

Selectboard Minutes
11/15/2021

Members Present by Zoom: Bard Hill, David Sander

Members In-Person: Christine Werneke, June Heston, Jay Furr

Absent: none

Others Present In- Person: Josh Arneson, Town Manager; Mary Houle, Chrissy Keating, Kevin McAleer, John Rankin, Diane Mariano, John Cohn, and the meeting was recorded by MMCTV

Others Present by Zoom: Kathy Daub-Stearns, Admin.; Kendall Chamberlain, Water & Sewer Superintendent; Ravi Venkataraman, Planner; Kyle Kapitansky, Police Chief; Pete Gosselin, Highway; Sheri Lynn, Martha Nye, Alyson Dengler, Glenn Murray, John Rankin, Judy Rosovsky, Erik Bailey, Ian Bender, Rod West, Stefani Hartsfield, Jessie Heiser, Jon Kart, Allen Knowles, Lauk Parke, Catalina Langen, Caitlin Littlefield, Denise Noble, Amanda Froeschle, Connie Van Eeghen, John Rankin, Julie Rusk, Janet, Margaret's iPhone, and Jim Feinson

Called to Order: 7:01 PM

Welcome by Christine

Public Comment:

Mary Houle stated:

1. that when the Selectboard had a vacancy the desire was to have the position filled with someone new, she said the DRB Chair had been on the Committee more than 14 years. She requested that each committee Chair report who was on their committee and for how long they had served with the information published in the upcoming Town Report.
2. that the flower beds in town had been "put away" for the winter
3. that while Linda Parent was taking care of the cemetery, she found a full flask of whiskey
4. that she wondered if ARPA funds could be used for a project at Cochran's Ski Area, Jay said the ARPA committee would be compiling a list for the Selectboard who would make the decisions

I. Additions or Deletions to Agenda

Christine reported that Item D was being removed from the agenda because the resident withdrew their interest due to another obligation, and the United Way might be moved to allow the person presenting to leave for another meeting

II. Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present

a) Consideration of reducing the number of seats on the Recreation Committee

Christine reported:

- that there has been a request to restructure the Recreation Committee

Ravi reported:

- that to resolve quorum issues the committee would like to restructure to five seats

Sheri Lynn reported:

- that over the last few months, having switched from remote meetings to in-person meetings, involvement in meetings had been impacted. The committee believed that to conduct business more easily reducing the seats to five with two others would be best. Bard asked if setting a minimum and not a maximum made sense. Christine said there should be guidelines set. Ravi said with other committees there is statute but with committees that are ruled by the Selectboard there could be a minimum and a maximum set by the board. June thought if there was not a maximum number then 3/5's of the members should come from Richmond.

Discussion included:

- that Rod West felt the Recreation Committee should be flexible

June moved to amend the membership rules of the Richmond Recreation Committee to the following revised language: The Richmond Recreation Committee shall consist of a minimum of five members with 3/5's of the members being Richmond residents. A minimum of three members shall be Richmond residents. The committee shall have at least one seat reserved for a representative from Bolton and at least one seat reserved for a representative from Huntington: Jay seconded.

A friendly amendment was made.

June moved to amend the membership rules of the Richmond Recreation Committee to the following revised language: The Richmond Recreation Committee shall consist of a minimum of five members with a minimum of 3/5's of the members being Richmond residents. A minimum of three members shall be Richmond residents. The committee shall have at least one seat reserved for a representative from Bolton and at least one seat reserved for a representative from Huntington: Jay seconded. Roll Call Vote: Jay, June, Bard, David, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

b) Consideration of making an appointment to the Housing Committee

Josh reported:

- that Kristen Hayden-West was not able to be on the phone due to another commitment.

June moved to appoint Kristen Hayden-West to the Housing Committee to fill a vacant term that expires in 2022; David seconded. Roll Call Vote: Jay, June, Bard, David, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

c) Consideration of making an appointment to the Conservation Commission

Josh said Kitt Emery was not able to attend the meeting.

Judy Rosovsky said Kitt Emery would like to be on the commission and that her credentials are excellent.

June moved to appoint Kitt Emery to the Conservation Commission to fill a vacant term that

expires in 2022; Jay seconded. Roll Call Vote: Jay, June, Bard, David, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

d) Consideration of making an appointment to the Trails Committee

This Item was not heard as noted above.

e) Consideration of approving a match for the Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC) grant

Ravi reported:

- that last month approval was granted to apply for the grant
- that this would make improvements at Volunteers' Green and has a match to show the town's commitment. He felt that a 20% grant match would be appropriate. He said \$15,000 from the town would be allocated over two years with all work completed in 2024 and that potentially \$15,000 could come from RiseVT.

