

Selectboard Minutes
12/6/2021

Members Present by Zoom: Bard Hill, David Sander,
Members In-Person: Christine Werneke, June Heston, Jay Furr

Absent:

Others Present In- Person: Josh Arneson, Town Manager; Mary Houle, Jeff Atwood, Shannon Dynter, Michelle Hunter, Cassidy Ferres, Heather Nagell, Jamie & Scott Sommerville, Taylor Cushing, Tyler Hoare, Sam Winter, Jeff Atwood, Jennifer Provancha, Jammy Plouffe, Jennifer Wefers

Others Present by Zoom: Linda Parent, Town Clerk; Pete Gosselin, Highway; Connie Bona, Finance; Ravi Venkataraman, Planning; Kyle Kapitanski, Police Chief; Glenn Murray; Highway, Allen Carpenter, Water Sewer; Aaron Krymkowski, Water Sewer; Kyle Leggett, Highway; Raymond Wilson, Highway; Rep. Jana Brown, Chris Conant, Sue Wear, Shannon, Gabrielle, Martha Nye, Amanda Duling, Sheila's iPad, Shannon Kelly, iPhone, Michael Atwood, Fred Satink, Rod West, Kelly Knotek, Ian Bender, Allen Knowles,

Called to Order: 7:00 PM

Welcome by Christine

Public Comment:

1. Jeff Atwood from Perpetual Dr. introduced his neighbors to show the public in Richmond who lives in affordable housing. Shannon Lipton, from Essex said she has spent 50% of her income for rent for years and in the process of buying a home on Perpetual Lane thanks to a new program. She thought there is a real need for affordable housing in Richmond saying people do not want to work where they cannot live.

Jamie Sommerville, moved here from Kentucky and loves VT and the school system. She said with two good incomes, she and her husband could not afford a home in Chittenden County until finding a home from Jeff Atwood. Christine asked if someone said they were not good people because they lived in affordable housing, Jamie said they had not even thought where they bought was affordable housing but said there is a stigma to affordable housing.

Jeff Atwood said he was concerned about one of his workers wellbeing because she needed housing. He said workers will have to come from out of state if he cannot have housing for his workers. He said he wanted her to have a house. He said he knows what it means to be in crisis, and she was in crisis. He said Richmond was not building affordable housing and he was frustrated by that.

June thanked everyone for coming saying she and the other board members know there is an affordable housing crisis. She said there is a problem, and that the agenda reflected the need to have zoning changed to allow infrastructure for affordable housing. She asked for people to stay engaged through the process. Jay said if he had a magic wand, it would be to have more affordable housing adding the barriers are being worked on. Jeff Atwood said fifteen (15) years had gone by with no change. He said Act 250 had to be reformed and wanted honest discussion.

Additions to the Agenda: none

II. Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present

a) Consideration of employee compensation adjustments

Christine reported:

- that this was an item that had been previously discussed due to workforce challenges in departments. She said a compensation study was being done and this discussion was to help bide time until it was finished. She said there were several options drafted and wanted to come to a decision this night. She said the town staff is thought of as family, that the Library Trustees and Water Sewer commission set wages for employees in those departments adding decisions by the Selectboard could serve as an example for them. She said this was a variance of the normal way things are done.

Josh reported:

- that at the last meeting it was discussed raising the lowest wage positions to \$17 or \$19 per hour. He reviewed what the cost of those increases would be. He then reviewed the last discussion on bonus' saying it was proposed there be a 2% bonus for the employees in grades 1-10 and a 1% bonus for those in grades 11-20 adding that the floor would provide a minimum amount that employees would make.

Discussion included:

- that Josh said Peter Gosselin (Highway Foreman) suggested a \$2 per hour increase for all highway workers. Josh said he spoke to staff, and he looked at wages in VTRANS and surrounding towns and starting wages were between \$21 - \$24. Josh suggested Highway and Water Sewer departments be brought up to those levels. Josh said Pete suggested if someone got overpaid according to the study then that position would have a wage freeze. Pete said his first proposal was \$2 per person so employees would not be bumping into each other because of the compression issue. Pete said \$2 an hour is a lot, but if we had to pay family health insurance for a new employee it would be much more. He thought the increase needed to go across the board and not just for new hires. Josh said \$2 would make it more competitive and the employees would be appreciative. Bard said he thought a wage increase is usually a budget issue and thought a short-term solution for those out of scale was appropriate since there is a problem with hiring and keeping plow drivers.

