

Special Meeting
Selectboard Minutes
11/9/2020

Members Present by Zoom: Christine Werneke, David Sander, Bard Hill, Katie Mather, Roger Brown

Others Present by Zoom: Josh Arneson, Town Manager; Kathy Daub-Stearns, Admin. Assist.; Connie Bona, Finance Dir.; Kyle Kapitansky, acting Police Chief; Ravi Venkataraman, Planner; Rebecca Mueller, Library; Kendall Chamberlain, Water & Sewer Superintendent; Pete Gosselin, Highway Foreman and Dennis Gile, Fire Chief; Joseph McLean, attorney; Jay Furr, Connie van Eeghen, Susan Parent, Martha Nye, the meeting was recorded for MMCTV Channel 15.

Called to Order: 6:30 PM

Welcome by David who thanked Linda for making the election process go smoothly in Richmond and the community for exercising their right to vote and all the volunteers that counted ballots.

I. Executive Session: Legal

Bard moved to find that premature public knowledge about a legal matter would clearly place the Town at a substantial disadvantage; Katie seconded. Roll call vote: Katie, Christine, Bard, and David voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Bard moved to enter into executive session to discuss confidential attorney-client communications made for the purpose of providing professional legal services to the body under the provisions of 1 VSA 313(a)(1) of the Vermont State Statutes and to invite the Town Manager, Josh Arneson and attorney Joe McLean, into the executive session; Katie seconded. Roll call vote: Katie, Christine, Bard, and David voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Bard moved to exit executive session; Christine seconded. Roll call vote: Katie, Bard, Christine, Roger, and David voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Meeting resumed at 7:25PM

Comments from the public:

- Bard thanked voters for their civility and balanced behavior during the election process.
- Connie Van Eeghan said she was there for support of OCCC asking if she should speak now or wait for the agenda item. Since Appropriations was 1st on the agenda David agreed that she would speak first.

II. Review and Discussion of the FY22 Budget

a) Charitable Appropriations

Discussion included:

- that Connie Van Eeghan said she came to support OCCC's application. She said there is a new and revitalized board that supports all people adding that last year the appropriations request was \$20,000 and is much less this year. She thanked the board for their support. Connie turned it over to Susan Parent who had an updated budget and that she explained.
- that Susan Parent thanked the Town for their support.
- that OCCC planned for a full camp program in the coming year.

David reported that he had the draft spreadsheet and turned it over to Josh who reported:

- that there is one change from last week
- that the requests are similar from last year
- that OCCC asked for \$3000 down from last years \$20,000 but up from the previous request of \$800
- that Front Porch Forum (FPF) requested \$100 and that last year the Selectboard increased that amount to \$200 due to the amount of benefit the Town receives from them.

Discussion continued:

Bard moved to increase FPF to \$200, Katie seconded. Roll call vote: Katie, Christine, Roger, Bard and David voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

- that Katie asked OCCC members Connie Van Eeghan and Susan Parent about the increase from \$800 to \$3000 after the \$20,000 increase. Susan replied that the increase is a portion of the budget. Connie Van Eeghan replied that what happened in the past was that there was no paid staffing. After Marie Thomas left they decided to hire people to fill positions.
- that the \$3000 will be the level they will be looking for to keep the infrastructure in place that they have developed every.
- that Katie asked if they would have a presentation about the "bridge" year and operating funds and what fund raising is taking place. Connie van Eeghan said the books are open and they would be happy to do that.
- Bard would like to know what the revenue from other towns looked like. Connie van Eeghan said all towns paid a different amount but would share the numbers with the board.

David thanked them. Josh will help set up a date for their presentation.

b) Revenue

Josh reported:

- that when looking at non-tax revenue there was an increase in zoning fees
- that investment interest has dropped with rates
- that police OT for the Governor's Highway Grant cannot be determined at this time
- that the SRO position has not been budgeted for until we hear from the school
- that Library income was reduced due to COVID

Discussion included:

- that Connie asked about taking money from the Town Center Fund to pay for insurance. Roger said there will need to be a bond in the future for repairs and

