

Special Meeting of the Town of Richmond Selectboard
Selectboard Minutes
10/12/2021

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

Others Present In- Person: Josh Arneson, Town Manager; Linda Parent, Town Clerk,
and the meeting was recorded by MMCTV

Others Present by Zoom: Kathy Daub-Stearns, Admin.; Kendall Chamberlain, Water &
Sewer; Ravi Venkataraman, Planner; Dennis Gile, Fire Chief; Peter Gosselin, Highway;
Rebecca Mueller, Library; Ian B, Suzanne Parent, OCCC; Angelike Contois, MMCTV; 215-
421-5990

Called to Order: 7:00 PM

Welcome by Christine

Public Comment: none

II. Review and Discussion of the FY23 Budget

Discussion included:

- that Bard mentioned the Board would typically discuss what the percentage the tax increase target would be with the target based on inflation. Christine wanted to see where the proposed budget would put the increase asking Josh if the rate was available, Josh replied that currently the increase was at 6.30% and was higher than the FY22 tax year adding there is still work to be done and things to be done on the revenue side as well. He reported that last year's rate was 1.32% and after town meeting the actual budget tax rate was set at 2.6%. Bard observed it was an unusual year and inflation has increased considerably since then. Christine thought inflation was in the 4% range right now and 6% felt high from last year, Christine noted there had been a discussion about the swing that could occur last year when funds were used to bring the rate down. and wanted to look at where the changes were and understand them wanting to determine the increase at the next budget meeting when more information available. Josh noted dept heads were told to put everything into their budgets they wanted and needed. He thanked all dept heads and Connie, who has been working on the capital plan, for all the work that went into preparing for the nights meeting.

Josh provided a general overview of items that were estimated for various reasons including having gone out to bid for insurances.

a) Planning and Zoning

Ravi Venkataraman, Town Planner reported:

- that the Planning and Zoning budget remained flat except for the salary line which increased due to Keith Osborne's, Zoning Administrator, hours increasing from 30 to 40 hours. Ravi said Keith's workload is high and there are several large-scale

projects going on. Ravi also reported that Keith had streamlined the process for reviewing applications and was doing more enforcement. Keith has not been able to work on the records maintenance with only 30 hours. The NEMRC data base is related to the listers and requires a lot of time and there are many administrative tasks that need to be done. Ravi recommended Keith have 40 hours plus \$1000 OT because of the workload.

Discussion included:

- that Bard was looking for a coherent process to link Planning and Zoning to the other Town depts.
- that Jay asked about the part time Huntington work, Ravi said Huntington was busier than expected and he would not be splitting his attention in the future. Christine asked when the plan would take effect, Josh said a decision could be made to start sooner, Christine said it seemed like a long time to wait and an operational improvement should not be waited for.
- that Christine asked about contract services, Ravi responded that the line item was a bit of a catch all and most of it last year was for the Interim Zoning Administrator. Ravi said it was Connie's idea to have Legal roll over since it has been underspent, by rolling the amount over it could cover unforeseen events and prevent taxes that might not be necessary. Christine thought there should be caps on reserve accounts. Connie thought capping it at \$10,000 was appropriate. Bard said the term "cap" has different meanings and "target" might be a better term. In a small town, specific things can have a big impact, vacancy savings, family insurance plans, no insurance, can create big swings. He would like to contemplate targets at a future meeting.
- that within the Highway budget, a sidewalk budget was created last year for future sidewalks, initially it was set up with \$10,000 he was now looking to increase the contribution amount to \$30,000 to cover grant matches and was becoming more important with three (3) scoping studies underway. Building up the reserve fund will be important if we want to build more sidewalks.
- that Connie commented Keith's position was already considered full time so there would not be additional insurance expense.

b) Fire Department

Josh reported that the department is made up of volunteers who get paid for trainings done in-house and fire calls. He said Dennis Gile, Fire Chief, would like to have firefighters paid for trainings that are held outside the firehouse, he said with that and minimum wage increasing the amount funded remained flat. The truck purchase of \$200,000 would be paid for by reserves therefore not affecting the tax rate and the next capital purchase would be in 2027 so there would be a few years to get reserves back up.

Discussion included:

- that Dennis Gile, Fire Chief, said firefighters do not get paid miles, he was just looking to get them paid for their training. Christine did not see an increase so wanted to be sure there was enough money being allocated. Josh said the line has been underspent historically so there was enough money.

c) Police Department

Kyle Kapitanski, Police Chief, reported:

- that the salary line was an estimate since the contract had not been ratified yet. All items tied to the contract were estimated and subject to change.
- that the number for dispatch was waiting for the legislature to decide how to proceed and could be removed or paid with unassigned funds
- that the PACIF insurance number was waiting for the bid process to be finalized
- that fuel would be offset by the Tesla, but he did not have enough information to know how much it would go down
- that the Police cruiser equipment and the police cruisers were coming out of the reserve fund. Kyle thought the cruiser costs included equipment and needed to be reduced. He and Connie will review the line and update the numbers for the next meeting.