- that Christine responded to a comment Aaron made in the CHAT (attached at the end of the Minutes) saying changes could be made at anytime and the budget was being worked on now so the amounts could be estimated. She said if changes needed to made changes could be made. Christine noted there were two (2) openings in highway and asked Pete what those positions were, Josh responded, a FT heavy equipment operator with the current starting wage of \$17.56 and a PT operator for \$13.40. Jay thought there should be increases for the minimum wage paid an employee plus an increase & bonus for employees. He did not think \$17 was high enough for highway and it should \$19. Josh said it should be more for highway. June said admin could be \$17 and it doesn't help highway and it is different levels of responsibilities. She said we are trying to pay a livable wage and market wage. Jay thought having a wage increase for Highway was needed so no

one was lost. June thought using what the market was for each position and where the town wanted to be in relation to that was a way of approaching the issue.

- that Josh suggested possibly not increasing everyone, just Highway with everyone else getting a bonus, knowing Water Sewer and Library boards could use this as an example for those employees.
- that Christine said if we move wages for one department because we have info and need, she thought making the other departments raises retroactive would be important to have employees treated equally. Jay and June thought that was a good idea.
- that Josh said Pete's proposal was a \$2 per hour per person increase, an increase FT to \$19.56 and PT \$15.40 for new hires. Jay asked if the PT position should be changed to a FT position. Josh said at the budget meeting Pete would have numbers. June said total compensation needed to be looked at so we are comparing apples to apples adding we pay 100% of insurance for families, if that were added in, it is a big number. Josh said once the compensation study was completed that would be known. Josh said two (2) employees in Highway take the opt out now.
- that Pete said he would be going over the restructuring of the Highway department and if implemented the changes would make the department more cost effective and by doing some of the projects in-house it could save hundreds of thousands of dollars. Pete said hiring a person with a CDL meant paying \$25 an hour and a basic \$2 across the board for current employees was necessary.
- that Bard asked what could be done that is responsible and possible. Christine said increasing all highway staff by \$2 would not address the minimum wage needed to recruit new hires. She asked Pete if the PT person was a seasonal person for the spring, Pete said it was a year-round position. Christine said Pete could make the decision to make the PT position a FT position. Pete said the PT position would be eliminated in the restructuring and the savings from that position would nearly fund the \$2 increase for employees.
- Connie said bumping every step on the grid by \$2 for Highway would make the starting wage \$19.56. June said it made sense. Christine said if it doesn't work then Pete could come back.

June moved to increase hourly Highway employees by \$2 per hour effective beginning the pay period of Dec. 2, 2021; Bard seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, David, June, Jay, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Discussion continued:

- that Christine said the next question was bonus'. She thought a signing bonus equal to the 10% would help with recruitment. Pete said anything would help. He thought we would be more competitive.
- that Bonus structure proposed was based on what grade an employee was and would be either 1% or 2%. Fire, Water Sewer and Library would need to be addressed by their boards. Christine noted that in Williston they were hiring 9 Fire Department employees because of a lack of volunteers. Christine said there was a bylaws discussion being had and this could be discussed later in December.

Jay moved to provide bonus' of 2% of annual salary for all employee's grade 1-10 and 1% for employee's grade 11-20 for Highway, Administrative, Recreation, non-union Police, Planning & Zoning, June seconded.

Discussion included:

- that bonus' should be based on what an employee is making before any increase

A friendly amendment was made

Jay moved to provide bonus' of 2% of the annual salary for all employee's grade 1-10 and 1% for grade 11-20 based on current wages for Highway, Administrative, Recreation, non-union Police, Planning & Zoning to be paid out in the next payroll disbursement June seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, David, June, Jay, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Discussion continued:

- that the Water Sewer and Library boards could bring this up at their next meetings and the Fire Department would be discussed at the next meeting.
- that Christine asked to have it specifically noted that the Selectboard discussed retroactively adjusting wages for the employee's wages being addressed when the compensation study is completed. This was noted because there are three (3) seats opening and the Selectboard may not be the same when the study was completed.

b) Consideration of setting a hearing date to consider adoption of a rule requiring the wearing of face coverings indoors in public spaces

Christine reported:

- that the governor allowed for municipalities to consider adoption of a face covering mandate. Rep. Jana Brown was present to discuss the rules.