- renovations. Bard asked how many years we have been handling the insurance that way. Connie replied, as long as she's been doing it, 8 years. She said the other departments have previously been broken out.
- that this would change what pot of money was being paid from. Roger said let's break it out and then decide where we want the money to come from on the revenue side.
 - Roger said he would like to be involved with the discussions with the bank regarding fees. Connie said right now she is trying to decrease the electronic fees.
 - that Christine asked – the water/ sewer green numbers match fees and expenses so they are not raised by taxes? Connie said, yes.
 - that Christine asked what the \$15,000 maintenance represents. Connie said that it is the amount used for maintenance for the building and is budgeted and approved by the voters. Christine said but not for the Library. Josh said that when speaking with the lawyer, that the fund is for the Town Center building and the Library heat expenses were not voted on by the voters. Bard said that excess revenue from tenants went into an account for future uses for maintenance and at the time was intended for the Town Center building only. Christine said a fair amount of work has been put off because the voters need to vote on it adding that then there is other work that should be budgeted. Bard asked if there was something that we want to add to the budget for planning for the Town Center. Christine said, yes. There are things very specific that we could put into the budget, like the second-floor meeting space and how it would be used if we move that meeting space upstairs. Connie said the amount in that account is a lot less than she thought. Josh said the amount shared was about \$520,000 not over \$700,000 adding that the number is consistent with last years Town Report. Connie said that the auditor told her that from years ago there were expenses charged to the fund that were not reimbursed to the Town. Josh said he will check with the attorney to see if we can put items into the budget to spend the money. Christine said there is a meeting on Thursday of the Town Center and Library Committee and the committee has an immediate needs request as well as long term needs. Bard thought that the funds couldn't be spent before July 1 but contracts could be sought. Josh thought we should be able to start using money immediately if the Australian Ballot vote is affirmative and outweighs the budget.
 - that Bard asked about revenue from tickets, do we want to show a lower revenue? David agreed that it is logical to assume it will be lower due to COVID and a change in how we patrol and give warnings before issuing a ticket. Kyle said that the number was left there with the thought that the number reflects July of next year and he was optimistic things would be somewhat normal.

c) Library Department

Josh reported:

- that there were no changes since the last review.

Discussion included:

- that it is standard from last year.
- that Connie said reserves are low, \$8,000 is a low amount. Bard said with high expenses.
- that the current reserve amount is \$38,000

- that Christine and Bard thought that the reserve contribution should be \$12,000 a year. David agreed that for tonight \$12,000 was ok but it may need to be looked at again.

d) Fire Department

Josh reported:

- that equipment purchases for hoses was reduced by getting a quote from another vendor

Discussion included:

- that in past years the fire department was underfunded so when seeing a decrease in the budget there is a concern that the department is being underfunded.
- that Denis asked if since one truck was paid off, did we want to put the payment into a fund to pay for the next truck. Roger said he would like to see what the expenses for the trucks are. Denis said every 5 years we replace a truck, we have 5 trucks. Roger asked for a list of the trucks and what replacement costs are. Connie said she is working on the capital plan, but it will take some time. Roger said he would like to see the numbers.
- that the reserve fund is \$105,590 plus the impact fees account of about \$18,000.
- that we may want to pay down the debt, Connie was uncertain that a bond could be paid down.
- that there should be a reserve for turn out gear instead of budgeting it and possibly not using it and losing it and that other equipment could be funded the same way. Christine said she would like there be a fund that encompasses more than just one item that can be purchased with the money. Connie said managing it is easier if it is for specific items. Christine said she did not like tying hands and not being able to use the funds. Roger said doing something like was done for the police vehicle replacement last year adding that if we raise the right amount of money then things can be purchased when they are needed. Christine is concerned that there will be too many little pots of money that are not being used. Connie said that if the money is in the reserve then the fund may not need to be funded every year.
- that a safety equipment fund will be set up

e) Police Department

Kyle said that the department capital plan number was increased because it was half of what was really needed.

Josh reported:

- that with a staff of four (4) and a chief we need six (6) cruisers.
- that we are on a four (4) year replacement cycle.

Discussion included:

- that there are six (6) cars but one (1) is not being used because of its condition.
- that the oldest car is a 2015 and has been decommissioned and ready to go out to bid. The oldest operational car is a 2016 with 128,000 miles.
- that if the school is not going to fund an SRO Kyle came up with a plan for what shift coverage would look like. He said there would be some gaps in coverage with a chief and three (3) officers and we would be reliant on coverage from the

state police and that Williston has helped us out but there is no obligation for them to help.

- that "on-call" officers are required to be here within thirty (30) min.
- that having a fourth (4th) officer would provide more robust police coverage
- that the question is do we end up with a chief and four (4) officers by the end of next year.
- that per diem coverage is budgeted at 15 hours a month, less than previously budgeted due to various reasons.
- that Roger said, every year we ask about on call coverage. Christine asked if there was a way to categorize 911 calls. Kyle said he could get general data about calls after certain hours. His perspective was that the community is better served by having its own community police department.
- that Kyle will get the information on call volume for the next meeting adding that context is important.
- that the number in the budget is for four (4) officers and a chief.
- that Roger said the people need to decide about what coverage we want for days and nights adding do we hire one (1) or two (2) officers.
- that Kyle said there is something called a cops grant that pays 3 years for a full time officer and the town would pay the 4th year. The scope of the grant he said is that the town has to benefit directly and is used to bring officers back from a lay off or to fill a vacancy.
- that Bard added that around the country people are looking at defunding the police adding that places like Burlington are downsizing by attrition, but they have 124 officers. It is an interesting time for this conversation.
- that Pete asked about how much time the administrative part of the job is. Kyle said on an average day with no arrests or investigations there are still incident reports that need to be filed. He said that when you add in criminal investigations or a death report or drug DUI it can be a significant amount of administrative work. Pete said being short staffed how much good service can be provided. Kyle said there is a balance of paperwork and community service.
- that Roger said it is inappropriate for the Selectboard to budget for less coverage and expect full coverage if we do not provide the funding. Connie said that even when we have budgeted for five (5) officers we have had three (3) so if we lower the number and officers are out for any reason we will be very short staffed.

