

TOWN OF CRAFTSBURY REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES

**TUESDAY, JUNE 20, 2023
7 PM | CRAFTSBURY TOWN HALL**

Present: Susan Houston, Jim Jones, Bruce Urie | Rudy Chase, Francesca Celi Kitch, Brian Machesney, Michelle Warren

Meeting Agenda

Co-chair Jim Jones called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.

- **Action – Adjustments / Changes to Agenda**

Additions to agenda: Ash Tree Inventory Update; Broadband Discussion; Housekeeping Item

- **Action – Approve Select Board Regular Meeting Minutes of June 6, 2023**

Correct spelling of Alison Blaney (typo: shows “Blane”). **Brue Urie motioned to approve the minutes of June 6 with correction of typo; Susan Houston asked for discussion.** CCCC sign; radar sign. **Susan seconded the motion. No further discussion. All ayed. Motion passed.**

- **Discussion – Broadband | Rudy Chase & Brian Machesney**

NEK Broadband CUD Rep Rudy Chase and Alternate Brian Machesney wanted to answer any Select Board questions regarding the dark fiber in town. *Dark Fiber* refers to cables not utilized (not currently lit up; the *Craftsbury Dark Fiber Network* comprises more than 13 miles of fiber-optic cable connected to the state-owned NEK Dark Fiber Network. Kingdom Fiber leases fiber from the Town to provide reliable high-speed internet service to homes and businesses).

NEK Broadband Communications Union District (CUD) would like to take over the total 13 miles. Helpful to town to allow NEK CUD to take over: professional management for working with lessees and others, potential for enhancing and expanding service to provide to Town, and the NEK Broadband CUD is in a much better position for grants (\$17M) and has applied for much more. In exchanges with USDA and NBRC, they will be fine with the transfer of authority if Town receives no quid pro quo or preferential treatment, e.g., accelerated network buildout in Craftsbury. Reason behind NBRC rejection of ARPA funding for CUD. NEK Broadband CUD will work with USDA, the [NBRC](#) and will bring to the Select Board documents as appropriate for signature.

Discussion: timing – pole owners may not have done the “make ready”; the transfer of authority provides flexibility. Management of the Kingdom Fiber 20-year contract (already about five to six years in) will be taken over by NEK Broadband. Kingdom Fiber does not use all optic cable strands. The CUD formed after the network was built and leased to Kingdom Fiber; lots has changed and continues to change. Craftsbury is the only town in the state – besides Burlington – that has built its own network. Other important aspects: continuity. NEK

Broadband could cease to function; the [VT Community Broadband Board](#) (VCBB) as well as the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment ([BEAD](#)) Program are looking for input to ensure business continuity; so, subscribers do not get left in the lurch. Clarification will be needed about what happens if NEK Broadband ever dissolves. The NEK Broadband CUD will be responsible for repairs/maintenance. No effect on New England Wireless. The Select Board expressed appreciation for all the time, effort and work on this matter.

Chase and Machesney proposed this motion for a Select Board member to make:

To facilitate enhancement and expansion of the Craftsbury Dark Fiber Network, the Craftsbury Select Board directs its appointed representatives to NEK Community Broadband, the Communications Union District (CUD) municipal authority for Northeast Vermont, to work with the CUD, USDA and Northern Borders Regional Commission to draft an agreement for Select Board approval which transfers the Network assets to the CUD.

Discussion: Important to hear opinion of Kingdom Fiber CEO Michael Birnbaum. Can meet and talk with him, invite him to Select Board meeting. **Bruce motioned to approve the proposed motion: To facilitate enhancement and expansion of the Craftsbury Dark Fiber Network, the Craftsbury Select Board directs its appointed representatives to NEK Community Broadband, the Communications Union District (CUD) municipal authority for Northeast Vermont, to work with the CUD, USDA and Northern Borders Regional Commission to draft an agreement for Select Board approval which transfers the Network assets to the CUD – with the condition that Mr. Birnbaum be contacted and input from him obtained.; Susan seconded. No further discussion. All aye. Motion passed.**

