

Selectboard Minutes
AUSTRALIAN BALLOT INFORMATION HEARING

3/01/2021

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

Absent:

Others Present by Zoom: Josh Arneson, Town Manager; Kathy Daub-Stearns, Admin.; Kyle Kapitansky, acting Police Chief; Pete Gosselin, Highway; Kendall Chamberlin, Water & Sewer; Rebecca Mueller, Library; Connie Bona, Finance; Ravi Venkataraman, Planner; Dennis Gile, Fire Chief; Gerald Levesque, FD Asst Chief; the meeting was recorded for MMCTV Channel 15, also present Rose Feenan, Martha Nye, Templin, June Heston, Cody Quattrocci, Duncan McDougall, Marshall & Gretchen Paulsen, Ike Patch, Luke Brunner, Judy McVickar, Rod West, Jana Brown, Cecilia Danks, Laurie Dana, Rachel's iPad, Logan Hegg, and Chris Granda

Called to Order: 7:04 PM

Welcome by David included thanking Roger Brown and Katie Mather for their time and service on the Selectboard

Public Comment: none

Josh shared video from Sen. Leahy and the VT Symphony Orchestra on town meeting day in VT.

Bard moved to enter into a Public Hearing to discuss items on the Australian Ballot since there will be no Town Meeting; Christine seconded. Roll call vote: Bard, Christine, Katie, and David voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

The Public Meeting began at 7:11 PM

Josh reported:

- that 992 ballots have been processed already by Linda Parent and the Justices.
- that ballots can be dropped off until 9AM at the drop box, then there will be a sign that says ballots can be brought directly to Camel's Hump Middle School.
- that if you are voting in person please bring the ballot you received in the mail if you received one.
- that if voting in person there may be delays due to social distancing

Josh reported:

- that a "2021 Town Report" page was added to the website to help answer voter's questions. Josh thanked town staff and Selectboard members for the months of work putting the budget together and staff for being there to answer questions.
- that there would be no candidate forum tonight adding that on Monday, February 15 MMCTV held a candidate forum night and that there is a link to the broadcast on the website where Town Meeting information is found

I. Australian Ballot Public Informational Hearing

a) Article 2: FY22 Budget

Josh provided:

- a brief overview of the FY 22 BUDGET noting that the budget is up by \$164,803 a 1.32% increase from FY21
- a review of Municipal Operations providing information on the staffing of each of the departments
- information that the Water/ Sewer budget will be done in May as usual at the Annual Meeting
- a review of Reserves & Unassigned Funds including an explanation of the different types of funds, the restrictions that apply to reserve and unassigned funds as well as each fund's balance
- a review of several private purpose trust funds
- information on the need for a town wide reappraisal
- a review of the general Town debt excluding the Water System debt
- a review of significant changes (\$5000 and over) in Revenue from FY21 to FY22
- a review of significant changes (\$5000 and over) in Expenses from FY21 to FY22
- that there are two categories, the Veteran's and Richmond Terrace Exemption's that result in a reduction in the Grand List
- that the proposed Municipal Tax Rate Increase is \$0.7393 up from \$0.7297 in FY21
- that the if the Conservation Fund passes it would add \$0.01 to the rate
- that the Town rate is about 34% of the tax bill
- that the increases each year follow the rate of inflation

Discussion included:

- that Gretchen Paulsen asked if anyone had determined how much money is received from grants for the Conservation Commission per household increment. Josh said he had not but would look at doing it for next year's presentation.

b) Article 3: Dump Truck Loan

Josh reported:

- that this Article is for a loan to borrow up to \$110,000 to go toward the purchase of a new dump truck, this includes a down payment on this truck in the amount of \$50,000.

Discussion included:

- that Cody Quattrocci asked if it was more cost effective to replace vehicles rather than provide maintenance on them. Pete replied that in previous years we would keep equipment for 12 years and we would put substantial money into repairs each year after the warranty was gone adding that there is very little service that can be done inhouse because of technological advances that require a specialized mechanic. Pete said that by replacing the trucks on the current schedule we are able to keep the maintenance down to \$12,000 per year for all town highway vehicles and by turning the trucks in when do, we get the best money for them on trade-in.

c) Articles 4 and 5: Town Center Reserve Fund

Josh reported:

- that these Articles run together and are related to the fund and the use of the fund
- that the original reason for the fund was to repay a loan that has been repaid
Since then, the funds have been used for paying expenses related to the Town Center
- that the voters will decide how to use the fund moving forward and provide the proper authorization for spending the fund

Christine provided:

- a thank you to the committee members she has been working with
- a review of a report put together by the Town Center and Library Building Committee that included information that there will be new leases for part of the 3rd floor of Town Center and the library heating system needs to be replaced adding there are essential repairs needed in the next year to both buildings including accessibility issues for those with physical handicaps
- information on the process for identifying the scope of the work and getting approval for the work to be done was reviewed
- that planning for the future includes determining the future of the buildings and, that includes weighing the benefits and costs of new construction vs renovation
- that she would welcome people to fill seats on the committee and to hear from anyone with questions or skills they would like to volunteer

d) Article 6: Cannabis Retailers

Josh reported:

- that there is a FAQ on the Cannabis issue on the Town website that Josh reviewed in detail
- that this would allow cannabis retailers in Richmond, but not online sales and would not regulate the growing of cannabis

Discussion included:

- that Cody Quattrocci asked if the local tax is available or if another tax could be used for cannabis sales, Josh said only a local tax could apply and would then apply to all sales in town
- that in the chat there was a question related to vape products, Ravi responded that the definition of cannabis sales included vape but could be subject to change
- that Cecilia Dank said they could have vaping equipment too and not just cannabis and vaping isn't good for the youth who are already into vaping. She asked if retailers could also sell cartridges that are not cannabis. Ravi did not know because all the rules have not been established yet.

e) Article 7: Conservation Reserve Fund

Josh reported:

- that the chair, Judy Rosovsky is here to share information
- that if approved the cost would be \$10 per \$1000 of property value

Judy Rosovsky provided:

- a presentation that included information on the fund and what it is used for.

- that the Andrews Community Forest and the Conservation Committee reports were left out of the Town Report but are available on the town website under Town Center information
- that grants increase the amount of funds available at a rate of 5/1
- that if the Article is approved it will increase the tax rate by \$.01 and she asked voters to vote in favor of keeping the Conservation Fund funded

Discussion included:

- that Gretchen Paulsen said if you have a \$100,000 property \$10 would be paid by the property owner and \$48 could be realized by grants received

f) Article 8: Waterline Replacement Bond

Josh reported:

- that if approved, the town would get a bond not to exceed \$400,000
- that the source of payment for the bond would be generated by the water and sewer department even though voted on by all residents
- that there was a Front Porch Forum posting that was inaccurate, not all residents will pay for the bond, only the users of the system would pay
- that there could be a 75% subsidy that we are in position to take advantage of

Kendall reported:

- that this is coming at a good time because of sidewalk improvements that need to be done and could be coordinated with this project

Discussion included:

- that Bard said this confusion arises any time there is a bond vote for the Water and Sewer District. He suggested that as part of any future article we include the information on how the bond is repaid.

David thanked Josh for all the work. He again acknowledged Katie and Roger saying they would be missed.

Roger moved to move out of the Public Hearing; Katie seconded. Roll call vote: Roger, Katie, Christine, Bard and David voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

The Public Meeting ended at 9:05 PM

Josh noted that the Selectboard will meet on the 2nd and 4th Mondays for the month of March

II. Approval of Warrants and Purchase Orders

Warrants:

Roger moved to approve the warrants and invoices as presented; Bard seconded. Roll call vote: Bard, Katie, Roger, Christine, and David voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

Josh will send the warrant out for signatures using DocuSign.

VI. Adjourn

Roger moved to adjourn; Katie seconded. Roll call vote: Bard, Christine, Katie, Roger, and David voted affirmatively. Motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 9:08 PM.

CHAT

01:12:00 Cecilia Danks: Thank you! Nice job on explaining everything.

01:34:29 Jana Brown: Thank you to everyone for tonight's informational meeting. Typically I would be handing out a Town Meeting Day report tomorrow and answering any questions about the legislative session. I am going to attach a copy of that report here and I would encourage anyone to reach out to me at jbrown@leg.state.vt.us with any questions. Thank you.

01:42:48 Cecilia Danks: I had a question about the retail cannabis but did not unmute in time. I wanted to know what products what products would be sold, specifically if vaping products would be sold. Thanks.

01:49:44 Ravi Venkataraman: Hi Cecilia,

01:52:28 Ravi Venkataraman: Per act 164, a "cannabis product" is "concentrated cannabis and a product that is composed of cannabis and other ingredients and is intended for use or consumption, including an edible product, ointment, and tincture. Cannabis product shall include a vaporizer cartridge containing cannabis oil that is intended for use with a battery-powered device." So, as of now, I'd say cannabis products include vaping products. But many of these rules are under discussion and may be subject to change.

01:53:28 Cecilia Danks: thanks, Judi!

02:04:36 Cecilia Danks: Thank you everyone! Very clear and well thought through.

02:04:37 Jana Brown: thank you Katie and Roger for your service to Richmond!

02:05:25 Marshall Paulsen: Thank you Katie and Roger.

02:06:25 Marshall Paulsen: Thank you Josh for all your hard work in putting the presentation together for tonight.