Highway and Recreation & Trails

Josh reported:

- that there were not really any changes
- that the only thing to note is that because of the wage comparison some changes were made to wages but that with other employees retiring it is almost level funded.

Discussion included:

- that Pete added the crosswalk sign that he was asked about is budgeted at \$4500 now.
- that Pete has been working on the capital plan and presented what the highway fleet replacements look like related to costs.
- that the reserve for highway is \$180,563. but there are big purchases coming up.

- that Bard said that we were putting more into capital reserve before, should we go back to the old number or a higher number. Pete said we can use cash or get loans and he leaves that up to Connie to put the information together. Connie said that we need to put money away adding that sidewalks will need to have a fund started so there is money to do the plans Ravi is working on. Pete said splitting lines has happened in the past. Roger said a reserve is a smart idea for new sidewalks and sidewalk repairs. The question is how much should be put away.
- that Roger thought we need to be spending \$190,000 for equipment replacement and Josh responded that the total for this year is 218,550.
- that Connie said that between the audit and the capital plan work she has discovered changes that have not been accounted for. Roger said every year we should spend the same amount whether we borrow or not.
- that Pete noted there are deficiencies in other departments too adding the capital funding may be adequate for this year but that having a fund for stormwater and sidewalks would be preferable

f) Planning and Zoning

Josh reported:

- that salary and staffing is the big thing
- that the Zoning Officer is currently budgeted at 20 hours/ week and works at Hinesburg 20 hours.
- that the position needs more hours or more support with the options being to increase the Admin. Assistant hours from 30 – 37 causing an increase to the budget of \$7600 or moving zoning officer position to 30 hours increasing the budget by approximately \$35,495.
- that moving the hours to 30 may be the best thing to do
- that if we continue to split the time with Hinesburg, we are limited to 20 hours

Discussion included:

- where does the board want to go?
- that Roger asked about partnering with Huntington. Ravi said he spoke with Huntington and it would be tough to pair with them because they are far along in their hiring process, so we are just too late.
- that if the position requires 30 hours then budget for it with the understanding it may be cut later.
- that we could advertise for 20 hours and then if the funding is assured later increase the hours to 30 in July. Josh thought we would not get anyone in until January and reducing someone's hours is much harder than increasing someone's hours. Bard thought advertising for 20 hours stating it may go to 30 with benefits could solve the problem. Ravi said the candidate pool is small so either partnering with Hinesburg or raising the hours to 30 hours is necessary.
- Bard would like to see the whole budget put together and recommended adding in what is wanted and then we may need to go back and look at it again.
- that Connie said if we do not budget for the Conservation Fund like last year the percentage drops. Are we budgeting for 2% over last years budget? Bard said that the voters need to vote the Conservation Fund so it should be 0 in the budget.
- that in the past the rise in budget has been linked to the CPI increase.
- that we are shooting for a 1-1.5% increase with the Conservation Fund included

- that Josh said the partnership with Hinesburg limits the ability to increase the position to 30 hours. Ravi added that in Hinesburg there are two (2) people doing the zoning because they have a DRB person at 40 hours and the shared person at 20.
- that currently the DRB meets once a month and there is a 2 month wait to get on the schedule.
- that to get a permit with a 20 hour a week position when the person is available only Wed., Thurs., and Fri mornings is difficult. Ravi added that having a 30 hour per week position would alleviate that.
- that the next budget meeting is December 14 so without a decision advertising the position would mean waiting another month.
- that we may need another budget meeting sooner.
- that Pete asked about contracting the work out. Ravi said there are circuit workers that work 5 hours a week and move through a number of different towns.
- that starting next week the DRB duties will be done by CCRPC at \$50 per hour and Ravi will be doing the zoning work.
- that this could be brought up next Monday, but the rest of the budget would not be ready as Bard suggested.
- that Bard suggested that if we are optimistic that we can do this with some trade offs then we could advertise the position at 30 hours and then make a change and pull the add and readvertise for 20 hours. Christine wondered if there is some middle ground is there some way to have the position not be full time. Josh said at 25 hours there would be no benefits but still prevents us from partnering with Hinesburg.
- that Bard asked about when the Capital Plan will be complete. Connie said it will take some time.
- that Ravi said the position needs to be filled by March adding that if we are not partnering with Hinesburg then waiting a month doesn't matter.

g) Town Administration and Assessors

Was moved to the next meeting. The next meeting will be Dec. 14, 2020 unless things move faster than anticipated then it may be sooner.

Discussion continued:

Christine asked for money for redoing the Town Website to be added to the budget. Josh said that it is a good use of unassigned funds. Christine would like the website to be a transactional tool for payments.

III. Adjourn

Bard moved to adjourn; Roger seconded. Roll call vote: Christine, Bard, Roger, Katie, and David voted affirmatively. The meeting ended at 10:58PM.