

**TOWN OF SPRINGFIELD  
SELECTBOARD HALL – 96 MAIN STREET – THIRD FLOOR  
REGULAR SELECTBOARD MEETING  
MONDAY, January 8, 2024**

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**APPROVED MINUTES**

**A. CALL MEETING TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND ROLL CALL**

Chair, Kristi Morris, called the meeting to order at 5:40 pm. Pledge of Allegiance was recited, and Roll Call was taken.

**Selectboard Members:** Chair Kristi Morris, Vice Chair Michael Martin, Everett Hammond, Walter Martone, and Heather Frahm were present in-person.

**Administration:** Town Manager Jeff Mobus and Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne were present in-person. Library Director Sue Dowdell joined via Zoom.

**Budget Advisory Committee (BAC) Members:** Chair John Bond, Doug Johnston, and Scott Richardson were present in-person. Jim Fog, Tara Chase, and Tre Ayer were present via Zoom.

**School Board Liaison:** Steve Karaffa was not in attendance due to School Board commitment.

**B. EXECUTIVE SESSION \*Item delayed until applicant arrived after Agenda item C. Minutes.**

Under 1 V.S.A. §313 (a) (3), the purpose of this executive session is to discuss the appointment, employment, or evaluation of a public officer or employee.

**MOTION: Walter Martone moved to move into Executive Session for purposes of interviewing two candidates for the Planning Commission.**

**Seconded by: Everett Hammond**

**Vote: 5-0, unanimous**

The Board moved into Executive Session at 5:47 pm and action to be taken later in the meeting agenda.

The Board returned from Executive Session at 6:27 pm and action to be taken later in the meeting agenda.

**C. MINUTES** \*Item moved to be done before the Executive Session.

1. Regular Selectboard Meeting – December 18, 2023
2. Budget Workshop - December 18, 2023

**MOTION: Walter Martone moved to approve the minutes of the Regular Selectboard meeting of December 18, 2023, and the Budget Workshop of December 18, 2023, as printed and distributed with revisions.**

**Seconded by: Everett Hammond**

Walter Martone requested correction on the Regular Meeting minutes on page 4 of 10, “Everett Hammond asked about the watermain for Riverside Park...”. Walter Martone requested correction on page 5, “Further discussion ensued that with the potential upgrades...”. Walter Martone requested correction on the Budget Workshop minutes on page 2 in the 6<sup>th</sup> line of the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph, “...that this level funds the account and requires ~~deference~~ deferral of some projects.”.

Recording Secretary Carrie Kellow noted that the date on the Budget Workshop minutes needed to be corrected to December 18, 2023.

**Vote: 5-0, unanimous**

**D. ANY REQUESTED ADDITIONS TO THIS AGENDA**

No requested additions to the agenda at the time of the meeting.

**E. NEW BUSINESS**

**ITEM #1** Jennifer Schaefer to address Selectboard

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed that Jennifer Schaefer was involved in a civil dispute over property with another party and was not pleased with the police actions or his response as Town Manager through the dispute. Town

Manager Jeff Mobus added that Jennifer Schaefer requested to speak to the Selectboard regarding this matter.

Jennifer Schaefer in-person discussed that around August of last year she was looking for someone to purchase their property due to health issues. Jennifer Schaefer added that a couple approached them, and the couple was unable to get a loan through banks, they agreed with the couple that the couple would help get the property up to code and help the Schaefers. Jennifer Schaefer continued that they forced her to write out a paper saying the couple was taking over her husband's HELOC loan and home insurance and the couple recorded it in the Springfield Town Land Records. Jennifer Schaefer further added that due to this she could not get the Police Officers to assist her. Jennifer Schaefer described the ordeal as traumatic.

Jennifer Schaefer discussed that the couple was supposed to be property managers and caregivers, but the Schaefers were not able to peacefully live on their property without being verbally assaulted by the couple. Jennifer Schaefer added that the police were called numerous times and they responded to the Schaefers to just stay inside their home and told the Schaefers that they did not have any rights to be outside their home on the property. Jennifer Schaefer continued that they contacted the Police Chief, and he told them that all they could do was to just wait for the court to decide who owns the property. Jennifer Schaefer noted that the court confirmed her ownership of the property and provided her with a WRIT of possession.

