

Selectboard Minutes 4/27/2020

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

Absent: none

Others Present by Zoom: Josh Arneson, Town Manager; Kathy Daub-Stearns, Admin. Assist.; Connie Bona, Finance; Pete Gosselin, Hwy; Superintendent; Ravi Venkatataman, Planner; Kendall Chamberlain, Water & Sewer Superintendent; Kyle Kapitanski, Police; and Angelica Contis recorded the meeting for MMCTV Channel 15, also present: Chris Granda

Called to Order: 7:06 PM

Welcome by David.

- I. Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present**
- II. Additions or Deletions to Agenda- none**

A. Update on COVID-19 health crisis response
Update on operations of Town departments

Josh reported:

- that the Highway employees have been hauling sand to get everyone back working 40 hours and with the Governor's order increased from 2 to 5 persons on a job site that will enable Pete to schedule everyone at 40 hours.
- that the library will still have hours being paid to part time employees that are not able to work from home
- that Martha has been called back to work with Linda working until noon then Martha coming in afternoons, they are not both working at the same time
- that the cleaning person back working
- that the goal is to get people back working as restrictions get relaxed.

Discussion included:

- Katie asking if the Town is allowed to be more cautious? Josh replied yes, and that all departments are making good decisions to keep people safe.
- David asked if the Town has a cleaning policy? Josh replied that there is guidance and training that all employees are required to do online put out by VOSHA. In addition, Kathy is producing a draft of the policy the Town will need going forward.

1. Discussion of employee compensation

Josh reported that in the last 6 weeks the Town has paid employees not able to work from home or working less than their normal hours \$20,000, of that \$5,000 has gone to Library employees.

Discussion included:

- Katie commented that there had been discussion about finding a way to redeploy library workers and wanted to know if any work has been identified? Josh responded

he has considered it but has not found suitable jobs that could be done part time from home. Christine added that there may be guidance coming for reopening libraries.

2. Update on options Selectboard has for property tax collection & budget adjustments

Josh reported:

- that the 5/15/2020 property tax payments due will largely come from escrowed money banks collect with mortgage payment. and considering the extra \$600 unemployed taxpayers are receiving the hope is that payments come in as usual.
- that the 8/15/2020 property tax payment is of more concern although banks may choose to pay the property taxes of delinquent mortgage holders to keep properties from going to tax sale
- that the extensions on tax returns and homestead filings may cause a delay in getting tax bills out and/ or cause a need to send out updated tax bills
- that the Tax Collector is paid with the interest collected on late payments
- that the Town has a process where if a taxpayer cannot pay their property tax they can apply to the Board of Tax Abatement for relief and this is done on a case by case basis.
- that currently the Selectboard cannot adjust anything related to property taxes without a town-wide vote
- that there is a bill being proposed that would give the Selectboard the power to extend the deadline for payment of local property taxes; reduce or waive penalties, interest, and fees for the late payment of property taxes; and adjust the municipal tax rate for the calendar year 2020. Josh added that all of the proposals come with downsides.

Discussion included:

- Roger asking how much of the property taxes are escrowed? Connie replied that about \$800,000 comes in from financial institutions per quarter. She added that the auditors have said that the Town could use the \$750,000 in the Town Center Funds to pay the education tax due if it was necessary especially since there is only a 2 week window to pay the school tax and a loan would take 6 weeks.
- Connie reported that there are a number of water and sewer bills that are late but that it isn't the worst quarter of the year. Connie said she is hoping that it will be August before we feel any crunch. She added that the Bond Bank is allowing the Town to postpone payments so she is feeling more positive.

Josh continued his report stating:

- that there is an 8% penalty imposed if the school tax bill is not paid by the Town to the education fund on time.
- that the House is considering whether there could be interest forgiveness for any Town that needed to borrow money to pay the education fund if taxpayers didn't pay their taxes.

Discussion included:

- Chris Granda added that he thought the bill may be voted on this Thursday.
- Connie noted that the delinquent tax collector works with property owners to resolve issues thus preventing anyone from being foreclosed upon for non-payment. Her

thought is that waiving the penalty takes away how we pay the tax collector and incentivizes not paying.

- Bard would like to know what percentage of property taxes are commercial/ industrial versus residential for the next meeting as part of collecting information for future decision making.
- Connie let the Selectboard know that 22 homeowners are delinquent with their property taxes right now adding that is a very low number.

3. **Update on Bridge St. Infrastructure Replacement Project**

Josh reported that with restrictions lifted by the Governor the Bridge St projects are moving forward. He stated that equipment is being moved into place with 5/4/2020 being the actual start date. Josh said he will update residences and businesses.

Pete will get the parking signs taken care of and the electronic message boards will go up with the message: "construction starts 5/4, expect delays".

Discussion included:

- Bard asked if there is a plan for communicating with businesses and residents? Josh, responded that he has compiled an email list of interested persons, will continue to post of Front Porch Forum as well as the Town website.
- David asked if the 5 person restriction would impact the work schedule & timeline? Pete responded that he didn't think would hamper things much since each crew of 5 would be working independently on different parts of the project.
- Roger asked if there was anything that needed to be done at Brown's Ct? or was it possible to leave it as is until we need it? Pete responded that what would be needed is temporary barriers only and that the bigger push is for the parking signs to be done. Pete added that parking will not be as big a problem with the stay home stay safe order and will need to be evaluated as the project progresses.

4. **Other COVID-19 health crisis items - none**

B. Discussion of feedback from Champlain Housing Trust on the draft affordable housing zoning amendment

Ravi reported:

- that he has marked up the affordable housing regulations
- that he and the Planning Commission have their work cut out for them in figuring out how to make affordable housing work, how to implement it and how it would be managed

Discussion included:

- Bard's comment that he appreciates all the information and work that goes into this daunting task
- Christine asked when Ravi thought he would get something back to the Selectboard for review? Ravi responded that it could be the next few months that the Planning Commission is meeting on 5/6/2020 and may warn another meeting on affordable housing at that time
- Bard requested Ravi provide a 10 minute check in every 2 months to keep the Board up to date on his progress

III. Approval of Minutes, Warrants and Purchase Orders

Katie moved to approve the Minutes of 4-20-20, Roger seconded. Roll Call Vote: Katie, Bard, Roger, Christine, and David voted affirmatively.

Invoices and warrants:

Roger looked through the invoices and thought they looked ok.

Roger moved to approve warrants as presented, Katie seconded. Roll Call Vote: Roger, Katie, Bard, Christine, and David voted affirmatively,

Josh will send the warrant out for signatures using DocuSign.

V. Discuss Items for Next Agenda

Update COVID 19- budget,
legislative update

It was decided to continue meeting weekly.

VI. Executive Session if necessary -none

VII. Adjourn

Roger moved to adjourn, Bard seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, Katie, Christine, David, and Roger voted affirmatively. The meeting ended at 8:15 PM.