

**TOWN OF RUTLAND SELECT BOARD OPEN MEETING  
HELD VIA PUBLICALLY ACCESSABLE CONFERENCE CALL LINE  
APRIL 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

Out of an abundance of caution around the covid-19 virus, this meeting was held via a conference call line which was made publicly available for anyone to call into.

- Meeting opened at 6:00 P.M.
- Board members present Mary Ashcroft, Sharon Russell, John Paul Faignant and Don Chioffi
- Members of the public present Chris Howland, Howard Burgess, Jim Scholtz, Lydia Flynn, Marcia Chioffi, Anil Sachdev, John Christopher, Keith Whitcomb

Approval of Orders

The Board will approve the orders as they come into the office.

Approval of Select Board Minutes for April 13<sup>th</sup>:

- Mr. Chioffi moved to approve the minutes; Mr. Faignant seconded the motion. There were some clerical corrections made. The motion passed 4-0.

Questions from the floor, public comment

Mike Rowe asked permission to use some of the slate being stored at Northwood Park to create signs for the trails at the park, with the help of the Town School. Approximately 30 pieces are needed. Mr. Faignant moved to donate the slate. Ms. Russell seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0.

Bill Sweet Administrative Assistant to the Select Board:

1. Reviewed the items from the packet.
  - a. Current meeting schedule and committee agenda items
  - b. Project lists and Goals for 2021
  - c. Letter from Portland Glass in response to the request to increase their sewer discharge allocation. This will be referred to the Water and Sewer Committee.

- d. Synopsis of calls for service from the Town Police to the Holiday Inn
  - e. Draft RFP for the Route 7 North sidewalk scoping study.
2. Provided the County Public Works Mutual Aid agreement to be reapproved, and the updated Local Emergency Management Plan from our Town Emergency management Director.
  3. The work on the Select Board room to be able to hold meetings with virtual attendees on an ongoing basis is well under way and should be completed in a week or so.
  4. Work on upgrading the lighting in the remainder of the offices will start next week.
  5. There is one more item to be added to our Safety Grant application and then it is ready to be submitted.
  6. The work on the VPN for our departments with laptops is done and they are ready to be used.
  7. Several businesses who were sent letters regarding their increased sewer discharge numbers have been in touch and are debating the accuracy of the readings. They are contacting Rutland City and are supposed to be following up soon.
  8. Mark Panagini from the Graphic Edge was in and did some research which showed Clark Realty was an owner of this property at 155 Seward Road. There was 1 outstanding allocation, which was listed as Clark Realty. This will be assigned to the Graphic Edge. The allocation is sufficient to cover their usage. A letter will be sent to them confirming their allocation.
    - a. As part of the letter sent to them, we included a section on their practice of pumping storm water into our sanitary sewer system. Mr. Panagini insisted they have written permission to do so but declined to share it with is stating he did not have permission from the building owner to do so.

New Business – Board to Review for Approval Scoping Study RFP for Route 7 North Sidewalk

1. The Request for Proposal document was sent to us as a template which was filled in to meet the needs of our project.
2. Mr. Faignant moved to approve the document. Ms. Russell seconded the motion. The origin on the project and the end result goal was reviewed. The scoping study grant requires a 20% match from the Town. We originally had asked for a construction grant,

but the state required a scoping study first. Discussed the sidewalk leading to the Adele Stanley apartments, it shows regular use. The motion passed 4-0.

Kari Clark Rutland Town Clerk/Treasurer:

1. Reminder that the latest tax installment is due May 10<sup>th</sup>. We have over 50% collected already. This is the last installment for the fiscal year.
2. Discussed the recent meeting with a company who digitizes land records. Our town specific concerns were discussed with the representative. The cost appears to be lower than expected. The security of the records is taken very seriously by them.
3. Discussed seasonal employees needing to reapply each year or not, specifically the recreation employees. Mr. Rowe said he typically has them reapply, but not sure we need to. Mr. Fagnant felt it is important to document each time someone is brought on board.
4. Discussed the back log of recordings. They are only a few weeks behind and should be caught up in the next couple of weeks.

Board to meet with Anil Sachdev, owner of the Holiday Inn, regarding housing of homeless citizens at his facility.

1. John Christopher, who is a friend of Mr. Sachdev, attended at the request of Mr. Sachdev.
2. Discussed the recent article in the Rutland Herald about the facilities. Mr. Sachdev would like to work with the town to resolve the issues presented.
3. Mr. Chioffi discussed the meeting regarding the problems being experienced.
  - a. When asked how many residents are being house, Mr. Sachdev answered 86. Chief Dumas asked if that included both the Holiday and Quality Inn. Mr. Sachdev said it was 86 at the Holiday Inn and 52 at the Quality Inn.
4. Ms. Ashcroft discussed information received from Senator Terenzini recently stating Vermont Department of Children and Families may be reimbursing the Town for the Police response needed at the Holiday Inn. Average calls to the Holiday Inn in the past have been 52 per year. The first 3 ½ months of 2021 has seen 115 calls for service. This could potentially be 400 calls this year without any changes.
5. Mr. Sachdev was asked about his screening process and inspection of rooms.