Discussion included:

- that Bard said if we are awarded the grant we would need to determine where exactly the \$30,000 would come from
- that Christine said there would be improvements to the Volunteers' Green and asked if \$180,000 would cover all that work. Ravi said it would
- that Christine noted that the budget process has proposed cutting into Unassigned Funds, she said she was not opposed to the idea but wanted to be clear that this was a decision about spending money far into the future. June thought the work needed to be done and the return on the money was clear

June moved to approve the provision of a \$30,000 grant match if the Town was awarded the Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative Community Grant: Jay seconded. Roll Call Vote: Jay, June, Bard, David, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

f) Consideration of approving use of funds from the Town Center Fund to pay for a mold remediation plan at the Richmond Free Library

Christine reported:

- that as a reminder anytime funds are being spent out of the Town Center Fund the matter is brought to the Selectboard for approval
- that there has been mold found in the library basement and a quote was gotten through the owner's rep

Discussion included:

- that Josh said this was for determining what needed to be done and the actual remediation would be done with additional costs
- that Jay said this is due to the humidity, Josh said the recent work done fixed the circumstances that allowed the mold, and this would tell us how to get rid of the mold

June moved to approve the use of not more than \$1,925 in Town Center Reserve Funds for a mold remediation plan to be determined by KAS Environmental Science & Engineering; Jay seconded. Roll Call Vote: Jay, June, Bard, David, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

g) Consideration of employee compensation adjustments

Christine reported:

- that this was noted as a decision item in case there was a way to make a decision on what to do about the difficult labor market. She said that the Town was engaged in a wage study that would be completed in 6 months but the difficulty recruiting into open positions and retaining employees this was an important matter.
- that some reports were done, and scenarios created, that had a set percentage for increases across the board, what bonus' would look like and how to handle the firefighters which is another body of work but did not want to leave them out. She said when bonus' are paid there are tax implications and thinking about increasing base pay prior to the study had its own downsides. Christine discussed a few ideas on how to proceed.

Discussion included:

- that Jay said having read Pete's memo he would suggest giving more money to the highway department but did not want to show favoritism to one department over another. June said doing across the board raises was premature with the study in progress, she said she would rather do a bonus structure and wait to see what the study showed, keeping in mind how this would impact the budget and do a sign-on bonus for new hires. Jay agreed with June saying a wage increase could not be taken back. Bard said he agreed saying it is rare to provide health insurance at the level the town does and thought taking a two-part solution with raising the lowest paying job's hourly rate and then recruitment and retainment bonus' to address the most pressing matters was his suggestion
- that Pete said he was concerned about the younger members of his staff saying there was a lot of competition out there. He did not feel bonus' were the way to retain employees. He said he presented ideas to restructure the department and do away with the part-time positions. He said for the next 6 months the job was a 7 day a week job and a salary bump for highway employees was what was needed, he was not in favor of a bonus.
- that Chief Kapitansky said his officers have the union to negotiate for them but he agreed with Bard the importance to bring up our lowest paid employees, he said that many of us see the value in fully paid insurance but it was not the same as having a hiring bonus, he said what potential employees see was the salary and that needed to be high enough to be appealing for candidates to apply
- that Bard thought establishing a threshold of the lowest paid folks would be a good first step, then deal with wage compression
- that Ian Bender asked if employees could opt out of insurance, Christine said there was a stipend paid if an employee had other insurance coverage
- that Kendall agreed with Pete that bonus' are not the way to go, he agreed with bringing up the lowest paid people first
- that Christine said talking about employee wages publicly was tricky, that raising the lowest paid employee grade in currently filled positions would affect three employees, that the bonus' would provide time to understand what decisions need to be made. Christine said the Selectboard had decisions to make once the study was complete. She said saying we need to match another town's rate was only one way of looking at it and wanted to do something that was sustainable and balanced, the bonus' were a show of good faith to show the Selectboard was committed to the employees and provide sign-on bonus' to help with hiring. She wanted to come back and look at bonus,' raising the lowest employee rates and sign-on bonus'. Christine said changing a part-time position to a full-time position was an operational decision Pete could make running his department. She welcomed further discussion about restructuring the department. Pete said if you offer a

sign-on bonus what are you telling the lowest paid people, he said until the current employees are at a level that does not threaten them when you bring new people on retention was going to be difficult. Pete said the staff needed to want to stay with the town. Bard said the three initiatives were temporary and increasing the minimum would help with recruitment and adding sign-on bonus' could happen quickly and restructuring the highway department was a longer-term discussion. Pete said the restructuring would need to happen during this budget season. He said the study results were a "maybe thing" and was why he brought the proposals he did to Josh. He said he appreciated the feedback. June said Pete provided very good information, and he was correct that looking at this sooner was important in a lot of ways. Josh said he and Pete hoped to have numbers for the next budget meeting.

