

Town of Bristol, Vermont
Selectboard Special Meeting Minutes of
Monday February 12, 2018

Selectboard Members present: Chair Peeker Heffernan, Joel Bouvier, Michelle Perlee, and Ted Lylis. Also present was Town Administrator Valerie Capels, Board Clerk Tasha Bouvier, Filming for NeatTV Shawn Kimball, Tom Murray (Vice President of Customers and Communities at Vermont Gas), Tim Vachereau (Manager of Construction at VGS), Karen Kotecki (Manager of Right of Way at VGS), Sargent Randy Crowe, Lieutenant Bruce Nason, Jim Quaglino, Patty Heather-Lea, Sally Burrell, Ken Johnson, Peter Papadopoulos, Ann Metcalf, Don Miller, Katie Raycroft-Meyer, Tom Pauolc, Elizabeth Sayre, Christine Lathrop, Amos Martin, Jono Chapin, Gary Clark, Bill Sayre, Rick Ceballos, Jennifer Vyhnak, Eva Matator, Alice Leeds, Patricia Hunt, Linda Andrews, Paul Forlenza, Cy Maesano, Linda Brown, Bob Donnis, John Ball, Janet Leed-Ball, and Steven Brown.

I. Call to Order. Peeker Heffernan called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.
Review agenda for addition, removal, or adjustment of any items per 1 V.S.A.
§312(d)(3)(A). There are no additions, removals, or adjustment.

II. Public Forum: Vermont Gas Systems, Inc., in Bristol.

Peeker Heffernan explained that the Selectboard is considering a memorandum of understanding between the Town and Vermont Gas Systems, Inc. (VGS) regarding VGS's proposed construction of a gas distribution facility in Bristol. Representatives from Vermont Gas Systems, Inc. include Tom Murray, Vice President of Customers and Communities, Tim Vachereau, Manager of Construction, and Karen Kotecki, Manager of Right of Way .

Tom Murray from Vermont Gas thanked the community for letting them come here and speak. He had a presentation printed off and passed out to the members in the audience. He gave a brief overview of Vermont Gas and the history of the company. He stated natural gas is convenient and affordable. Vermont Gas is also going to be getting renewable natural gas that is generated at a landfill and/or farms. Patty Heather-Lea asked What the MMBTU stands for on the bar graph. MMBTU stands for million BTU. Bob Donnis from Bristol asked about wooden pellets and where it falls on the bar graph. Tom Murray stated that is not on this bar graph. He stated that Vermont Gas customers rate the company 95% from good to excellent. John Ball asked what the difference between propane and natural gas is and why the natural gas stayed flat according to the bar graph. The company you purchase the propane from regulates the price whereas the natural gas is regulated by the government. Patty Heather-Lea asked what he meant for the long haul and the numbers he said from page 3. Tom Murray stated long haul is for 10 years or in the future. Tom provided a map of Bristol with black dotted lines. The black dotted lines would be where the Vermont Gas pipes would be.

Tom Murray said the construction process moves along pretty quickly. Janet Leed-Ball expressed her concern about saving the trees and flower beds. Bob Harrigan stated VGS uses a directional drill. He stated they drill around the trees and flower beds and find a flat spot

between two driveways or a green space. They don't want this to cost Vermont Gas much money, so they move around the trees.

Alice Leeds asked about the long term commitment from Vermont Gas and the pipes. Tom Murray stated regarding the pipes, Vermont Gas can come on site and locate the pipes. They have a high-tech system that can locate the pipes and detect if there is a leak. Vermont Gas is regulated by the feds and the state. They have an obligation to maintain these pipes and a state of the art system to maintain the pipes. Tom Murray stated about the water pipes, Vermont Gas will work with the public works people when the water pipes need to be fixed. John Ball expressed his concern with Vermont Yankee and how Vermont had to pay the bill for the clean-up of Vermont Yankee.

Vermont Gas timeline for 2018 is the town agreement needs to be signed, get the Act 250 permit, and then begin construction this fall. In 2019 would be the village build out and service would start. The Act 250 permit may cause a delay in the village build o. In 2019 service would then be offered in sections. Ann Metcalf expressed her concern about the impact on trees and that it could take a while for a tree to die.

