and Mr. Lewis had recently met with the chief of police and 5-6 people from BBA – regarding safety in this area and stated the meeting was very positive. It was noted that there has been an increase in police presence in the area lately. The removal of the Village from traffic ticket income was again questioned. President Deck will follow up with the town on this. BBA's financial contribution to this project was reviewed and confirmed.

The 2023/24 Tree List was reviewed. Proposal requests are currently being sent to 3 tree care companies according to Village policy. President Deck mentioned his desire to have the Trees and

Beautification line item divided into 3 categories next year: Tree care, New Trees, and Beautification. The condition of the trees planted in the last couple of years was discussed.

President Deck mentioned his recent visit to River Road and he shared photos of how the project is progressing. The Road Crew has done an exceptional job with this project so far. It was clarified that this grant was approved by the state and that the project had to be paid for by the Village with reimbursement following the end of the project.

Ms. McClintock provided the Treasurer & Tax Collector report. She provided a brief report on suggestions made by the Village Auditor regarding the Town of Manchester-Village Payment Allocation Formula. She reviewed some of the financial reports distributed and provided statistics on the percentage of tax bills processed. Ms. McClintock reviewed the Fidelity accounts and provided a brief explanation of how the funds were invested. She noted improvement since recent adjustments were made in the allocation of the funds. She mentioned that she expected the auditing company to make one more visit to the Village office before a final report is presented. She mentioned the possibility of reallocating some of the Employee Benefit Fund. President Deck mentioned a recent inquiry Ms. Johnson made to VLCT on funding unbudgeted for expenses and the possibility of creating a new fund for these types of surprises. He continued by saying the splitting of the Employee Benefit Fund, with voter approval, could fund this new account.

In Old Business the Draft Rental Ordinance was reviewed and comments made regarding the need for the ordinance and the process necessary for the approval of it. Questions were posed and answered. President Deck moved to approve the Draft Rental Ordinance as modified. Trustee MacLaurin seconded the motion, and all voted in favor. The Ordinance is being returned to the PC for additional comments and vote.

President Deck distributed a draft list of goals and priorities for the coming year. He reviewed the list and asked the board to think about these issues to move the Village forward in the coming years. Participation by the entire board was requested. Some of the projects are already in the works, some will need assistance to get off the ground and others will need committee work in order to bring them to fruition. He mentioned that this list belongs to the board and the trustees were welcome to add to the list as they see fit. The list will be reviewed, worked on and votes may be taken on these items in the coming months. Trustee MacLaurin mentioned the Energy Plan and the need to achieve a level of promoting energy efficiency that the Village committed to. The costs of this promise need to be ascertained.

In New Business: Ms. Haines mentioned her involvement as an advocate for seniors in the Northshire and showed the board a new source of senior information, a publication provided by the Community of Vermont Elders ("COVE"). She recommended the publication to everyone and asked Ms. Johnson to obtain a copy of the publication for the office.

As there was no further business before the Board of Trustees, Trustee MacLaurin moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:11 pm. President Deck seconded the motion, and all voted in favor.

The next Regular Meeting of the Village of Manchester Board of Trustees is currently scheduled for Monday, October 2, 2023.

Respectfully Submitted,
Missy Johnson, Village Administrator