- that identifying retention and sign-on bonus' and increasing the minimum employee wage to either a specific number or grade and step would come back at the next meeting.

h) Consideration of approval of agreement with the New England Police Benevolent Association Local 415

Christine reported:

- that this was reviewed and discussed in a recent executive session

Discussion included:

- that the Union ratified the agreement

June moved to approve the three-year agreement with the New England Police Benevolent Assoc. Local 415; David seconded. Roll Call Vote: Jay, June, Bard, David, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

i) Review of potential projects to submit for the FY23 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) priority list

Ravi reported:

- that the Richmond Transportation Committee was considering a Route 2 scoping study that would be an update, turning the bike master plan into a regulatory map and revise the fee structure to help fund sidewalks

Jon Kart reported:

- that Richmond had gotten support recently that was advancing some of the projects that have been discussed in the past

Allen Knowles reported:

- that he was interested in having something actually happen, he thought having widened shoulders on Route 2 was the best we were going to get from the state.

Discussion included:

- that a shared pathway along the interstate right-of-way was something that had been done in other places. Allen Knowles said it could be a way to encourage people who do not use a vehicle. Bard asked if Allen had ever seen this in Vermont. Allen Knowles said that Ravi has discussed the idea with CCCRP about this idea, they said work would need to be done with VTRANS each step of the way. Bard asked if he knew if VTRANS was

agreeable and thought having engineering and scoping studies would be necessary and should be a priority

- that Christine said this was important and consistent with town plan goals

j) Update from Parking Advisory Committee

Items J & K were switched.

Kevin McAleer reported:

- that the Parking Committee was formed to address the town's parking challenges
- that a review of what was accomplished by the Parking Committee over the past year was presented
- that there had been a lot of parking challenges addressed by the Parking Committee in the last year, he asked if there was a direction the Selectboard wanted the Committee to take in the future

Discussion included:

- that Pete said Overrocker Park was planned to be plowed until Dec. 1 unless it was used significantly more than it was currently being used
- that Christine said this was a beautiful example of having the people the most involved with a problem coming together with the resources of the town to find solutions. She said that if the focus changes to another area of town that the residents there should become involved to find solutions
- that Jay said he was impressed with the amount of work done in so short a period of time and was appreciative of all the work done
- that Bard said he was impressed with the volunteers Richmond has
- that people are noticing the speed vehicles are traveling now that there is parking in all these places
- that Christine asked if PAC was asking for direction, Dianne Mariano said there were a number of committees to navigate, and they were not certain who was responsible for what. She said knowing what the Selectboard wanted them to do now was information they were looking and did not need answers tonight. She added that speeding was definitely an issue and enforcing speed limits was a challenge. John from PAC said there was data they have been collecting that could be shared. Christine was appreciative of all the work that was done and would be an agenda item in the future about where the committee would go from here.

k) Presentation of United Way Prevention Center of Excellent grant work

Christine reported:

- that Christina Keating was present

Christina Keating reported:

- that there were people that called in and were available to answer questions and present as well

Stefani Hartsfield reported:

- that this was an evolution spread over the receipt of several grants by the town
- that creating a new town position was challenging
- that she spoke about the people and findings that were obtained
- that there was an increase in suicidal ideation in youth in VT

- that higher cannabis use was seen as acceptable
- that the request was to pick one of the three options listed because the work was not sustainable on the backs of volunteers

Amanda Froeschle reported:

- that there were recommendations in the packet for supporting the community
- that she encouraged people to look at page 3
- that in the wake of COVID there was increased substance use

Julie Rusk (Civic Wellbeing Partners) reported:

- that directly hiring positions can be problematic so contracting the position may be advantageous and budgeting for them was necessary
- that there is an international study happening in Burlington next summer that could be of interest for people

Discussion included:

