

Town of Danville
Selectboard Minutes
December 2, 2021
Danville Town Hall (6:00 pm)

Board Members Present Using Microsoft Teams: Eric Bach, Kellie Merrell, Kristin Franson and Peter Griffin

Board Members Present: Ken Linsley

Others Present Using Microsoft Teams: Amy (Hornblas) Page, Craig Morris, Greg Prior, Quinlin Peer, Sara Stinson, Mary Wyand, Tasha Cochran, Clayton Cargill, Molly Gleason, Tom Vogel, Maryellen Griffin and Jenni Lavoie (rejoined meeting via Teams)

Others Present: Audrey DeProspero, Alison Despathy, Hailey Morgan (News 7), Pat Ramsey, Melissa Ramsey, Trevor Bunnell, Megan Bunnell, Dawn Brittain, Carolyn Morrison, Tiffany Johnson, Jenni Lavoie (left meeting approximately 6:30pm)

Meeting was called to order by Chair Ken Linsley at 6:00 pm.

1. **Additions to the agenda:**

- Jenni Lavoie

2. *Motion by Kellie Merrell, 2nd by Eric Bach to approve **minutes** of the **Regular meeting of November 18, 2021** as written. Vote 5-0-0. All in favor.*

3. **Visitor:**

- Jenni Lavoie – PC and DRB work – temporarily stepping down from Planning Commission Chair and Alternate Development Review Board member due to upcoming surgery. She will be out from January until March. Glenn Herrin, current Vice Chair will step up as Chair until Jenni returns. Jenni to communicate information to DRB also.

4. **Town Clerk** (Wendy Somers) - absent

5. **Highway Foreman** (Keith Gadapee)

- Curb Cut – 151 Dole Hill Road. Everything looks fine. Inspection has been done. There is no problem, there is plenty of visibility. Form requires Selectboard signature.

Motion by Kellie Merrell, 2nd by Peter Griffin to approve the Curb Cut for 151 Dole Hill Road. Vote 5-0-0. Motion carries.

6. **Issues and Information** (All)

(a) **Municipal Mask Mandate Letter** – –

Kristin Franson discussed draft letter sent out to businesses owners a year ago.

Alison Despathy inquired if the Selectboard was making a mask mandate and inquired why the public was not told about it.

Carolyn Morrison inquired if the mask mandate would be throughout town.

Ken Linsley noted a decision would be made after discussion and input from the Selectboard.

Alison Despathy noted it was an impulsive action by the Selectboard and not a good idea for a mask mandate. She suggested the Selectboard step back and think about what they were doing. She wondered why the Selectboard thought it was up to them to make choices for others. She repeatedly noted 'our body, our choice'. She stated there was no evidence that masks stop transmission, they only give a false sense of security. She read a letter with statements and suggested the Selectboard look at the research. She did not think the Selectboard should elect a mask mandate. She noted she spoke to businesses

and they too did not want a mask mandate. She thought the Selectboard should make a statement not a mandate.

Dawn Brittain, resident and business owner, thought this subject was different for everyone. She noted the American Medical Association noted that masks for kids were not a good idea. She spoke of being a business owner and leaving the decision of wearing a mask up to the person coming through her door. She felt that since she lived in the United States she had freedom of choice and should be able to choose whether to wear a mask or not, it shouldn't be chosen for her.

Trevor Bunnell spoke of freedom of choice in this country and doing what is good for his family and having others do what is good for theirs. He spoke of his son and how his son wants to see his friend's smile. He compared the mask mandate to the holocaust. He wanted normalcy back and was hostile towards enforcement of masks.

Carolyn Morrison, resident and business owner in St. Johnsbury, spoke of the current state of their community noting that folks were struggling and putting a mandate on people would be doing more harm than good. She was worried about children and their growth. Her concern was for people and their mental health. Her opinion was that the road the Selectboard was going down was a slippery slope which has given her some concern to appreciate the state as she had in the past. She spoke of liberty and freedom.

Trevor Bunnell thought the Selectboard should let the town vote on the mandate. His opinion was that the Selectboard should not make the decision for the Town.

Carolyn Morrison spoke of her business interacting with a variety of people and at the beginning of the pandemic all were scared and wore a mask. She felt that everyone was respectful about wearing a mask and it was up to the individual to be critical about their own health. She noted that there was no longer a State of Emergency and the Town should respect everyone's wishes.

Melissa Ramsey thought before a decision was made the Selectboard should speak to the business owners.

Alison Despathy noted the Selectboard was potentially setting themselves up on a massive and dangerous trajectory. Her opinion on the local and state level that they could provide information, education, and suggestions. She has spoken to both the school and business owners.