Jana Brown reported:

- that she was present to be a resource. She said VLCT has some guidance also.

Discussion included:

- that information from VLCT was displayed, Christine said the hearing required a week's notice. Josh added that per the Town Charter it has to be noticed in the paper.
- that the Rule Requiring Wearing Face Coverings Indoors in Public Spaces with no enforcement was displayed. June and Jay agreed it should be enacted without enforcement. Bard said this was the same idea as the Resolution that was passed.
- that this would need to be re-warned every 30 days to remain in effect. The ability to have this in effect expires in April. Christine asked Jana Brown if there was any discussion about revisiting this if April, Jana Brown said there could be an extension or a state mandate.

Jay moved to set a hearing date of December 20, 2021, at 7pm to consider adoption of a face covering mandate in the Town of Richmond; Bard seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, David, June, Jay, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

c) Consideration of applying for the Green Up Vermont Water Bottle Refill Station Grant (This was taken out of order after item k)

Christine reported:

- that this was for the Library

Bard moved to approve applying for the Green Up Vermont Water Bottle Refill Station Grant; Jay seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, David, June, Jay, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

d) Consideration of approving an agreement with an engineer for repairs and upgrades on the Town Center and Library and use of funds from the Town Center Reserve Fund to pay for this work

Christine reported:

- this would be for the engineering work needed for work at the Town Center and the Library
- that they were the only bidders

Jay moved to accept the proposal from DuBois and King for the engineering and design work for repairs and improvements at the Town Center and Library and to approve the use of up to \$27,775.00 from the Town Center Reserve fund to pay for this work; Bard seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, David, June, Jay, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

e) Consideration of approving Participation Forms for the National Opioid Settlements

Christine reported:

- that it was a decision to move forward with this and these documents needed to be signed

Bard moved to approve the Participation Forms related to the National Opioid Settlements and to name Town Manager Josh Arneson as the authorized representative to sign the forms; Jay seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, David, June, Jay, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

f) Consideration of approving a vendor for Town property, liability, and workers compensation insurance (This was heard earlier in the agenda)

Josh reported:

- that there were two quotes received for the Town's insurance, PACIF and Traveler's through Hickok & Boardman. The PACIF bid was \$105,940 the Traveler's bid was \$120,857.
- that after review by the committee PACIF was recommended for several reasons. PACIF provides coverage for municipalities only and this would be the same coverage as 2021. Travelers' Insurance provides some coverages PACIF does not, but the town may not need the coverage or is covered another way by PACIF. Looking at flood insurance, PACIF has a maximum amount for all towns they cover, when asked if there was ever a time when the maximum amount was reached, the answer was that has not ever happened, even with hurricane Irene. Benefits from PACIF are very good for HR and police matters. PACIF offers an employee assistance program (EAP) and Hickok & Boardman offers a similar program for a fee. The Grant program PACIF offers helps the budget. Testing of CDL drivers when set up through PACIF the agency comes here, with Travelers' drivers would have to go to the service provider.

Discussion included:

- that Jay said the difference in price was due to credits and in future years the price between the two would be the same.
- that June asked about Fire Department Worker's Comp, Josh said both companies would provide coverage but under different policies, Kathy added that historically PACIF has provided a high-risk policy and Travelers' would do the same at an additional cost. Kathy also noted that should the Fire Department go from a volunteer department to a paid employee department it would make a difference in the rate. Fred Satink from PACIF added that assigned risk groups are quoted together by one company at a low rate. Kathy clarified that the rate would change due to the rating assigned the different classification of firefighter, Fred Satink said that was correct.

Jay moved to enter into an agreement with PACIF for Town property, liability, and workers compensation insurance for 2022 and to appoint Town Manager Josh Arneson as the duly authorized representative to sign paperwork for this agreement; June seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, David, June, Jay, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

g) Consideration of approval of liquor license for Stones Throw Pizza
(This was taken out of order after item b)

Christine reported:

- that this was to allow Stone's Throw to sell beer and wine as take-out

Discussion included:

- that Amanda Duling said this was in response to the rules changing and would allow their customers to continue to purchase drinks as they had become accustomed to with the COVID rule changes.

