

Special Meeting
Selectboard Minutes
10/20/2020

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

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; Pete Gosselin, Highway Foreman and Dennis Gile, Fire Chief; Jay Furr, Rod West, June Heston, Ann Naumann, Wafic Faour, Gretchen Paulsen, Laurie Dana, Eveline Killian, Martha Nye, Patty Brushett, Sau, Madeline, Allen Knowles, Emily Mitchell, Stefani Hartsfield, Cody Quattrocci, Jana Brown, Alexis Latham, and the meeting was recorded for MMCTV Channel 15.

Called to Order: 7:00 PM

Welcome by David

Comments from the public:

Ann Naumann asked when the next FIPP (Fair & Impartial Policing Policy) discussion would be. David replied it would be at the next regular meeting. Josh responded that at the next meeting the breakout group was going to address the Selectboard then at one of the January meetings the group would come back. Ann Naumann said that when the next time FIPP would be discussed is what she wanted to know. Bard said he asked for the Town Staff to talk at the next meeting and then have another meeting to have others address the board. Ann said she did not know why the staff would have another time adding she thought that the previous meeting was for everyone to speak already adding if that meant only the staff would speak at the next meeting. Bard said that was his request, that the staff did not have an opportunity due to time at the previous meeting. Bard said his goal is to have staff say what they want to then have a third meeting. Ann said that Racial Equity did not speak, and she thought they and others should have time. Bard repeated his request to hear from staff at the next meeting then others at the 3rd meeting. Ann thanked him for the clarity.

I. Additions or Deletions to Agenda –

Josh requested that a warrant for employee gift cards be added to the agenda. David approved.

II. Review and Discussion of the FY22 Budget

a) Property, Casualty, Liability and Workers' Compensation Insurance

Josh reported:

- that this had been discussed at other meetings
- that the amount was due to be reduced by 5% based on VLCT's letter
- that the invoice received had a slight increase instead of the 5% decrease
- that VLCT responded and that the property casualty side of the policy was increased due to a claim from 2015 that was now being factored in causing our payment to be substantially even
- that the budget has been updated to reflect the increase

Discussion included:

- that David asked about going out to bid. Josh replied that there was a company interested and with the level of detail they requested we were not able to put it together for this year but would start earlier next year to ensure we go out to bid.
- that Christine asked if our total costs were going up for insurances through VLCT. Josh said the amount is about even adding that in previous iterations of the budget it was thought the amount was going down, now the correction has been made and it looks like it went up but is even with last year.

b) Planning and Zoning Staffing

Josh reported:

- that planning, zoning and police staffing are the largest conversations tonight.
- that the zoning administrator has left, and we are looking at hiring another adding that in the past the Town coupled with Hinesburg for 20 hours in each location for this position with health insurance available through Hinesburg at a 50% cost to the employee.
- that the actual amount of work requires more than the 20 hours allotted and would like to increase the hours to 30 hours and offer insurance. That change increased the total amount by about \$35,000 to go to 30 hours from 20.
- that the Planner is currently at 35 hours and with the tasks he has plus other committee involvement Josh said he would like to have that position at 40 hours that equated to a \$7500 increase.

Discussion included:

- that the numbers were already included in the budget presented tonight
- that historically items are put into the budget and may need to be adjusted later
- that Bard said he was contacted by the Planning Committee about updates that are needed
- that Gretchen Paulsen asked if we are going through the budget page by page David said after police staffing

c) Police Staffing

Josh reported:

- that at the last meeting we discussed what the proper number of staff needed was
- that we looked at scheduling of 3 vs 4 officers

Discussion included:

- that David said there is a savings when we have a vacancy savings. Josh said there is no mechanism to reduce taxes once it is budgeted for
- that Bard said the number of officers translates into what coverage we will have

Kyle Kapitansky reported:

- that with three (3) officers and a chief there would be abbreviated coverage and that the schedule would not allow for training, vacation, sick or on-call time adding that the State Police would have to cover the rest of the time.
- that with four (4) officers and a chief the schedule could provide time for training and shift coverage if someone were sick. The 4th position had been partially covered by the SRO position that may not be funded this year causing the budget to increase.

