

Town of Colrain  
Select Board/MLP Board Meeting  
Highway Garage  
9 Jacksonville Road  
4:30 PM

**MINUTES OF SELECT BOARD  
November 28, 2023**

**Present:** Benjamin Eastman, Chair; W. Thomas Griffin; Emily Thurber

**Others Present:** Steve Daby, Highway Superintendent; Jeff Wroblewski; Mike Slowinski; Alan Staley; Mark Rosiensi; Howard Phelps; Kathy Phelps; Jonathan Lagreze; Kevin Worden I; Jim Ryan; Jane Johnson; Roger Williams; Jade Mortimer; Debbie Rosiensi; Amy Sullivan; Paula Harrison; Bella Levavi; Greenfield Recorder; Marjorie Smith, Administrative Assistant; Kevin Fox, Town Administrator

Chair, Benjamin Eastman called the meeting to order at 4:34 pm.

**Appointments:** None

**New Business:** South Green River Road Seasonal Closure Discussion

Deb Rosiensi presented the Board a signed petition by 23 Colrain residents and a letter to the Board from Mike Zilch regarding their concern with closing South Green River Road from 219 South Green River Rd to Nelson Rd. Kevin Fox and Steve Daby explained the reasoning for closing the road the past two years, ice and/or severe mud, and for the safety of residents, highway employees and emergency personnel that section of road should be closed during the winter months. The detour is unfortunate and an inconvenience; however, all residences are accessible. Other residents expressed concern regarding the fact that up until two years ago the road was never closed despite the same ice and/or mud issues. It was explained that a highway employee went to the area weekly with the grader, however, with the current staffing issues, that is not a feasible solution. Discussion on fixing the road to alleviate the problems and including in the budget. The Board decided that the road will remain open at the discretion of the Highway Superintendent, Steve Daby. Should the road be closed, all emergency departments, town officials and the school will be notified.

**Special Town Meeting (STM) Discussion/Clarification of Need**

Kevin informed the Board that the purpose of this discussion is to answer any questions and clarify the reasoning behind the Special Town Meeting. Ben explained that hiring a contractor isn't to replace a new employee and not wanting to hire a new person and put them in an unfamiliar vehicle on unfamiliar roads. Emily suggested the Board go to the meeting with an opening statement explaining the facts and timelines. Thom reminded the Board that should a suitable applicant apply, money can be transferred back to wages with another STM. Steve Daby explained that the contractors will be used only for storms and called in when the highway department is called in for the storm. Paula Harrison commented that this is a timing issue between advertising and no one applying until late and that this is a one-time option to get the Town through this winter. Discussion on being clear with the reasoning and how to communicate with residents to get the word out regarding the upcoming STM.

The Board and Kevin discussed the following questions posed to Emily:

1. Do you think \$50,000 is enough and where will more come from when it's gone? *We don't know if it's enough and if there isn't enough it won't come from anywhere. The Town has a legal right to overspend snow and ice removal which would then be raised in the following year.*
2. Did this go out to bid? Explain. *Snow removal is exempt from the procurement laws. We did Best Practices and solicited three quotes from contractors. Vendor one quoted and was most responsive, vendor two didn't respond and vendor three quoted.*
3. Who is going to fix mailboxes and lawns? *No one, as they have never been fixed in the past and damage is not caused intentionally.*
4. Under what conditions will the contractors be called in? *They will be called in when the Highway Department is called in at the discretion of the Highway Superintendent.*
5. Why is this on a Thursday? *Last meeting, we were criticized because the fire department trains on Tuesday's and couldn't attend.*

#### **Tax Rate Certified/Levy Capacity Discussion**

Kevin Fox informed the Board that the tax rate was certified a week ago and set at \$18.98 for FY2024. This is a \$0.65 decrease from last fiscal year. It was further explained that while the tax rate went down, assessments were increased and therefore tax bills will see an increase as well. The excess levy capacity available is \$367,064 meaning the Town can levy additional taxes without going into an override situation.

**Old Business:** None

**Unanticipated:** Library Survey – Ben Eastman

Ben Eastman presented the need for the library to have the property surveyed in order to continue with the feasibility study. A member of the Cornerstone Committee approached the Town Administrator, Kevin Fox, regarding the survey and because the property is owned by the Town, Kevin preferred the request come as a directive from the Select Board.

**MOVED:** Thom Griffin moved to authorize Kevin Fox to select a contractor to determine the boundaries of the library.

Emily Thurber seconded. **Approved unanimously.**

#### **Approve Select Board Meeting Minutes – (8/24/2021; 11/14/2023; 11/20/2023)**

**MOVED:** Thom Griffin moved to approve the minutes of 8/24/2021 as submitted.

Emily Thurber seconded. **Approved unanimously.**

**MOVED:** Thom Griffin moved to approve the minutes of 11/14/2023 as submitted.

Emily Thurber seconded. **Approved unanimously.**

**MOVED:** Thom Griffin moved to approve the minutes of 11/20/2023 as submitted.

Emily Thurber seconded. **Approved unanimously.**

#### **Highway Department Compliment**

Ben relayed a message that Emily heard a lot of positive feedback on the storm last week.


**Town Administrator Updates:** None

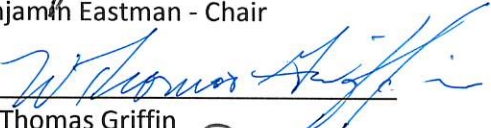
**MOVED:** Thom Griffin moved to dissolve the meeting at 5:52pm.  
Emily Thurber seconded. **Approved unanimously.**


Respectfully submitted,

Marjorie Smith  
Administrative Assistant

Accepted by the Select Board

  
Benjamin Eastman - Chair

  
W. Thomas Griffin

  
Emily Thurber

**Documents:**

Select Board Meeting Notes

Map of Proposed Closure on South Green River Road

Copy of Special Town Meeting Warrant for 12/7/2023

Tax Rate Recapitulation FY2024

Levy Limit FY2024

Signed Petition re: South Green River Rd Closure (Presented at the Meeting)

Letter from Mike Zilch to the Select Board dated 11/21/2023 re: South Green River Rd Closure (Presented at the Meeting)