Jennifer Schaefer discussed that she was told she had no legal action she could take against the couple and noted the damage the couple did to the mobile home and property. Jennifer Schaefer added that she has reached out to many different organizations for assistance in this manner and has been told there is nothing she can do. Jennifer Schaefer continued that the police will no longer take her statements and have told her that she is hostile and aggressive and that she could be arrested for going to the Police station to complain about this couple. Jennifer Schaefer further added that she has four trespass orders that the police have not served, and they were sent back on October 13, 2023. Jennifer Schaefer noted concerns that she was being discriminated against because of her last name.

Jennifer Schaefer discussed that the couple brought false stalking charges that were denied and simple assault charges against her and her husband who is a

vulnerable adult. Jennifer Schaefer noted that the couple is gone from the property as of November 11, 2023, and peace is being restored. Jennifer Schaefer added that for a year and 3 months they did not feel supported by the police.

Michael Martin inquired if the Schaefer's were the owners of record and what document was filed in the Land Records that changed the ownership. Jennifer Schaefer responded that she was forced by the couple to write a letter dated 8/20/2023, which was not notarized. Further discussion ensued that the document was a "rent to own lease". Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne confirmed that the document was recorded. Additional discussion ensued that Jennifer Schaefer was not represented in court as she could not afford a representative.

Further discussion ensued that the residual animosity between the Schaefer's and the couple are not resolved and there are simple assault charges against her husband are in the process of the criminal court.

Michael Martin inquired what remedy Jennifer Schaefer was looking for from the Selectboard. Jennifer Schaefer responded that she spoke with the Police Chief and was told that she cannot do anything about this and has to wait for the Police Department to bring charges before anyone. Michael Martin responded that they are not lawyers and are not in a position where they can reprimand the Police Department for lack of action on a criminal matter but recommended that if she had a fraud claim she should contact the District Attorney directly and explain her case to the District Attorney. Police Chief Jeffrey Burnham added that she may have already spoken with the District Attorney Ward Goodenough. Michael Martin recommended Jennifer Schaefer reach out to Legal Aid. Jennifer Schaefer responded that she tried Legal Aid, and they would not take her case and she went through Disability Rights Vermont and due to how far along in the civil case they would not take the case either. Michael Martin responded that he understood her complaint was that she felt as though fraud was committed against her and she wanted someone to take action on that. Chair Kristi Morris noted that the civil judgement she won so the document recorded in the Land Records was determined not to be valid through that judgement.

Jennifer Schaefer commented that she is left with property that is not worth \$25,000, noting the extensive damage to the landscaping. Chair Kristi Morris

responded that this was a civil case not a criminal case and without criminal activity by the code of law there is not much that they can do, noting that she won the civil case which was the first step in mitigating the problem. Jennifer Schaefer expressed frustration in not feeling that her rights to the property were being honored and did not feel that the outcome was fair or just when she was left with the damages.

Police Chief Jeffrey Burnham discussed that the police have always responded to her calls, and they do their best to unravel what is going on. Police Chief Jeffrey Burnham added that often the responses did not go as she appeared to expect. Police Chief Jeffrey Burnham continued that he believed she had not been given good advice and has been the raw end of a civil arrangement and looking for remedies that the Police Department cannot provide. Police Chief Jeffrey Burnham further added that in his last conversation with her she stated that the couple destroyed her property so he called the State's Attorney to ask if a landlord tenant situation could have a criminal act if they already prearranged it and the tenant left it in such a disarray that it could elevate it to a crime, noting that the State's Attorney said it could however it can be very difficult to prove. Police Chief Jeffrey Burnham noted that he was not sure if that option had been vetted yet because everything up to this point has been civil and now that the civil case is resolved if they can prove that the damage was done by a particular person then Crimes can follow through, it won't change the dollar amount there may be a restitution issue, but he will further that investigation as far as he can take it. Police Chief Jeffrey Burnham noted that he would return the no trespass documents to Jennifer Schaefer as it should go through the Sheriff's Department, noting that she was already informed of that previously. Police Chief Jeffrey Burnham further discussed that she would never be charged for filing a report unless she became a disorderly problem in the Police Department, noting that she was warned of that, but she interpreted that as she could never come.