Discussion included:

- that the budget presented does not have the SRO reimbursement from the school
- that Christine asked about training adding that the Racial Equity Group is interested in the training. She asked if training could be during scheduled hours or would it be OT hours. Kyle responded that with the four (4) officers and a chief scenario in-house virtual training could take place, with the three (3) officers logistically it would

be much more difficult. Bard said if people want more training having it budgeted for is important. Kyle said the increase in the training budget of \$1000 anticipates additional training but nailing down exactly what the costs would be is not possible due to variations in training topic costs.

- that Gretchen Paulsen asked Kyle if the department ever trains with other police departments. Kyle responded that they train with departments throughout the state with fees generally paid on an per officer basis.
- that Bard said some types of police training may not be best virtually.
- that Connie said having a full police staff has not been reality adding that in the coming year we have an officer that will be gone for nine (9) months. She thought having five (5) officers was necessary. Bard said there seems to be some vacancy so if we shoot for five (5), we end up with four (4+), if we shoot for four (4) we get three (3+).
- that Wafic Faour said the SRO is separate is that why you mentioned it that way? Kyle said no, the school has not made a commitment for an SRO so there would be no offset. Wafic said if we do not need an SRO officer, we do not need an SRO position. Connie said the SRO officer worked as a regular officer at least 50% of the time. Josh said the SRO schedule was four (4) days at school, one (1) day on the regular schedule and when school is out on the regular schedule. Wafic asked if 2/3rds of the salary came from the school. Josh said yes, this year we are budgeting for the officer with no offset from the school and that is the genesis of the discussion. Bard said the school budget and the town budget are linked on this topic. Gretchen Paulsen asked if the SRO officer was only at the middle school or the high school also. Kyle responded that the SRO at the high school is done by the sheriff's office.
- that David said some residents have been unhappy about State Police response times. Bard asked Kyle to let us know what type of calls the State Police would cover. Kyle said that the State Police are wonderful partners. He said when State Police go off duty, they have a Sargent and 1 or 2 troopers that are on call so when a call comes in the dispatcher calls the Sargent who decides who responds and when it will be responded to adding it could be when day shift comes on. Kyle went on to say that it could be that unless it is an emergency it would wait until the next day. The other concern is where the on-call trooper lives. It could be hours before a trooper arrives. Richmond PD has 30 minutes to respond barring weather and other calls. Bard said that sounds consistent with what he has heard.
- that Stefani Hartsfield said the school board meeting is tonight also and she arrived at this meeting late. That the SRO conversation at the school board level is that the best use of the officer may not be the school. She said the school district used the money in other capacities which is their right to do. She said looking back at Selectboard Minutes of May 28 the same staffing discussion took place. She said we have turn over but that does not mean we budget for 5 and hope for 4. She wondered if there is a more creative way to deal with the staffing rather than adding \$40,000 to the budget. Bard said we talked about staffing patterns earlier in the evening that she may have missed since she was just joining the conversation. Stefani said she hopes we are not disregarding past discussions. Kyle responded that he thought Stefani was talking about contracting police services out and his experience was between \$75 to 90 per hour and opposed to funding an officer.
- that Rod West is concerned with only authorizing three (3) officers. He said if we start cutting our officers the lack of reciprocity may cause problems adding that the guard will be deploying and there will be staffing shortfalls for troopers as well. He felt training is important when we do not pay our officers much.
- that Patty Brushett said we should make sure we budget enough for training and another \$1000 does not seem like a lot. Bard asked what amount she thought was appropriate. Patty responded that there are a few different routes that could be taken, there are free resources, like the film 13 and then have a facilitator to discuss

it. Implicit bias and things are things we need to talk about. The first thing is that it will take OT. Christine said that every time we go through one of these budgeting discussions department heads have brought back information that has been helpful. She asked Kyle what core items are included in the budgeted number. Kyle replied that he will bring back additional information for the next meeting and said if people have specific training topics let him know and he will see what the cost is. Bard said who gets what training and when is not the budget discussion. Connie said there should be enough money for training.