Megan Bunnell felt a mask mandate would divide the town and ruin it.

Molly Gleason noted she had no strong opinion on the mandate but all could benefit by looking out for one another.

Amy Page was disappointed by the medical professional's letter submitted and thought the information needed back up documentation as no sources were provided for where the information came from. She thought mask wearing should be a choice and people should decide for themselves.

Greg Prior noted polls and surveys have evolved and wondered if a community survey could be done.

Alison Despathy spoke of people living in twenty months of fear noting the Selectboard was acting impulsively. She noted that sometimes action does not need to happen and respecting difference of opinions.

Trevor Bunnell noted Danville's COVID cases were quite a bit higher than Florida. Florida did nothing and their numbers went down. He thought Danville should do the same. He wanted to make his own choice and not have someone make it for him. He noted he was not for masks or against them but wanted everyone to be able to make their own choice.

Kellie Merrell discussed level of community spread.

Kristin Franson noted the Selectboard was tasked with the decision by the Legislature. The mandate does not make it law, it is simply a way to encourage people to wear a mask. The Selectboard was not trying to infringe on people's liberty, they are just trying to keep people safe and kids safe. Wearing a mask is caring for your neighbor. She interpreted the public's comments as threatening and reminded the attendees that a decision had not been made.

Eric Bach noted the Selectboard has been talking about this information for two months. They have been in contact with both Representatives and Senators and House. He noted this was not new topic. Information has been sent to businesses in town and new and updated research has been done daily. He is the appointed COVID point of contact for Danville and has been well connected to folks in the area to refer them to the assistance they need and stays on top of things in Town.

Peter Griffin understood how hard this was for people and did not think the government should have tasked the decision to the Selectboard but there are a lot of persons in town that want to see a mask mandate. He too struggles with the mandate part of the mask but does see mandates every day from seat belts to running red lights and people on phone while driving. The governing body oversees the safety, health and welfare of residents.

It was clarified that what the Selectboard chose did not affect the school's policies or procedures.

Ken Linsley believed the legislature/governor did a disservice by giving the decision to towns and 250 towns will have to make this decision.

Kellie Merrell spoke of her due diligence in preparation for making a decision on a mask mandate and reviewed her presentation 'Level of Community Spread in Danville as of 11/30/21'. She discussed the ongoing community spread in Danville; the CDC guidance on masking which was last updated on October 25, 2021 and their suggestion that everyone who is 2 years or older who is not vaccinated should wear mask in indoor public places and those who are fully vaccinated should wear one to maximize protection and prevent spreading if the level of community spread is ranked as substantial or high; the community transmission as of November 23 in Caledonia County was rated as high; Vermont's seven day case rate which is in the highest category per CDC; Danville case rate being in the highest category as of November 23 as ranked by the Vermont Department of Health; National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences and their pandemic vulnerability profile; the low vulnerability score verses the high vulnerability score, NIH's data trending cases; CIDRAP's effectiveness of masks, and additional steps toward preventing infections. She also discussed encouraging masks as an additional step toward preventing infection in our community, Danville having the highest vaccination rate for twelve years and over. She felt a Town wide mask mandate for indoor public spaces was appropriate and an additional step toward preventing infection.

Peter Griffin reviewed the letter submitted by medical professionals in town.

Kristin Franson spoke of the Department of Health's COVID dashboard and the positive test percentages that keep going up. One concern is that people can be positive and be asymptomatic. It can be spread without even realizing it. She viewed the mask as another layer of protection and thought if a child can't make the decision for themselves or get a shot that this was the next best way to protect them.

Eric Bach noted 'the mask isn't for you, it is for me, and it is keeping my germs in'. Masks aren't the only thing keeping people safe, the vaccines are additional.

Selectboard suggested posting the submitted medical letter to the Town website.

Kellie Merrell thought the opinion of the medical professionals was most important and appreciated receiving it.

Eric Bach spoke of medical resources being pinched for support, COVID in areas, slowing the rate of passing the virus, help treating folks that are affected and all items being on the agenda for several months. He reiterated that this was not new information.

Kellie Merrell discussed VLCT's model rule with language filled in appropriate to Danville for rule requiring wearing face coverings indoors in public spaces.

Kristin Franson inquired about places of worship.

Ken Linsley spoke of 45 days in effect, the extension of 30 days and the rule having to be rescinded by Selectboard.

Kristin Franson noted the Selectboard was not saying that they were doing this forever but they are right in the middle of a spike and variant.