Walter Martone commented that he had seen reports of scams where elderly and frail people particularly lose their property as a result of situations that sound similar to this, and inquired if the Town Clerk was seeing these kinds of situations in Springfield. Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne responded that documents are filed with us, affidavits like what she (Jennifer Schaefer) had happen to her, we are not attorneys we can invalidate those documents we

have to received them and record them. Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne continued that the best advice that we have is for people to know what they have for property, everything back to about 1966 is online you can look or come in to look at the records, know what you have. Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne clarified that she would say that people should check the Land Records under their name frequently. Town Manager Jeff Mobus explained that anytime a lien is placed on a property, such as a fuel company or repair bill for property doesn't get paid, they place a lien on the property, and they do not get permission from the property owner. Town Manager Jeff Mobus continued that the Town Clerk has to record what is brought to her to be recorded and if there is a dispute over it then they go to the court and settle the dispute, the Town Clerk cannot act as the judge for which ones are recorded and not recorded.

Michael Martin commented that in seven years this is the third time that someone has come before them that was dissatisfied with something that happened to them similar to this and in each case they were not represented by counsel, and in each case, he has asked about approaching Legal Aid. Michael Martin expressed frustration that this is the third time that he has had someone that clearly needs legal representation that has told him that they can't get legal representation.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus commented that Jennifer Schaefer had comported herself very well tonight, noting that she was very frustrated with what happened to her.

**ITEM #2** Receive Budget Advisory Committee recommendations.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus presented the "Receive Budget Advisory Committee recommendations" item included in the meeting packet. Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed that he met with the Budget Advisory Committee (BAC) on Wednesday, January 3<sup>rd</sup> to review the following BAC recommendations to the budget he proposed on December 18, 2023.

BAC Chair John Bond provided an addendum at the time of the meeting with comments about some things they had discussed that they felt important to share.

**MOTION: Michael Martin moved to acknowledge receipt of the Budget Advisory Committee's recommendations to the 2024 budget.**

**Seconded by: Heather Frahm**

**Vote: 5-0, unanimous**

**ITEM #3 Appoint Planning Commissioners.**

Town Manager Jeff Mobus presented the "Appoint Planning Commissioners" item included in the meeting packet. Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed that due to a resignation, there is a vacancy on the Planning Commission and the Town has received applications from two residents. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that prior to the meeting, the Board had the opportunity to meet with both candidates in Executive Session.

As a result of those meetings, the Board will appoint a new Commissioner. This appointment will end March 2026.

**MOTION: Everett Hammond moved to appoint Jeff Dacey for the remainder of the Planning Commission vacancy ending in March 2026.**

**Seconded by: Walter Martone**

**Vote: 5-0, unanimous**

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed that in addition, Planning Administrator Charles Wise would like the Board to consider appointing a Student Commissioner, noting that since September 2023, Marshall Simpson has been an active youth volunteer attending meetings. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that the student planning commissioner term would end June 30, 2024.

Walter Martone asked to clarify that the Planning Administrator Chuck Wise wanted to make the student commissioner a voting member of the Planning Commission (PC). Planning Administrator Chuck Wise confirmed. Walter Martone noted that the Board has a certain amount of discretion over the number of people they appoint to the PC, if it is a voting member that is not ex-officio, they have to comply with State Statute and the Town Charter. Further discussion ensued that Statute says you can have between 3-9

members, but in the Town Charter, it says that they need to be a registered voter. Additional discussion ensued that Marshall Simpson was not a registered voter and therefore could not be appointed as a voting member. Walter Martone continued that he likes the idea of this and would recommend that he be appointed as an ex-officio member in order to comply with our Charter. Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne added that if Marshall Simpson was 18 years old, he could register to vote.

**MOTION: Walter Martone moved to appoint Marshall Simpson as ex-officio member of the Planning Commission.**

**Seconded by: Michael Martin**

Mike Schmidt commented that working with Marshall Simpson this past year was very enlightening and he has actively participated in the meetings. Mike Schmidt added that Chuck Wise did a wise job of bringing someone on board and he looks forward to being a part of the Planning Commission going forward. Mike Schmidt continued that he believes if they have a candidate as smart as Marshall Simpson going forward, he should be able to vote, whatever that would take to amend things in the future.

**Vote: 5-0, unanimous**

**ITEM #4** Discuss and act upon handicap parking request.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus presented the “Discuss and act upon handicap parking request” item included in the meeting packet. Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed that the Library Trustees have requested that the Town consider adding a handicap parking spot in front of the library. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that he met with Chief Burham and reviewed the request. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added that in addition to being a benefit to patrons of the library, it would also be available for people going to the Woolson Block building. Town Manager Jeff Mobus recommended that the Town designate the spot indicated in the sketch included in the meeting packet as handicap parking.