Discussion included:

- that Christine asked about body camera purchases asking about how many devices there were. Kyle said all the cameras would be purchased that were needed either as a software service and storage or leases, then the additional money for future years storage and maintenance.
- that Christine asked Kyle to come up with an estimate on fuel that recognized the Tesla purchase.

d) Highway and Recreation & Trails

(Charitable Appropriations was discussed before Highway)

Pete Gosselin, Highway Foreman, reported:

- that there were not a lot of changes until you get to capital purchases
- that there had been a part time, year-round, position vacant for a year and the department had lost another full-time employee in the last week and felt it was going to be a hard position to fill. Christine thought that the overtime line should be looked at and hoped he was not experiencing the same staffing shortfall other sectors were seeing. Pete said last winter was a mild winter, but you just don't know.
- that building maintenance has consistently been updated and there were several projects he noted needing doing
- that equipment repairs were up because of usage and increased costs
- that gravel costs were down because of state funds and grants and because the gravel roads are in good shape
- that there were several pieces of equipment that needed replacing including a dump truck, excavator, and bucket loader, if the reserves are tapped for paying for them it would keep the tax rate down. Connie said that instead taking loans, restricted funds could be used for the FY22 dump truck, and the Board could make a motion tonight if they wanted to. Christine asked if the FY22 dump truck and the other equipment could be purchased with reserve funds, Connie replied they could be. David and Christine did not want to take any action on this the first pass of the budget. Christine suggested if it was timely to pay for the truck it could be taken up on Monday. Josh asked if there was a timeline for the loan, Connie said no and because the ARPA money was sitting there, there was plenty of cash available. Josh said by the next meeting there will be firmer numbers available, and this could be figured out then. Josh said the total of the three pieces of equipment was \$530,000 cash or loan and there was \$400,000 in revenue so \$130,000 could be raised in taxes.
- that David told Pete he appreciated the work that goes into the budget and everything else he does. Pete said it meant a lot to hear that.

- that Christine asked about the dump truck and whether it would be used for plowing too, Pete said it would.

Recreation & Trails

Pete reported:

- that there were nearly no changes and hoped that the double cleanings of the bathrooms, for COVID, would be coming to an end
- that in a few years there might be some major changes at the park including an upgrade to the playground and pavement of the parking lot. Christine asked, why wait to pave the parking lot another year, Pete replied that 50% of the parking lot is privately owned and it would need to be a joint effort. The issue also is that it is in a floodplain adding the parking lot should be expanded and that needed to be planned for. Pete said Ravi was working on a new plan with the Recreation Committee for the park. Christine asked if a number could be put in for FY23 and manage the planning in the process at the same time. Pete said there were many questions that need to be answered. Christine asked if it was his job to get the costs and the negotiations would be through the Parking Committee. Pete said it was really a Planning thing, Christine asked if he did not have to do the negotiating would that help, Pete said there were a lot of things to work out. Bard asked given the subtitles of stormwater and wastewater there should there be an engineering plan, Pete agreed saying it would have to be graded right and asked where the water would go, Bard thought investing in the plan work would be a good starting point. Christine liked the idea if it could be paved in 2023. Bard said maybe consider an engineering plan for FY23 that could lead to a precise number for construction. Pete said it would be the proper way to do it. The engineer does his work and puts numbers to things. Christine asked to have a line added for the engineering of the paving of the Volunteer's Green parking lot. Pete thought \$5000 would be a good estimate. Jay said it could be paid for with ARPA money. Pete thought Ravi might know of grant money. Christine thought Pete had done what he could do in the parking lot, but it needed more. Bard said stormwater and traffic flow should be looked at, possibly the regional planning commission could be consulted.

e) Town Administration and Assessors

(Library was discussed before Town Administration and Assessors)

Josh reported:

- that there was a line added since last year for OT to reflect Connie Bona, Financial Director's, overtime (\$3000) to be more transparent
- that equipment for a telephone upgrade was included
- that legal was updated to reflect the interesting topics that came up in 2021
- that for IT equipment, one computer and probably a new server was budgeted for

Discussion included:

