

TOWN OF WEATHERSFIELD, VERMONT

SELECT BOARD

Select Board

**Martin Memorial Hall
5259 Route 5, Ascutney VT
Monday, December 5, 2016
7:00 PM**

REGULAR MEETING

MINUTES

APPROVED 12/19/2016

Select Board Members Present: Daniel Boyer
C. Peter Cole
Lynn Esty
Amy Beth Main
Kelly Murphy

Select Board Members Absent:

Ed Morris, Town Manager

Others Present:

Chip Cobb	Collin Butler	Edith Stillson
Nancy Heatley	John Arrison	Westley Hazeltine

1. Call to Order

Mr. Boyer called the meeting to order at 7:02PM.

2. Comments from Select Board and Town Manager

Mrs. Esty reminded everyone that the deadline for completing the town survey is the tenth. The survey can be accessed online on the Town's website or a paper copy can be obtained from the Town Office.

Ms. Murphy asked if the Transfer Station hours of operation could be made more accessible on the Town's website. She said she was unable to find it herself.

Mrs. Esty asked if the Transfer Station will be open on December 24th. Mr. Morris said it will be open on the 24th (Saturday) and closed on the 25th (Sunday).

3. Comments from Citizens on topics not on the agenda

There were no comments from citizens.

4. Review minutes from previous meetings – 11/10/2016

Motion: To accept the minutes of 11/10/2016 as written.

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Made by: Mrs. Esty **Second:** Mr. Cole

Vote: Ms. Murphy abstained; all others voted in favor

Review minutes from previous meetings – 11/21/2016

Motion: To accept the minutes of 11/21/2016 as written.

Made by: Mr. Cole **Second:** Mrs. Esty

Vote: Unanimous in favor

5. Veterans Memorial Committee Update – Chip Cobb

Mr. Cobb began his update by providing a brief history of the Veterans Memorial Committee and how the monument was created. The monument and memorial park are now complete and the committee's focus has shifted to maintenance of the components – the monument, the garden, and the Roll of Honor displays. The committee holds ceremonies on Memorial Day and Veterans Day each year, holds an annual fund-raiser to support the committee's work; keeps the Roll of Honor up to date, and offers assistance to veterans as the committee learns of the need. The committee oversaw the illumination of the flags in Ascutney and Perkinsville (the VMC pays for the electricity on the Perkinsville flag) and has recently committed to providing brass grave markers for any Weathersfield veteran's grave site. The committee has an agency fund with a current balance of \$7587. The committee gave a recent donation to the organization, "Sullivan County Cares", which provides personal supplies to troops in the field. Mr. Cobb said that since the committee is small, it tends to keep its projects within scale. He said he presents to the Select Board each year the list of the committee's annual objectives.

Mr. Cole asked if the committee had considered doing anything with the monuments in the Memorial Grove. Mr. Cobb said the committee was waiting for an estimate from Aaron Fitzherbert on restoration of the Civil War obelisk. Mr. Arrison said that the Select Board had looked into cleaning that monument once before and had been advised to leave it alone as cleaning it would only increase the damage. Mr. Cobb said that was many years ago and that perhaps cleaning techniques have evolved since then. It was suggested that Parks & Rec, the Cemetery Commission, and the VMC collaborate on the maintenance of the Memorial Grove stones.

The board thanked Mr. Cobb for his presentation.

6. Review and approve Accounting/Personal Clerk Job Description

Mr. Morris said he had done a lot of updating of the job description. He said it now more accurately reflects what Crystal was doing and what he will be expecting from the new clerk. He said he would like to change the title of the position to reflect the HR work that has been done in that position. He said having the HR piece remain in this position (previously it had

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gone back and forth between whoever had the skills and was willing to do it) makes sense as this clerk deals with payroll and thus benefits administration.

Ms. Murphy noted that HR experience or knowledge is not mentioned in the job qualifications. Since HR is in the job title and the consequences of error can be substantial, it might be good to have base level of knowledge or skill stated in the job description. Mr. Morris agreed to have something as a recommendation, but said if the position ventures into the field of HR professionals, we would have to pay much more than what is being offered.

Motion: To approve the title change and position description for this position.

Made by: Mrs. Esty **Second:** Mr. Cole

Mr. Morris agreed to add something regarding HR. He said Crystal had reviewed the description and she had said it was quite accurate.