Linda Brown asked how Vermont Gas comes up with the map for areas that would be serviced and is the map based on need or delivery system. Tom Murray said maps were created several years ago around 2013. Vermont Gas met with the Regional Planning Commission. Property owners do not need to connect to the gas line if they do not want to and there is no cost to them.

Don Miller asked if there was a leak how does Vermont Gas know where it is. Tom Murray said Vermont Gas has one of the tightest systems in the country. If there is even a minor leak the system knows where it is and Vermont Gas would then send a technician to fix it. The system is coded with steel or polyethylene and both are very durable. Vermont Gas has about 20 service technicians. The gas gets an odor added to it. it's a major leak then call 911 and the fire department and Vermont Gas is called. Vermont Gas has trucks they detect frost. The trucks have four sniffers and the truck goes around and sniffs the gas pipes to check for frost and leaks. Joel Bouvier noted that Franklin County had gas installed in 1965 and asked how many times the lines have been serviced by Vermont Gas. Tim Vachereau said there are about 10-12 leaks per year for the entire system and they are usually fixed within a day or that week.

John Ball said as a home owner this seems like a good idea. How would you go about connecting to this? Tom Murray said if the home is within 100 feet from the main then they can be connected for free. If you want to connect your boiler then you take the burner off and you can rent a converter and you would pay for renting this.

John Ball asked how the competitors feel about natural gas. Tom Murray said they work with fuel dealers and contractors. Now instead of delivering oil they service the equipment. They accept the fact and that Vermont Gas has a monopoly on it.

Janet Leed-Ball asked where the gas comes from and is it fracked. Tom Murray said yes it is most likely fracked and it comes from Highgate and before that from Canada. Tom stated

Vermont Gas has sound environmental values and they have the best practices and frack gas responsibly. He feels this is the best company he has worked for.

Alan Huizenga said he is interested in the planning side of things and he is worried about the water lines. He suggested when installing the Vermont Gas pipes to put them close to the water lines since the water lines will need to be replaced. The new water lines could then be installed away from the Vermont Gas pipes.

Sally Burrell said the storm water runoff goes into the drains and then the river. She expressed her concern for the trees, sidewalks, and the distribution lines and coordinating this. She is not in favor of having Vermont Gas coming to Bristol. She has a concern for safety and risks of explosions. She said her sister who lives in Washington said there was an explosion there which burned buildings and blew windows out of buildings. She would like to see the Town create local renewable energy and within the state. Jono Chapin also expressed concern about the risks of explosions from natural gas and the source being from fracked gas.

Jennifer Vynhak stated in 2016 Vermont Department of Public Service wrote the Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan which states, 25% of our energy needs using renewable by 2025, 40% by 2035, and 90% by 2050. She stated it starts at the local level and start thinking about our kids and grandkids.

Kevin Hanson is looking forward to natural gas coming. He owns a large house and business. He is a little bothered that the Selectboard is not committed yet and has not signed anything yet. As a village he feels the majority is looking forward to this. He feels this is beneficial for the Town of Bristol.

Steve Brown stated he is not in favor. He said Vermont Gas stated they are a monopoly, but state regulated. Once this project gets in place and who is to say the cost estimates will stay the same and not increase.

Bob Donnis is concerned about methane. We need to reduce our carbon footprint. He stated there is a presentation this Saturday February 17 at the firehouse about cost effective ways to reduce your heating bills.

Regarding use of natural gas as a back up for heat pumps, Tom Murray stated after speaking with technicians and Efficiency Vermont heat pumps are not a good source for your first source of heating your home. Heat pumps are for the shoulder months so spring and fall. When it's 10 below for days, the heat pumps do not function well.

Peter Ryan stated the fracking does not happen in Vermont. He likes the opportunity to lower his cost. We are not going to fix the climate change in Vermont. He feels he should have the opportunity to hook up to natural gas.

Amos Martin asked if the map is set in stone. Tom Murray said the map that was presented has to get approved first and then they can expand if needed.