- that Christine said supporting the development of resilience and wellbeing of the community was important to know. She said the Selectboard needed to be extremely mindful about adding staff
- that Sheri Lynn asked about the amount for the director, Stefani Hartsfield said they had hoped to get funding through another source but were just told the funding was not advanced but there were other sources that would be looked at
- that Christy Keating said there were three options presented knowing having a town staff member was problematic, Julie Rusk said there was grant money for this kind of thing
- that Christine asked about the number of adults that were part of the focus group, Stefani did not know the answer, but the strengthening family group meeting tonight knew that answer. Christine thought that information was important, she said prioritizing how the town responds should be based on the data. Stefani H. felt reaching youth in a modern way needed to be found, Christine suggested having this subject come to the budget meetings and discussed there adding that Dec. 13 was the next budget meeting. June said there was value in this work, and since it is not in the cards to hire a person, and the United Way could not be the hiring entity, she and Stefani thought having a contractor might be an option. She asked if it was possible to look at using ARPA or OPIOD funding. Bard said the Town has other pressures and is why there are so many non-profits doing this type of work and not municipalities. He said he was still not clear on what the outcomes expected were and thought having the position in an organization that could support the person made more sense. Christine said it is incredibly difficult right now to find the right person, but in terms of the context and how to get to the vision would be something that happened over time. She thanked everyone.

I) Update on Emerald Ash Borer grant work and mitigation plan

Caitlin reported:

- that some of the ash trees being removed would be replaced with other trees
- that the RFP was being issued and more information was available on the town's website

Discussion included:

- that Christine asked about the trees taken down being used, Caitlin said some would be firewood and possibly used in other ways depending on how much usable wood there

was. Christine wondered about using some of the wood for the Town Center renovation of the building that could tell an ongoing story. Caitlin said she loved that idea and thought there could be wood for smaller projects

- that Caitlin described what the next steps would be including the RFP
- that Christine asked if the utilities had finished the removals they were doing, Caitlin said they were finished or just about finished
- that Christine thanked her for the work she had been doing
- that Bard said this should be included in the budget discussions since it would be ongoing for several years

m) Update from ARPA Committee

Christine reported:

- that a number of people have been appointed to the ARPA Committee and a meeting would take place soon including CCCRP involvement for guidance

Discussion:

- that Bard thought knowing what the timeline and process was would be helpful
- that Jay said the ARPA Committee objectives were setting a scoring criterion and soliciting ideas then making recommendations
- that June said the full committee was meeting on Thursday and by 2024 it would need to be known what the money would be spent on
- that Connie Van Eeghan said the housing committee would like to know who to address their letter to so they could present their idea, June said the ARPA Committee had much to learn about how the money could be spent and would be an ongoing community conversation

n) Update on FY22 projected year end balances for unassigned and restricted funds

Christine reported:

- that this was information requested for the budgeting process
- that the previous year's information was also requested

Discussion included:

- that Bard commented that what the target for year end balances should be needed to be identified
- that June thought the balance was higher at the budget meeting, Josh said there was information now accounted for that changed the number, he added that the FEMA money was applied for today but that it could be months before it was received. The document was reviewed and showed that after using Unassigned Funds as proposed \$579,958 would remain

III. Approval of Minutes, Warrants and Purchase Orders

Jay moved to approve the Minutes of 11/1/2021; David seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, June, Jay, David, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

June moved to approve the Minutes of 11/8/2021 amended as noted; Jay seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, June, Jay, David, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Discussion:

June asked for an amendment or edit where the discussion was \$17M in assets and adding her as

having been present

Purchase Orders:

David moved to approve PO #4283 to Reynolds & Sons for SCBA gear in the amount not to exceed \$14,911.39; Jay seconded. Roll call vote: Jay, David, June, Bard, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Invoices and warrants:

June moved to approve the warrants as presented; Jay seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, David, June, Jay, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Discussion included:

- that June asked about the NEMRC invoice, paid monthly, she wanted to know why July was more, Josh said it was after that date the amount began to be split out between the two accounts.

IV. Discuss Items for Next Agenda

COVID topic
parking advisory committee
employee compensation
hiring of ARPA professional
committee for inclusiveness and equity
Don Turner -Milton town manager

Discussion continued:

- Bard said he had heard that Kathy was leaving and did not know the timeline but wanted to be certain to not miss thanking her for her work. Jay agreed saying in the time he has worked with her he had been impressed. Kathy said she was leaving but this was not her last meeting.

V. Executive Session if necessary: none

VI. Adjourn

June moved to Adjourn; David seconded. Roll Call Vote: Jay, June, Bard, David, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

The meeting ended at: 10:14 PM