Peter Griffin noted that under S.1 (Special Session House and Senate), the first adoption was for 45 days, and it could be renewed after that for 30 days at a time. Also, noted was the version being reviewed does not have enforcement and gives Selectboard flexibility.

Motion by Kellie Merrell, 2nd by Peter Griffin to adopt the Rule for Face Coverings without enforcement. Vote 5-0-0. Motion carries.

Kristin Franson noted there was a lot of stress being brought forth, they are all part of the community, and the Selectboard are volunteering their time and not trying to impeded on rights of people, they are taking information from everyone, present and others, and are being put in a tough position to make a decision to the best that they can with what they have been given.

Trevor Bunnell noted the Selectboard is in tough spot but their decision will cripple restaurants in Town and thought the decision should be made by a Town vote. His opinion was the Selectboard was not above everyone else, they were equal and in fairness the decision should be done by an open ballot box or it would start trouble.

Alison Despathy told the Selectboard 'if this makes you feel good, this does not make it right. Don't follow mob mentality. Rising cases does not mean a rise in infections.'

Amy Page noted the proposal doesn't mention exemption or mask harmfulness.

Jenni Lavoie spoke of statistics and the information making individuals uncomfortable. She noted the pandemic affected the mental health of people especially ones that are hard of hearing because they cannot understand people wearing masks. She wondered how many people were actually in favor of a mask mandate.

Selectboard discussed, reviewed and made changes to the letter for businesses.

Eric Bach noted the purpose to the letter was for the Selectboard to take the heat not the businesses.

Kristin Franson noted if a business does not want to enforce it, they do not have to and if they want to they can fall back on the Town mandate.

Eric Bach spoke of the high number vaccinated and not having symptoms but carrying it and effecting person before they start to show symptoms.

Peter Griffin discussed the content of letter being support for businesses.

Selectboard discussed, reviewed and decided on content for letter.

Motion by Eric Bach, 2nd by Ken Linsley to accept letter as presented with changes. Vote 5-0-0.

Motion carries.

- (b) **Recycle Center Christmas Schedule** – Clayton Cargill sought guidance on the recycle building open dates for Christmas and New Year's Day. Both days fall on a Saturday, same day as the normal open date for the Recycle Center.

Consensus is for the Recycle Center to be open on Sunday, December 26, 2021 and for Clayton Cargill to poll the Recycle Center users regarding New Year's Day.

- (c) **New Back Up Solution – Quote/Budget** – Audrey DeProspero – Ormsby's Computer System has submitted a quote for data backup solution to retire the old Dell server at Town Hall. The first recommendation was to move all to a cloud backup solution however the limits of the upstream bandwidth of our current internet service provider will not work well. The solution would be a more reliable local backup. Inquiry was to complete now or wait until the next budget season.

Eric Bach suggested filing the expense this year.

Ken Linsley agreed and noted that budget statements were available for review.

Kristin Franson thought ARPA funds could be used for the expense.

*Motion by Kellie Merrell, 2nd by Eric Bach to pay the full quoted figure this year. Vote 5-0-0.
Motion carries.*

- (d) **D'Avanza Clock Update** – Audrey DeProspero – inspection of the Town Hall clock was completed and Phil D'Avanza noted that a full cleaning was not currently needed but a small cleaning to the shafts were done to keep them working. The striking hours 24/7 strike hammer is not being used currently so there was no need to fix unless the Town wants it to make noise. Having the clock strike the hours is not a simple fix as parts need to be modified and wheels on drum need work. In order for the auto wind system to work there will be a cost upwards of \$7,500 as it is custom made and the outside clock support wall will need a brace/stabilizer and a steal weight shaft. The motion faces upside down which needs to be corrected so that proper lubrication can be done. The function of a clock is the biggest issue as it will cause a drag to the time. The weight box was found to be over weighted as there is only 3 dials so that was corrected and will now reduce friction.

While Phil D'Avanza was inspecting the clock, he was able to show Greg Prior how to set the time from inside, how to oil the pulley and weight the box.

Greg Prior suggested to get a quote for the auto wind system and consult Tim Ide in the process.

Ken Linsley noted that the cost may be able to be funded by Marion Sevigny's money as it would be an improvement.

- (e) **Fire Department Insurance Quote** – Ken Linsley noted there was information received late and the discussion would need to be postponed.

Noted was a special meeting would be held next week to address insurance on Fire Department.

7. **Adjourn** – *Motion by Eric Bach, 2nd by Kristin Franson to adjourn at 9:07 p.m. All in favor.*

Minutes taken by Audrey DeProspero submitted December 8, 2021 at 10:59 pm.