Paul Forlenza asked if the Selectboard looked at all the pros and cons of this project. Ken Johnson, burns bio mass to fuel the kilns and natural gas would be there back up. He doesn't see it as a perfect solution, but does see it as a cost effective way of fueling.

Patty Heather-Lea, asked about page 6 of 9 in the agreement regarding the period of restoration is one year and asked if that can be longer. She asked about the variation of 25 feet of the right of way for most places. Michelle Perlee stated the plan is to have Vermont Gas work within the town's right of way, however if it's greater they would have to request an easement from the land owner. Patty asked if the land owner denied the easement then Vermont Gas would need to change their path and the way they do the work.

Patty asked about the 12 hour shift and make sure they are treated well. Tom Murray stated they aren't working 12 hours a day every day. This varies day to day to finish the section of the road.

Linda Brown asked what criteria is the Selectboard using when going through the memorandum and if this is not a done deal, how will the Board provide a platform and get input from the town members. Peeker Heffernan said he misspoke when he said the Board has not signed anything. On December 18, 2012, the Board signed a letter of support for Vermont Gas coming to Bristol. Michelle Perlee, stated there are no criteria and the letter states supporting natural gas coming to Bristol from Vermont Gas. Sally Burrell said she spoke with Chico Martin and she heard the Addison County Board was meeting and they approved Vermont Gas coming to Middlebury. She said Chico Martin approached Bill Bryant (previous Town Administrator of Bristol) to have Vermont Gas come to Bristol and she felt the letter was signed without all of the information that was needed. She felt the community has not had a chance to give their input. Jono Chapin asked if this was a done deal and could we vote on this next month. Linda Brown asked how to get a better idea of how the town feels about this. Michelle Perlee said she put it on Front Porch Forum, etc. Linda said maybe Monday at 6 p.m. for meetings and on Front Porch Forum isn't working. Peeker Heffernan said they advertised and added places where they posted the meeting times. The Board cannot force people to read things. If the community has a better way then let them know. Linda Brown asked the Board if the Town of Bristol is in the same place in 2018 as they were in 2012. Peeker Heffernan said in 2012 the Board was asked if the Board was willing to support the idea of low cost fuel coming to Bristol and he believes the answer today is still yes they support the idea of low cost fuel coming to Bristol.

Valerie Capels noted that at the December 2017 meeting, it was her understanding that Vermont Gas could go through Bristol without Town permission on Route 116 and 17 because it is a State highway. Someone from the audience stated she understood that Town approval was required and Karen Kotecki, from Vermont Gas nodded in agreement that the Town still needs to give permission for them to come through Bristol and go to Starksboro.

Shawn Kimball said community members can watch the Selectboard meetings on the NEATtv website and the videos are now sectioned out in case someone does not want to watch the entire meeting. Michelle Perlee said the community can email the Board members and the Town Administrator.

Bill Sayre, Director Vermont Gas, and resident of Bristol stated Vermont Gas is striving to improve the environment and safety and to providing affordable natural gas to Vermont. He told a story about Buzz Bouvier when he was on the Board 20 years ago. There was an issue 20 years ago and townspeople came to a Selectboard meeting to discuss an issue. Buzz Bouvier at the time stated, he was there to represent the town citizens of 4,000 people and not 15 people that opposed the policy at that time.

Jono Chapin asked what are our values and is Bristol ready to be courageous enough to go against the corporation. He feels that Bristol is at a different point from now compared to 2012 and where we are trying to go as a town or state.

Jennifer Vyhnak again mentioned the point Pecker made that this is a done deal. She stated, "This is a done deal" is a strategy to disempower the people. She also asked about an article in the town warning and what could have been done to make the Comprehensive Energy Plan binding. Valerie Capels said the state statute determines what matters are binding or non-binding.

Peter Ryan said he agrees with the Board being responsible for the whole town. He does not trust petitions and people would just sign them to get them out the door. He feels this is not going to cure the climate change. This will lower his cost to live in Vermont.

III. Adjourn.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tasha Bouvier, Board Clerk

with review by Valerie Capels, Town Administrator