

**TOWN OF CRAFTSBURY**  
**REGULAR SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

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**TUESDAY, AUGUST 8, 2023**  
**7PM | CRAFTSBURY TOWN HALL**

**Present:** Jim Jones, Bruce Urie | Michael Birnbaum, Michelle Warren

**Meeting Agenda**

Jim Jones called meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

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

None.

- **Action – Approve Select Board Regular Meeting Minutes of July 25, 2023**

**Bruce Urie motioned to approve the July 25 regular meeting minutes; Jim seconded. All aye. Motion passed.**

- **Discussion – Flooding**

Town Clerk Michelle Warren and Bruce attended FEMA meeting. Learned a lot, especially about 60-day deadline. For Town to be paid back 100% for administrative, got to initiate bid process. If Town can obtain 100% reimbursement it means costs to Town are almost nothing. Must act promptly; long time before money received. Can advertise for position | administrative work: Bruce will handle. Put out an ad? Check with contacts regarding payroll and administrative payments for help. Will discuss with them and determine.

*Not Flood-Related but Discussed:* Crushed gravel purchase. Bruce suggested the Town consider exploratory boring holes for long-term gravel supply in the Mellett Gravel Pit. Will need to dig / move further to access the gravel.

- **Discussion – Broadband (Kingdom Fiber CEO Michael Birnbaum)**

Mr. Birnbaum was invited to discuss potential transfer of Town network to NEK Broadband CUD (Communications Union District); to allow Select Board to hear his opinions, concerns of transfer; to answer any questions Select Board members may have; to determine whether a formal meeting with CUD, Select Board and Mr. Birnbaum is necessary. Mr. Birnbaum say no need for a formal meeting, noted that “it’s been great working with you” and that he doesn’t “see any reason why relationship cannot continue regardless of ownership.”

- Indefeasible Right of Use (IRU) allows Kingdom Fiber to operate regardless of ownership; lease transfers with ownership. Transfer doesn’t affect lease. Who owns the network is a bit irrelevant to Kingdom Fiber.
- What does change: supervision of Kingdom Fiber on behalf of Town network. Supervision has been rigorous; basically, Town trusted Kingdom Fiber would manage it

well. Understandable why Town would want to “wash your hands of it.” If a break/flood destroys some of the network, it is a liability concern for the Town; damages Town would have to cover. The network that goes through Town was built by the State; the State was responsible for repairs of any break then the NEK CUD took that over. All State fiber networks transferred to CUDs. CUD is purchasing the physical network. Kingdom Fiber would still be owned by Birnbaum with right to operate on the network; anything funded with grant money would be under CUD.

- Only way it could affect Kingdom Fiber is if the CUD were to manage the lease in some sort of less-than-benign way; aggressive toward lease? Put in jeopardy? Mr. Birnbaum does not anticipate anything like occurring.
- Intrinsic value that Town has in network. Network was built with money from four different sources: Northern Border Regional Commission; United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Grant; Town put in \$25K from Lowell Fund; Kingdom Fiber contributed more than \$50K in terms of managing and engineering for network, which was donated by Kingdom Fiber to Town. That’s how it was funded.
- Does Town realize anything from those investments once ownership is transferred?  
**NOTE:** Town prohibited from profiting in any way – to make money – by grant guidelines, restrictions. May want to consult with Town attorney for interpretation. Only Town in the entire CUD with a network that has value to/for Town; will be handing/transferring a working, built network.
- Has the permissibility to transfer something funded from USDA, NRDC funding without approval been explored? What’s the transfer process? Who pays? CUD should.

#### Clarifications:

Two entities involved:

1. The Network
2. Company Operating on Network: Kingdom Fiber
  - Report of State of Kingdom Fiber | Craftsbury - passes 317 Craftsbury houses and, of those, 150 are customers now: 48%/49% on deck and have another 20 (will be over 50% within two weeks). Of those 150 - 80 are served from Town-owned network, 70 are from State or Kingdom Fiber; more than half served by Town network - Kingdom Fiber operates on town network.
  - Hardwick Gazette Article | mentions a “merger”; Town is not merging with CUD, just considering the possibility of transferring ownership; potential for better management of outages. NEK CUD being the new owner instead of Town doesn’t really change servicing requirements; still must be done. CUD now has contract with several contractors.
  - July Flooding Outage Details | Hardwick Unit stopped working due to power loss in Hardwick Office. Efforts to obtain alternate electrical source – generator – resulted in losing car in door-high waters when it stalled. Couldn’t get started. Never made it to Hardwick; power went out at 10 pm and at 10 the next morning, internet started working. The water had receded enough to get off batteries, and system re-started.

Fortunate could have been days or weeks without internet; just a matter of about 12 hours.

- **Discussion – Hidden Sign Paul Pitt Town Line Road**

Unclear what is desired; Bruce will follow up.

- **Discussion – Aleta Akerlind Request for “Hidden Driveway” Sign**

Jim investigated area; observed driveway length. Pretty decent view; not a long ways. So very close to corner; placement for sign not feasible – too close.

- **Committee Reports**

- *Forestry Committee* – Mike Renaud would like to be appointed to the Municipal Forest Committee. For several years, he has donated his time and equipment to prune the trees on the Common for public safety and to reduce the need for less-careful pruning by Hardwick Electric. **Bruce motioned to add Mike Renaud to the Municipal Forest Committee; Jim seconded. No further discussion. All ayed. Motion passed.**

Tree Damage: Tree accidentally damaged by Jeff Fellingner during Antiques and Unique; Jeff’s offer to replace it. For consideration: “damage is extensive enough that the tree might not make it, but we’d like to give it a chance. However, we think it’s prudent to plant another smaller specimen just in case. Stuart LaPoint found a potted hop hornbeam tree that could be planted this summer (cost: \$149). We are proposing that the Town split this cost with Jeff.” Town’s portion will come from the logging fund. That’s a really good price for a hop hornbeam tree. **Bruce motioned to split the \$149 cost with Jeff Fellingner; Jim seconded. No further discussion. All ayed. Motion passed.**

- **Clerk Report**

- P&L (expenditures through July); delinquent taxes coming in; making progress. Billing going out monthly.
- Water Issues: Town Hall/replace pump and fix spigot leak – going to be replaced tomorrow.
- Painting and Radar Shipping are both coming from Good Neighbor Fund (quality of primer is good quality); windows re-caulking; pleased with his work..
- Shipping Quote: \$110 | Bruce signed copy of the quote confirming approval
- MERP Grant Signature – Application for Municipal Energy Resilience Program grant requires estimate; send it in and send quickly. Sent to every town in state; cannot to cover costs of physical items but can cover administrative costs. Based on how needy town is; other towns have more people under the poverty level.
- Auditors – think about dedication for Town Report; to whom to dedicate.
- Town Fair – postcard about it.
- VNA – Vermont Nursing Association; put it in as part of our article; should let us know how many Craftsbury residents they serve. An appropriation.

- **Upcoming Projects to Keep on Agenda**

- Group Process: Throw Up Class 4, TH 23, Bruce Awaiting Word from VTrans
- VOREC Grant: Upgrade Sterling Trailing; Parking Signage - Gina Campoli
- Appreciation Certificates
- Electricity on the Common – will walk on the common with two electricians to assess
- Act 172 Municipalities
- Assessing Spaces and Needs

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

None.

- **Decide Next Meeting Date & Adjourn**

August 22 at 7 pm at Town Hall. Meeting adjourned at 8:02 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Victoria Hudson  
Select Board Clerk