- a. Discussed concerns discussed at the recent meeting regarding alarms and rooms meeting code. Mr. Sachdev stated there is a logbook which is for weekly room inspections. Any issues found in the rooms are noted for correction. Mr. Sachdev stated extra staff has been hired to inspect rooms to check for compliance. Any cooking devices found are removed.
6. Ms. Ashcroft asked how many evictions have taken place based upon rules violations. Mr. Sachdev said 6 had been evicted Monday, and 2 prior to that.
7. The logbook has been provided to Patrick Banks and GJ Garrow from the Division of Fire Safety. They checked the Quality Inn last week but have not been to the Holiday Inn in several months.
8. Mr. Sachdev would like to evict the people staying there who are causing the theft issues in the area.
9. Mr. Sachdev said they are housing families, with about 25 children total.
10. When asked if he was having problems when trying to gain access to rooms to do inspection, he answered they do have problems most of the time. He has been in contact with Cassandra Tracey from DCF for help with compliance. Evictions have not been done based on refusal to enter rooms in the past.
11. Mr. Chioffi asked about a policy about drug use or drug possession. All the people evicted recently were involved with drugs.
12. Mr. Chioffi asked what the current reimbursement rate is from the state. It is \$89 per room per night.
13. Mr. Sachdev said there was no security assistance from the state initially. There has been private security present there in the last 2 weeks. Mr. Sachdev said this has helped with the room inspection problem and identifying problem residents.
14. Chief Dumas said in the last 2 weeks there have been 50 calls for service, specifically 26 in the area related to residents of the Holiday Inn,
15. Chief Dumas asked who the owner is. Mr. Sachdev stated he is one of the owners, but it is owned by Hospitality Management of Rutland.
16. When asked who Uday is, Mr. Sachdev stated he is the General Manager and has been for the last 5 or 6 years. He is responsible for day-to-day operations and the main point of contact for the Police Department.

17. Chief Dumas calculated income from the rooms at approximately \$500,000 in the past 6 months and questioned why private security was not hired before now.
18. Chief Dumas said he should contact the Rutland Housing Authority in regards on how to handle problem individuals. He urged Mr. Sachdev to hire more private security, using the proceeds from the rooms. Mr. Sachdev said he is willing to do that.
19. Mr. Sachdev said for the safety of the town and business he is willing to work with Chief Dumas.
20. Mr. Chioffi thanked Mr. Sachdev for his willingness to cooperate and looks forward to seeing the impact he is promising.
21. Ms. Russell commented that the large problems with the theft being experienced are not coming from the true homeless and are coming from people involved in the drug trade. Ms. Russell offered to meet with Mr. Sachdev to help him talk through solutions. Mr. Sachdev said he will come meet with her.
22. Ms. Ashcroft asked about plans to shift from housing homeless back to being a true hotel. Mr. Sachdev said a major renovation will need to be done to repair and restore the hotel. It is expected to take 30 days, or by June 30<sup>th</sup>, to restore the hotel but relies on the state and their plans.
23. Ms. Ashcroft thanked Mr. Sachdev for his participation.

Barbara Noyes-Pulling Rutland Town Planning Commission Chair:

1. A meeting with stakeholders for recreation in regard to the Pocket Park is planned for May 10<sup>th</sup>.
2. The RFP for the land survey has been published. It will be placed in online boards as well. Discussed being able to send out notices to companies directly. This will be done.
3. A Planning Commission member has brought up starting a Conservation Commission in town. There is statute about creating one. There is a wide variety of things it can do. The Planning Commission agreed that if it were to be created the Pocket Park would be a good first project.
  - a. Ms. Ashcroft asked for a summary of what the conservation commission could do and information on what other towns groups have done to present to the Select Board.

Mike Rowe Rutland Town Recreation Director:

1. The water was turned on in park buildings today.
2. Baseball starts next week, and everyone is excited to start.
3. The pool cover is coming off next week.
4. The trails at Northwood Park are being used on a very regular basis.