Jay moved to approve a second-class liquor license for Pinemarten LLC doing business at Stone's Throw Pizza; David seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, David, June, Jay, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

h) Consideration of approving the 2021 Grand List Errors and Omissions

Josh reported:

- that the assessors look from April to April and if something is missed this is when it's caught.
- that it could be timing but sometimes things slip by without notice

David moved to approve the 2021 Grand List Errors and Omissions report; Jay seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, David, June, Jay, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

i) Consideration of reducing the number of members on the Transportation Committee

Ravi reported:

- there are five (5) members with two (2) vacancies, and this would allow the committee to continue and have a quorum at their meetings.

Discussion:

- that Christine said this would set a minimum and she was frustrated because we grow and contract, she did not want to turn volunteers away, so she wanted to set a number and keep to it. June said using this language we could grow and contract without having to keep coming back to the Selectboard.

June moved to amend the membership rules of the Richmond Transportation Committee from seven members to a minimum of five members; Jay seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, David, June, Jay, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

j) Decision on stipend amount for Selectboard seat that was filled mid-term

Christine reported:

- that the person sitting in the seat when it gets paid would get the amount. This year Cody Quattrocci was in the seat, then Jay filled it. Jay said he thought Cody should have the whole amount. June said Jay can do what he wants with the money. She opposed Jay's idea so as to not set a precedent and let Jay do what he wanted with the money.

June moved to approve stipend(s) of \$437 for Jay Furr and \$313 for Cody Quattrocci; seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, David, June, Jay, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

k) Presentation from Lake Iroquois Association

(This was taken out of order after item d)

Shannon Kelly reported:

- that he took over for Chris Conant who is now VP and was present at the meeting, he then reviewed the presentation that included treatment of milfoil, grant applications, greeter and boat wash program, the LaRosa Partnership Program, aquatic plant survey, the loon restoration project, outreach and education, ice out challenge.

Discussion:

- that Christine asked about the chemical used in the treatment of the milfoil and asked if there has been any feedback to the results since there was concern about it's use. Chris Conant said they were lucky to be able to use the product and found the safety factors outweighed the concerns residents had. He said testing had shown very low amounts of the chemical 48 hours later. Christine thanked them for their work. Chris said Jack Linn was on their board and that he was a workhorse and his volunteer hours were amazing.

l) Review of draft agreement and update on transfer of operations of the Solid Waste Transfer Station to Casella

Christine reported:

- that the town is serving as the middleman for the transfer to have a clean transaction but was not the facilitator
- that there was some debate and Josh had them work it out themselves

Discussion:

- that Bard said he interpreted "keep" as CSWD taking those items, June thought it should be made clearer and could be interpreted in different ways.

- that there will be some services through January, but not all services
- that the draft agreement was looked at
- that pricing would not be increased for two years
- that this will be brought back at the next regular meeting
- that CSWD will be retaining all their employees

m) Consideration of appointing two Selectboard members to meet with Milton Town Manager, Don Turner, regarding Richmond's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiative

Christine reported:

- that this was recommended since he has some experience that could be learned from.

Discussion included:

- that June and Christine would meet with Don Turner and Jay would replace Christine if her schedule became too much. June said if Jay wanted to do the meeting she would step down since he is so involved with the social equity group. It was agreed that Jay and Christine would meet with Don Turner. Jay would set the meeting up.

n) Discussion of Selectboard representation at vote to consider expansion of the Water and Sewer District

Christine reported:

- that Linda Parent communicated that the attorney said there should be a quorum of the Selectboard at the expansion vote. All members of the Selectboard planned on attending.

o) Review of invitation to County Assistant Judges pre-budget meeting

Christine reported:

- that Jay volunteered to go, the information to sign up for the meeting was in the packet.

III. Approval of Minutes, Warrants and Purchase Orders

Minutes:

David moved to approve the Minutes of 11/15/2021; June seconded.