- that Bard asked where the Selectboard stipends were listed, Josh said line 6. Connie thought the amount should be higher. Bard said in 2016 the median Selectboard payment in Vermont was \$1100 per year, and he had seen an article that addressed paying more to encourage diversity. He recommended increasing the stipend to \$1000 from \$750. Christine said she appreciated him bringing it up. She said the Board members vote on the increase just like every other voter in the Town of Richmond. Connie said she started looking into it and consulted VLCT, they said it could be raised and having the Selectboard put the budget forward to have the voters vote on with their increase was ok. David said he has thought of it but wouldn't ask for it while on the Board. Jay asked if the new rates would apply to only new

members, Connie responded the stipend is paid in December and whoever is in the seat gets the stipend so this would not apply until 2023. Christine thought there was not enough of a conflict of interest and if there was any concern then it could be revisited. Linda Parent said she did not think anyone would notice the difference. Bard said this could be noted in the summary given prior to the vote and would be happy to discuss this with anyone who wanted to and thought paying more could be a tradeoff for people of lower income. David said some people he spoke to about filling the open Selectboard seat said they could not afford to.

- that Linda Parent, Town Clerk, said on the revenue side there are a lot of dogs not registered in Richmond, she felt if we had a system of enforcing the state law requiring people to register their dogs there would be more coming in. Christine thought engaging with the Richmond Animal Hospital could be a way of educating people about the need to register their dog.

- that Christine asked about the building maintenance line and asked how it was being split out, Josh replied the amount was for the regular maintenance.

- that Christine asked about the website saying there will be updates and maintenance needed suggesting there should be a contract with someone to do that, Jay agreed, Josh said the ongoing support and hosting was included in the contract but would check on what exactly was covered.

- that Christine asked about the Town Report printer because the amount was back down, Linda said that less reports are being printed and if a PDF was made it would be even less money. Christine asked Linda to send her an email on it.

- that Bard asked what application was being used to create the report, Linda said most of the programs have a fee associated with them, so it is pieced together, and a PDF created.

Assessors

Josh reported:

- over budgeted in FY22 for listing services inadvertently so that was corrected in this budget

f) Library Department

Rebecca reported:

- that the main increase is for maintenance
- that the salary line was 4% from 3.5% because of a vacancy that needs to be filled

Discussion included:

- that Christine thought having a maintenance agreement for the new system was wise, Rebecca said having the people maintain the system that installed it made the most sense.

g) Charitable Appropriations

Christine reported:

- that OCCC was present, and their request was the same amount as last year, \$3000.

Discussion included:

- that Suzanne Parent, from OCCC, said the request was for the same level of funding as last year, that the camp did well financially, took advantage of federal grants and received a VT afterschool grant, she thanked the town for the continued support. Christine thanked her for the camp especially during COVID.

- that Angelike, from MMCTV, said she was available for questions if the Board had any. Christine asked about how things have been going in the new space, Angelike responded it was nice to have the luxury of time to get everything set up. Christine noted the increase in their request, Angelike said it is based on the number of meetings being recorded having increased.
- that Jay asked about COTS, not having applied yet. Christine said there could be a placeholder put in. Connie said the deadline passed. Josh said acceptance of a late application was at the discretion of the Selectboard. Christine said she was willing to accept an application and keeping it as an open item for now. Kathy let them know she anticipated having an application submitted. Connie said CUSI did not put an invoice in for FY21 yet but could be paid still. Christine said she always likes to give the benefit of the doubt and we just do not know what the situation is and be as compassionate as can be. Bard asked if this has ever happened before, Connie said there have been years where we chase down people to pay them.

REVENUE was reviewed

Discussion included:

- that Jay asked what Beverage Licenses cost, Linda said it depended on the license and the applications were all going online. She went on to say that for Marriage Licenses the town gets \$10 of the \$70 fee charged and we get \$3 for each vehicle registration renewed at the Town Clerk's Office.
- that as town staff continue to update the numbers and we have information on regional and national inflation numbers then we can get more detailed, find offsets, look at a finer list and decide if we are going to look at reducing numbers. Bard thought we could quantify vacancy savings, that could be available for offset. Loans for equipment vs offsets will be looked at a future meeting.
- that Reserve Accounts were reviewed by Connie and the balances displayed.
- that Unassigned Funds and Highway Restricted Funds were discussed, and the projections were estimated and waiting for the final audit changes.
- that Connie said if no unassigned funds or reserves for highway capital purchases were used then the budget would be at 17.90%, if they are used the increase would be 2.97%

III. Adjourn

Bard moved to Adjourn; David seconded. Roll Call Vote: Jay, Bard, David, and Christine voted affirmatively. Motion passed. Meeting ended at: 9:42PM