- **Discussion – Review/Update Ash Tree Inventory Working Group | Brian Machesney**

Group is surveying ash trees along roadways; started week before last. Locating stands of ash; the biggest stands of ash: some stands not that big. Prioritize: first go after locations where most trees are. Determination: where trunk is located (right of ways), leaners. Not just determining location of trees in right of ways; also having discussions with landowners to learn if they can handle by themselves. Sale of ash: ash is getting a good price; working [with Dept. of Forests](#): advise anyone with ash trees about taking them down and getting money for it. First survey – test runs – learned cell phones can provide exact positions. In addition to two hours spent on Wylie Hill Road, spent another three hours getting 50 – 60 ash trees; about two-thirds done with Wylie Hill Road. Not deciding which trees to remove; just inventorying. Up to 9-inch trunks, big stands: where infestations of emerald ash borer most likely to occur. Working with Orleans County Forester Jared Nunery. [EAB is not encroaching](#) rapidly but still must monitor. Perhaps create some sort of spreadsheet.

- **Discussion – Sign Community Capacity Building Mini-Grant Agreement (Craig Taylor)**

Select Board needs more details before signing: appears to be for \$4K. What can it be used for? Energy Committee request. Craig Taylor was unavailable to answer questions.

- **Administrative – Tonelli letter**

Sign insurance claim denial letter. Municipality rule: road grading.

- **Administrative – Stephanie Dunbar Scholarship**

Scholarship established in 2007 to honor and share spirit of Craftsbury graduate was set up to be monitored by school and family. Students receive check upon graduation. Family learned account was closed and remaining funds placed into Orleans Southwest Supervisory Union account without their knowledge or documentation. Family asks Town to open account and monitor; check has been delivered to Town Clerk office; account parameters include a two-signature requirement and other details to be defined.

- **Committee Reports**

- *Conservation Commission* – Feedback on “Tools of the Trade” (four-person panel) is that it was excellent, well-received. “People learned a lot and appreciated it.” The numbers highlighted the message: number of acres currently in use: at one time had 27 farms - only about two would have survived without the Vermont Land Trust. About 40 people attended. BioBlitz nature inventory training session on Sunday, June 25, at 2 pm (Lost Nation Trail). Bring cell phones or iPads; citizen scientists record their findings.
- *Energy Committee* – grant for \$4K received from New England Grassroots Environment Fund; good portion going to window dressing, firewood and other things. Obtained more money [from NEGEF](#) than requested.
- *Antiques & Uniques* – met Friday | 100 vendors; ads placed in *Hardwick Gazette* (first event since COVID). Have quite a few sponsors. Volunteers paid through unique funding program: money earned goes to a nonprofit of their choice. Community groups use it as a fundraiser; the \$5 parking fee benefits Craftsbury Fire Department.

- **Clerk Report**

- P&L – getting close to complete report
- Schedule Time to Set Tax Rate – set a time next week (June 28, Wed., at 9 am)

- **Road Foreman Report**

Bulky Day recap. About \$900 to get rid of tires.

- **Weight Permits**

Warren Hill Trucking (already signed by Jim Jones); new permit JC Trucking signed.

- **Upcoming Projects to Keep on Agenda**

- Write letter: Barbara Tonelli
- Electricity on the Common
- Triggers for Opening the Emergency Shelter, Providing Assistance, Activating N2N
- Group Process: Throw Up Class 4, TH 23, Bruce Awaiting Word from VTrans
- VOREC Grant: Upgrade Sterling Trailing; Parking Signage - Gina Campoli
- Appreciation Certificates
- Act 172 Municipalities
- Assessing Spaces and Needs Assessing Spaces and Needs

- **Other Business & Walk-ins With Business to Come Before the Select Board**

Housekeeping: need more chairs to ensure enough for event; had insufficient for event. Need to prepare – set up. Many more people showed up than expected. Bruce will pick up some folding chairs.

- **Decide Next Meeting Date & Adjourn**

Next meeting will be Tuesday, July 11, at 7 pm at Craftsbury Town Hall. Meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victoria Hudson", is positioned above the printed name.

Victoria Hudson
Select Board Clerk