June said there was a misspelling of a name in the list of people who attended. Kendall Chamberlin, Lauke Parke and Kyle Kapitanski

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

Purchase Orders:

Jay moved to approve PO 4268 to GovHr for the compensation study in an amount not to exceed \$21,300.; David seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, Jay, June, David, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Jay moved to approve PO 4160 to Mount Mansfield Union Unified School District in an amount not to exceed \$1,795,855.39; David seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, June, Jay, David, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Discussion included:

Invoices and warrants:

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

Discussion included:

- that June asked about the NEMRC tables- Josh said that the PO is for services, not supplies and we buy the books that are needed.
- that the audit bill was being paid and June asked if the final report was available, Josh said it was not.
- that June asked about a credit for an overpayment that generated a \$1600 credit, Josh said that was because the room dividers were paid for by invoice and statement. June asked if there were procedures to prevent this. Josh said it was because it was paid off a statement, duplicate invoice numbers would have prevented it.
- that the FPF invoice was explained because of it not being a charitable organization any longer

IV. Discuss Items for Next Agenda

Hearing

FD & Police bonus' / hazard pay

Affordable housing

V. Executive Session if necessary

David moved to find that premature general public knowledge of the Selectboard's discussion of a pending or probably civil litigation or a prosecution, to which the public body is or may be a party, would clearly place the Town at a substantial disadvantage; Jay seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, David, June, Jay, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

David moved to enter into executive session to discuss a legal matter under the provisions of 1 VSA313(a)(1) of the Vermont State Statutes and to invite the Town Manager, Josh Arneson, and Attorney Phillip Woodward into the executive session; Jay seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, David, June, Jay, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Entered Executive Session at: 10:35PM

June moved to exit executive session and reenter the regular meeting; Bard seconded. Roll Call Vote: Bard, David, June, Jay, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Exited Executive Session at: 10:43PM

VI. Adjourn

June moved to Adjourn; David seconded. Roll Call Vote: Jay, June, Bard, David, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed. Meeting ended at: 10:45PM

CHAT

00:36:59 Aaron: I believe Highway Foreman Peter Gosselin had an excellent suggestion regarding pay increases during the Town Manager's meeting with Highway and W&S last week. An increase to at least come close to the wages being paid by nearby towns, with any increases past the amounts recommended by the upcoming wage study being frozen until yearly raises catch up.

Regarding the wage study. Study results are not expected until at the very earliest April of next year. That means a significant gap in between now and any changes. That is asking for almost another two years of waiting while being under compensated for our work.

None of the positions currently filled now will be filled at the same wage if the current employee leaves

00:39:17 Kendall: \$2/hr won't keep my \$15/hr employee.

00:39:24 Rod West: I support the wage increase, especially over a bonus plan.

00:42:02 Aaron: \$2/hr, and raising all employees to a minimum floor, are the first steps needed at this time.

00:43:12 Aaron: The time is presuming the town will not change wages until budget discussions open

00:53:19 Kendall: Floor for highway should be \$21.00 - just look at the closest towns

00:53:45 Aaron: The Selectboard can provide the needed guidance to the actions the other boards need to take for the employees whose wages are governed by said board

00:57:28 Aaron: I personally have some flexibility, but the lowest paid staff member of Water & Sewer lives tightly paycheck to paycheck.

At the least, the Selectboard tonight can recommend the Water & Sewer Commission look at increasing those employees pay to a livable amount.

01:06:12 Kendall: Why are you so reluctant to give \$4/hr across the board when you know other towns hire at \$21?

01:07:20 Aaron: Guidance "advice or information aimed at resolving a problem or difficulty, direction, etc." In this case, while it would not be a formal directive or order, the example of the Selectboard taking this action, combined with the shared membership of both boards, is both a strong push factor for those necessary actions to taken and a small token for the employees affected to have some confidence in the Town

01:08:08 Aaron: *to be taken

01:21:22 Aaron: <https://humanresources.vermont.gov/compensation/market-factor-adjustment>

In Richmond's case, I would recommend that the pay increase not be temporary in the manner that the state of Vermont uses this adjustment method.

01:54:27 Peter Gosselin: Thank you to all the selectboard members for addressing this important compensation issue and taking action tonight in the best interest of the Highway staff as well as bonuses for all staff.

01:54:56 Jay Furr: Pete, thank you for being a great leader of your team and for advocating for them

01:55:49 Rep. Jana Brown (Richmond): Thank you to our select board members. I'm happy to continue serving as a resource as we move forward with this discussion. Jbrown@leg.state.vt.us

01:55:49 Allen Knowles: Re: masks: I appreciate the moral authority of the select board in support of rational infectious disease control measures

02:12:42 Amanda Duling (Stone's Throw): Thank you!

02:23:39 Allen Knowles: Re: Committee membership and the Chair's comments: Who knew self government was so much work?