Michael Martin

**MOTION: Michael Martin moved to add a second handicap spot in front of the library.**



**Seconded by: Heather Frahm**

Walter Martone commented that a couple years ago when there were concerns about the number of parking spaces available, they did an exhaustive inventory and there were a lot of concerns that of the handicap spots that we have the consensus was that they were not being used. Walter Martone continued that the Regional Planning Commission evaluated what we had and what was required, and we exceeded the requirement for the number of handicap spots. Walter Martone noted that when parking spots were redesignated near the Handley building there was one handicap spot that was excluded because there was a presumption that they were not being used. Walter Martone noted concerns that they were taking away a spot when people are complaining that there are not enough spots to park to reserve a spot that won't be used, noting maybe they have another handicap spot that is underutilized that they could switch back to regular parking.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that there are two consecutive handicap spots in front of the Congregational Church and that is more likely to create an underutilized situation. Walter Martone discussed that he would approve the handicap spot and for 30-days they observe the usage of the two handicap spots in front of the Congregational Church and if it is clear that they are both not being used they eliminate one and return it to a regular spot.

Further discussion ensued that likely the need for the spots in front of the Congregational Church is on Sunday's.

**MOTION AMENDED: Michael Martin moved to change the designation of the parking spot to handicap parking and let the Town Manager and Public Safety to determine which one of the other three spots to eliminate.**

**Amendment Seconded by: Heather Frahm**

**Vote: 5-0, unanimous**

**ITEM #5** Act on application for Twenty-Year Review and Facility Upgrade.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus presented the "Act on application for Twenty-Year Review and Facility Upgrade" item included in the meeting packet.

Last month, the Board approved the submittal of a priority list application for the 20 Year Review of the sewer collection system and compost facility. At the time, I said that I would be coming to the Board to approve the actual loan application as this is a 2-step process. The reason that we are submitting an application now is to be eligible for the best funding package possible. Once this is determined, we would then go to the Town for bond authorization. I recommend that the Board approve the application.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed that he has reached out to follow-up on what kinds of funding packages are available and this one is \$63,000 for the preconstruction engineering and the subsidy for this one is 50% of the engineering (about \$31,500), but when you get to the construction of the septage and sludge treatment plant you can get as much as 100% subsidy for that section.

**MOTION: Michael Martin moved to approve the State revolving loan program funding application for water infrastructure financing programs for the 20-year review and facility upgrades for \$64,000 with 50% Town contribution.**

**Seconded by: Walter Martone**

**Vote: 5-0, unanimous**

Further discussion ensued that the plan is to explore the regional composting facility, which is an opportunity to cover the Town's portion of the cost.

**ITEM #6** Revolving Loan Fund application -marketing

Walter Martone and Heather Frahm recused themselves and moved to the audience.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus presented the "Revolving Loan Fund application – marketing" item included in the meeting packet.

Stonecutters 802, LLC is requesting a grant of \$30,000 from the Revolving Loan Fund to fund a marketing proposal. I have included their proposal in the packet. Bill Cronin in-person discussed the high level is that they are seeking approval for the loan first to fund the build out of the website in the amount of \$20,000, noting the RFP included in the meeting packet. Bill Cronin continued

that the additional \$10,000 is for both digital and hardcopy marketing materials and all of this is in anticipation of marketing efforts starting in July. Bill Cronin noted if they can get this infrastructure up and running between now and July, they will not lose any ground. Bill Cronin further added that they have a lot of great stakeholders at the table now and a lot of wonderful ideas that they want to capitalize on.

Heather Frahm noted that Stonecutters 802, LLC is not taking any money this is just a facilitation of the marketing efforts there has been an RFP done if they get the money and if approved, they would use the other \$10,000 for outside vendors. Further discussion ensued to ask for clarification on who would be receiving the funds. Mike Schmidt responded that the \$20,000 would be received by Stonecutters 802, LLC and would be passed through immediately to a third-party contractor which is based on their proposal and the additional \$10,000 would be processed the same way as soon as they identify the graphic developers and printing services, none of this will reside in a bank account other than to pass it through to these other vendors. John Bond added that this would facilitate the energy that has been developed over the past several months, if we are serious about marketing (Springfield) he believes it will take off like wildfire. Walter Martone corrected that they are requesting a grant not a loan which is allowed under the Revolving Loan Fund guidelines for this type of project.

