

Special Meeting
Selectboard Minutes
1/11/2021

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

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, June Heston, Gretchen Paulsen, Sau, Madeline Granda, Allen Knowles, Suzanne Parent, Virginia Clarke, Connie van Eeghan, Judy McVicar, and the meeting was recorded for MMCTV Channel 15.

Called to Order: 7:00 PM

Welcome by David

Comments from the public:

David said he has received feedback and emails about the efforts the Selectboard has made to work through what we have had to work through in the last few months and he appreciated the sentiments.

I. Additions or Deletions to Agenda- none

II. Items for Presentation or Discussion with those present

a) Vote on approval of resolution relating to water line bond vote

Josh reported:

- that to get the bond vote to coincide with Town Meeting it was necessary to get the vote in at this meeting.
- that this would fill in the gap that was not done this past summer
- that there is up to 90% loan forgiveness for the project
- that this will be on the Town Meeting ballot for voting

Bard moved to approve the resolution relating to the water line bond vote and to approve the Declaration of Official Intent; Katie seconded. Roll call vote: Christine, Bard, Katie, and David voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

b) Vote on approval of Declaration of Official Intent relating to the water line project

See motion made in a).

c) Review and Discussion of the FY22 Budget

1. Review of changes since last budget meeting

2. Review and discussion of FY22 Budget

Notes below are for items 1 & 2 as they ran together:

Josh reported:

- a review of changes from the last meeting
- that the higher the grand list, the lower the tax rate
- that there is a small amount of funds kept for administrating the school tax that will be broken out in a more transparent way in the budget going forward

Discussion included:

- that Roger asked about the changes the auditors made
- that Bard asked about the percentage of the education tax the town gets to keep and what it is and what it is based on, Connie said she did not know the percentage but that there is a new member of the audit team that likes things broken out to be more transparent and that they are not mandated, just suggested. Roger asked if it was money that was collected and not given to the school, Josh replied yes, it is reflected on the invoice from the school and was going into the general fund in past years. Bard asked if it was true that the number is generated by the state and we have no control over how much we receive, Josh and Connie agreed. David said we are documenting it this year differently, Connie said yes. Roger was concerned that the auditors are just seeing this, Connie replied that this is a recommendation to break it out in the budget. Christine asked where the number came from, Connie said from the state's report and is an estimate. She then asked about the Veteran's deduction was available to spouses as well, Roger said it is not all veterans it is disabled veterans and their spouses.

Josh continued:

- providing details of the changes to the Fire Dept
- that "ChargePoint" collects the funds from the EV Station and will reimburse the money to the town and that will offset the Library electric bill since that is where the EV Station pulls its power from
- that there is a line for the Conservation Fund for when it is voted on
- that the training expenses were increased to allow for racial equity training of staff
- provided details of updating the website
- provided details of the transportation grant funding

Discussion included:

- that the website should be more accessible and user friendly

Josh continued:

- that brings the tax rate to 3.93%

Discussion included:

- that 3.93% increase is more than is wanted

- that the cost of training of officers and town employees is yet unknown, Katie asked if VLCT will be putting together any type of training for officers and staff, Josh said this will be an ongoing discussion and that he will check with VLCT but is not aware of any. Kyle said he has been talking with other departments about training and even with the reduction of the OT line there should be enough funding for training. Christine asked if when town staff are being trained will they be paid, Josh said there may be a few hours of OT for required training. Roger said it is hard to determine how much to spend when we do not have a training plan. Christine said this year we make the plan and next year we look at any gaps.
- that Josh said in past meetings we discussed using unassigned funds saying that \$91,000 could be used to bring the tax rate down overall
- that there are one-time costs that will not be needed in future years totaling about \$54,000. Roger asked about the FD needs and equipment replacements, Josh said yes, Dennis provided the information to Connie. Bard said the single audit could be added to that number as a one-time expense also.
- that the CPI looks like it is going to come in at 2.3% and that would mean reducing the budget 1.7% and that excludes the conservation fund
- that on the police side of the budget there will be savings due to an officer being called to active duty for 6 months
- that the town has no oversight over the school budget or education tax
- that if ever there was a time to dip into the "rainy day fund", this is the time
- that effects of the pandemic will not be over this year
- that municipalities have not been provided financial help from the federal government

Bard moved to use \$58,375 from unassigned funds for the FY22 budget; Christine seconded.

Bard agreed to a friendly amendment to increase \$58,375 to \$91,000

Bard moved to increase the amount of funds from unassigned funds to \$91,000 for the FY22 Budget; Christine seconded. Roll call vote: Christine, Katie, Bard, Roger, and David voted affirmatively. Roger opposed. Motion passed.

Discussion included:

- working the numbers to see how using funds from unassigned funds affected that tax rate
- that Roger said he could not agree to use unassigned funds of \$91,000.00, he would prefer to find a way to spend the money in a targeted way to help the town
- that when something is overspent or underspent it affects the unassigned funds
- that you cannot budget to put money in unassigned funds
- that money not spent on taxes could be spent on anything else and help the economy
- that with the Conservation Fund passing 2.68% would be the tax rate
- that it is essential to plan ahead but that we also need to be fiscally prudent
- that there may be more vacancy saving this year than other years
- that Roger said sidewalks are expensive and 800' of sidewalks would be \$130,000 grant match, Christine agreed that planning is important.

Ravi reported on sidewalks:

- that VTrans has a booklet for cost estimates that he will share
- that curbs are important to stormwater planning

- that the total grant matches for the projects being considered is \$310,240 and that those costs do not include acquisition costs if an easement or right of way issues come up

Discussion included:

- that Pete said the numbers for sidewalks will be higher
- that replacing an existing sidewalk is less expensive
- that Bard said in the future maybe move funds from unassigned funds to a restricted fund if there is a huge surplus
- that there could be a bond vote for sidewalks in the future

Roger moved to approve the budget as amended tonight; Bard seconded. Roll call vote: Christine, Bard, Roger, Katie, and David voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Discussion included:

- that a sidewalk fund has been established this year
- that the projects spoken of tonight will take years to come to fruition

III. Adjourn

Roger moved to adjourn; Katie seconded. Roll call vote: Christine, Bard, Roger, Katie, and David voted affirmatively. The meeting ended at 8:40 PM.