- that Cody Quattrocci asked if the list of calls was a public document. Bard replied that it is on the town website with the agenda packet of information

d) Review of entire budget

Josh reported:

- that there were some budget changes made since the meeting in November and reviewed them

Discussion included:

- that Christine asked about the Library Reserve of \$12,000 and asked what triggered the \$4000 increase. Connie said that there should be more money budgeted to cover maintenance that has been put off adding that the Selectboard members asked to have it increased at the last meeting. Rebecca thought it was a wise decision to save for needed repairs. Christine said that in March we plan to identify the immediate maintenance needed that will be voted on by the residents on Town Meeting Day so that in FY22 this reserve might be a place to find some money. Connie said that the library reserve line has been hit pretty hard this year and should be replaced so we do not end up in an emergent situation with no money for repairs. Christine said that the Article being put forward would allow for the Town Center Fund money to be used for the Library too so why are we needing to build back that fund if we are tapping into another fund. Bard said that since it is an unknown and may fail. Connie said we just cannot decide to spend large sums of money without it being voted on even if the residents vote to allow the use of the Town Center Funds for the library, we should bring the funds back up in the library reserve fund. Rebecca said there are huge, big ticket items that the library needs, there are other things like carpeting, interior painting, and other projects that need doing. She said that with the age of the building there are things that just need to be done on a yearly basis and said we should continue to fund the reserve. Pete said the reserve funds for each department are essential to keep things going when you do not know what expenses will come up. Rebecca said that some years the funds just rolled over and were not tapped into. Bard said we have put things in that we think are reasonable and then make changes later if needed. Roger said that in terms of an emergency reserve there is the unrestricted or unassigned funds that can be used if needed also.

Josh resumed:

- that there are unassigned funds could be used for contributions to fund reserve funds if necessary
- that we may want a line for a new website
- that when looking at the wage comparison analysis he wanted to put a place holder amount in to help get people up to where other towns are even though there are a few positions yet to be done. Bard said he is struggling with how to address the amount without knowing specifics. Josh said that he wanted to start the conversation rather than wait and understands the need for more details. Roger said he and Josh were trying to figure out how the best way to present this. Walking through position by position could take hours. Pete asked Roger if the salary piece would be finished for this budget season. Roger said it is why we have

been working so hard on it. Roger asked Bard if he wants to know the idiosyncrasies or if Bard just want to know what the changes were. Bard said he wanted to see the work on how it was decided. Roger asked if position wages are public. Connie said historically we have not had the information with names attached to numbers but that it does fall into public information. Bard asked Josh to find the answer adding if it is not subject to executive session then it must be public, and we could talk about it in public. Roger said in terms of wanting to see the math sitting down with Josh would be the way to go and then do we do it publicly. Bard said he did not know at the town level but at the state level what every employee makes is public knowledge. Josh said he has reached out to VLCT and that it is a challenging topic. Connie said we need to start wrapping the budget up in the next 4-5 weeks. Roger said he knows why the wage evaluation has not been done in the past because everyone has a complaint about how it is being done.

- Bard asked if we have finished the agenda items. Josh said we had, and he would check with Linda Parent on when everything is needed for the printer. We have a budget meeting scheduled for the second Monday in January adding he would come back with the final numbers at that meeting. Bard said the salary numbers will be ready for the final review in January and then decide what needs to be reduced if necessary. David said the Town Report will take longer to set up this year.
- that Gretchen said that the Racial Equity Group asked for more money be budgeted for implicit bias training for all town staff. Josh said training/ education in administration may the line to use. Connie agreed with Josh. Bard said it made sense to increase that line and see a training plan for all staff. Gretchen asked how many town employees. Connie said not counting the fire department volunteers there are about thirty-five (35) FT and PT employees.

IV. Warrant approval for gift card for employee:

Roger moved to approve the warrant Bard seconded. Roll call vote: Christine, Roger, Bard, and David voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Discussion included:

- that Bard asked where the gift cards are charged to. Josh said employee recognition.

Bard thanked everyone for coming and being respectful to each other and the process.

III. Adjourn

Christine moved to adjourn; Bard seconded. Roll call vote: Christine, Bard, Roger, Katie, and David voted affirmatively. The meeting ended at 9:20 PM.