Further discussion ensued that this request is like the umbrella to do marketing for the Town overall (with three pillars for tourism, residential, and business, and the \$25,000 added to the proposed budget in Professional Services under Administration is for the Town's portion of what we do for marketing which would feed into this marketing effort.

**MOTION: Michael Martin moved to approve the grant application for \$30,000 to Stonecutters 802, LLC for the purpose of developing a marketing materials and website for the Town of Springfield.**

**Seconded by: Everett Hammond**

Michael Martin commented that he had the opportunity to review a 40-page document that this group created and has been working on earnestly for quite a while. Michael Martin noted that they have recognized the need for economic development for the community, however they have focused so much effort on

business development that they have overlooked tourism as well as recruiting potential residents to Springfield.

Everett Hammond commented that this also would reach out and help some of the other areas like SRDC, noting that we should be for future development of Vermont in general not just Springfield.

Further discussion ensued that Rutland has a good regional example that was done through a joint program through Rutland Town and Rutland Chamber of Commerce.

**Vote: 3-0, 2 recused, recognizing Walter Martone and Heather Frahm as recused.**

**ITEM #7** Local Hazard Mitigation Plan announcement

Town Manager Jeff Mobus presented the “Local Hazard Mitigation Plan announcement” item included in the meeting packet.

Fire Chief Paul Stagner is working with OPH Consulting to update the town's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. As a part of the process, the following information will appear on the town website (springfieldvt.gov):

"Springfield is updating its Hazard Mitigation Plan. Having a Federally approved plan allows for cost savings when recovering from a disaster. Having your input is an important part of the planning process and with the recent flooding in the state, your experience and concerns will help guide future planning. Please take a few moments to answer this survey, thank you!"

Survey Link: Town of Springfield Hazard Impacts Survey - Google Forms

In addition, the following information needs to be formally noted at a warned Selectboard meeting:

"The Town of Springfield has received a grant to update its Hazard Mitigation Plan. Community awareness of hazard mitigation efforts and the opportunity for input are important parts of the planning process. There is a community survey.

(link to website) available related to the impact of natural disasters in the town."

Further discussion ensued that the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan expired in December.

**E. FINANCIAL REPORTS**

FY2024 Warrants to January 4, 2024-copies on website.

Town Manager, Jeff Mobus stated that any questions regarding these warrants should be directed to the Finance Director, Cathy Sohngen.

**G. FUTURE AGENDA ITEM PROPOSALS**

Everett Hammond requested that they do the Manager evaluation before the Board changes. Walter Martone agreed.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed that at the next meeting (January 22<sup>nd</sup>) the Mount Ascutney Regional Commission has done a housing study, and they want to present this. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that the presentation will be 15-20 minutes at the beginning of the meeting. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that at the next meeting there will also be a Local Cannabis Control item, noting this has not gone to the State yet so we will not be locked into the State’s decision.

**H. COMMITTEE REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Heather Frahm discussed that she met with Steve Karaffa and the School Board schedule will hopefully work soon to allow her to attend the School Board meetings. Heather Frahm added that Steve Karaffa provided her with a one-on-one regarding the School Board meetings.

Michael Martin announced that the Ordinance Committee meeting was on January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024, at 2 pm.

Chair Kristi Morris noted that the Trails Committee report that he and the Town Manager attended is included in the meeting packet. Chair Kristi Morris added that there is a bill in Montpelier looking to extend the VORAC grants that have been successful and we have been blessed to be able to receive some of them.

**I. OTHER MINUTES & CORRESPONDENCE**

Chair Morris read aloud the list of Other Minutes and Correspondence and noted these are all available online.

1. Springfield Conservation Committee -Minutes of November 18, 2023
2. Springfield Housing Authority -Minutes of December 12, 2023
3. Springfield Housing Unlimited-Minutes of annual meeting, December 12, 2023
4. Springfield Housing Unlimited-Minutes of regular meeting, December 12, 2023
5. Springfield Public Works -Highway Department monthly report of December 2023
6. Springfield Town Library-Director's report, December 2023
7. Springfield Town Library-Trustees' minutes of December 12, 2023
8. Springfield Trails & Rural Economy-Minutes of November 30, 2023

**J. CITIZENS' COMMENTS**

No citizens' comments at the time of the meeting.

**K. ADJOURN**

**MOTION: Michael Martin moved to adjourn the meeting.**

**Seconded by: Walter Martone**

**Vote: 5-0, unanimous**

The meeting adjourned at 8:04 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Carrie M. Kellow, Recording Secretary