Byron Hathaway Rutland Town Road Commissioner:

1. Provided a contract with Mendon Trucking and Excavating for the Gleason Road culvert replacement.
  - a. There is an acknowledgement of arbitration clause which was removed.
  - b. Mr. Faignant moved to approve the contract. Mr. Chioffi seconded the motion.  
The motion passed 4-0.
2. Met recently with Steffanie Bourque regarding grants in aid work. We have been approved and can make up to \$12,000 in reimbursable repairs.
3. The Shared Use Path project is having a status meeting on Thursday at 9AM at the Highway Garage. The permit application should be in soon, but we are about a week behind schedule.
  - a. There are no archeological issues with the sites.
4. Reported on a recent webinar to be able to apply for funding for the Post Road sidewalk. The Federal process could take up to 4 years. The small project grant is a 50% match, and is 100% state funds, and could be as short as 18 months.
  - a. Discussed if the need still exists, as identified in the 2014 scoping study, for this sidewalk. John Kaplan, who works for the State, recommended applying for the small grant due to the size of our project. There would some savings realized since engineering would not be required.
  - b. Discussed whether the Federal or small grant process should be taken. The scope of the project is not as big as it was originally when it started in 2014. Due to improvements on the athletic fields at the school, less kids are walking on Post Road than before. It may be possible to get an easement from a neighbor on Chasanna Drive for access to school property and the sidewalk would not be

needed. As little as 50 yards may be needed. A full sidewalk could cost up to \$150,000. Town labor could be used as part of the town portion.

- c. A deadline of June 4<sup>th</sup> for the small project grant needs to be met if construction were to happen by next year.
  - d. Discussed the school making the offer to acquire the needed easement. This will be brought up to them.
  - e. Mr. Hathaway will provide a map for the board to review at the next meeting.
5. Discussed resigning the county public works mutual aid agreement.
    - a. Mr. Hathaway said it has been useful in the past.
    - b. Mr. Hathaway was the primary and Mr. Sweet was the secondary contact.
    - c. This will be included for discussion at the next meeting.
  6. Discussed resigning the Local Emergency Management Plan.
    - a. Mr. Chioffi moved to approve the plan and authorize the chair to sign on behalf of the board. Mr. Faignant seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0.
  7. Green up Day is May 1<sup>st</sup>. Bags are available at the Transfer Station, at the Highway Garage and the Town Office.
  8. Discussed the Grove Street project Rutland City is doing now, Mr. Chioffi asked if the City planned to pave Grove Street from the North side of the bridge to the Town line. Chief Dumas said he was just in that area and it looked like they were.

Chris Clark Rutland Town Fire Chief:

1. There have been 6 calls for service in the last 2 weeks.
2. As far as the Chief knew, February 19<sup>th</sup> was the last time the State Division of Fire Safety was at the Holiday Inn, and that was to review the Covid-19 vaccination site.
3. Mr. Faignant discussed the ability of the Chief to respond during work hours when he is driving a city owned vehicle. Mr. Faignant recommended to provide the Fire Chief with a letter extending vehicle insurance coverage to the Fire Chief for him to respond to and return from calls while driving a city vehicle. Ms. Russell seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0.
4. Mr. Chioffi asked how many calls our Fire Department has responded to at the Holiday Inn recently. There have not been any recently.

Ed Dumas Rutland Town Police Chief:

1. Thanked the board members who attended the recent meeting discussing the issues on the South end of the Town. There were about 40 participants. The meeting was productive and should help lead to a positive impact. The testimony from the participants was very impactful.
2. 26 of the last 50 calls have been related to the Holiday Inn and the Green Mountain Plaza.
3. Stockton Security is now helping to patrol areas of the plaza. They have helped make a positive impact in the plaza downtown and hope to here as well.

John Paul Faignant Town Health Officer

1. We are still operating under the emergency guidelines provided from the state. In person meetings are still not allowed unless in an emergency situation.
2. Restrictions are planned to be lifted on July 1<sup>st</sup>.
3. Approximately 60% of the population have received their first dose of vaccine and 40% have received their second.
4. The July 1<sup>st</sup> date looks realistic.
5. Discussed the authority of the Health Officer, specifically related to the Holiday Inn.
  - a. As a result of previous incidents at the Holiday Inn, mainly in 2019, it was found the position is considered a state employee for these purposes and it comes with extensive powers.
  - b. A comprehensive inspection in conjunction with the Division of Fire Safety is going to be scheduled in the next 4 to 6 weeks.

Committee meeting updates:

1. The Scholarship Committee has been reviewing the applications received.
  - a. Mr. Chioffi commented on the stories being told by the applicants. There are many worthy students of receiving the funds.
  - b. A full list for the board will be provided soon.
2. Discussed planning a Town Wide Celebration for this year. Mr. Chioffi and Ms. Russell will talk about the feasibility for this year.

Update on the Project List

1. Discussed adding succession planning for various department heads and important town positions. This will be added to the 2021 list.

Discussed the anticipated funds from the American Rescue Plan Act. There are other possible source of funding coming which could amount to just under 1.2 million. The allowable uses have not been totally communicated yet.

The next Select Board meeting is May 11<sup>th</sup>, and we will be meeting with our Rutland Free Library representatives at 5PM.

Mr. Chioffi moved to adjourn. Mr. Faignant seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:53 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Mr. Bill Sweet

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Mary Ashcroft, Chair

**ABSENT**

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Joseph Denardo, Clerk

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John Paul Faignant

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Sharon Russell

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Don Chioffi

Center Rutland, VT.