Vote on the motion: Unanimous in favor

7. Fireworks Policy/Second Reading

The Board had received an email from Chief Spaulding regarding the lack of mention of fireworks storage requirements in the new policy. Ms. Murphy said the previous version of the policy refers to the most recent version of NFPA 1123. If one wishes to read NFPA 1123, one has to purchase the standard to read it. She felt that the town should either buy the standard and repeat it in the policy or remove the reference. Mr. Morris said he could get the wording if that's the board's wish. Mr. Cole felt it was better to reference the standard because it accommodates all future changes in the standard without the town having to change the wording in the policy. Mr. Morris felt that the people handling the fireworks should have access to the standards themselves. Mr. Arrison said that by leaving it as a reference, it puts the onus on the applicant to be familiar with all of the standards in the NFPA. He said it costs \$55 to subscribe to NFPA. The town would have to continue to subscribe if it were to have the standard on hand at all times.

Mrs. Esty asked to have the Town Manager added to the list of required signatures in the first paragraph following #5 in Section IV.

Mr. Arrison had some concerns with items #1 and #3 in Section IV that were resolved after discussion with the board. He also asked that a rain date be added to paragraph #2 of Section IV and on the application form.

Motion: To move the policy to a third reading with changes as described.

Made by: Mrs. Esty **Second:** Ms. Murphy

Vote: Unanimous in favor

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8. Quarry Road Traffic Information

The board reviewed the data from a traffic study performed by the Regional Planning Commission on the Class IV section of Quarry Road (just before the Baltimore town line). Traffic speed data was not available because of the position in which the traffic count was collected. It may be possible to move the data location next spring to accommodate collection of speed data.

Mr. Morris has contacted the town of Baltimore regarding this matter. The town is aware of the board's investigation, but is not ready to participate at this point.

A petition from the residents has not been submitted.

Ms. Main asked for context in which to place the 23 vehicles per day on Quarry Road. Mrs. Esty said by comparison there are 8400 vehicles per day on Route 131 (includes both east and west bound traffic). There are many other traffic counts listed by road in the transportation chapter of the Town Plan for further reference.

No action was needed or taken.

9. Budget Review

Mr. Morris said this first draft contains the numbers that departments are actually asking for (pre-cuts). He warned that there are some "pretty big numbers" to start the discussion. He said he didn't expect all of the numbers to make it through the budget cycle.

Mr. Butler took over the presentation. According to the budget report, we are asking for \$1.2M in taxes for the General Fund; \$935K in taxes for the Highway Fund; with a summarized tax rate of \$0.7460. Mr. Morris said this represents an \$0.11 increase as the budget sits right now. One cent on the tax rate represents \$29,435.

Mr. Butler and Mr. Morris asked that the Board simply look through the numbers at this meeting and perhaps start some discussion and thinking about future planning. He asked that the meeting on the 19th be dedicated to fine-tuning the budget.

Nancy Heatley represented the Budget Committee at this meeting.

Ms. Murphy asked about the generation of the tax revenue figure. Mr. Morris said it is based on the grand list which is held fairly consistent from year to year to be as conservative as possible. Mr. Butler said all of the tax values are set as of April 1st, except for the ones that come from the state for utilities, which occurs on December 31st. So any of the Velco right-

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of-way improvements taking place right now won't get into the grand list this time. Mr. Morris said we are hoping for a small increase (in the grand list from Velco), but we will budget as conservatively as possible.

Mr. Boyer asked if the town gets paid for the forest lands on Mt. Ascutney. Mr. Butler said we get paid for all of the state land in the town, but recent legislation changed the way the land is valued for the PILOT payments. The values used to be dynamic; now they are fixed and the PILOT is based on that. Once in a while they will adjust those values.

Mr. Butler said he did not have a narrative prepared for the board on the budget. He said he was relying on the board to ask questions. He drew attention to the fire truck loan in FY17 that goes away in FY 18 – it distorts the revenue figures.

The County tax is shown as revenue because it is billed separately to our taxpayers.

There was no current data on delinquent taxes, but Mr. Butler and Mr. Morris said it is the lowest it has ever been (around \$200,000 with \$90,000 of it from the Abbott property).

General Fund Revenues

There are no major changes in General Fund revenues. Mr. Morris said there is one error found today – reimbursement to solid waste for town support was omitted (\$21,650; line 77). Police fines have been reduced to \$15,000 to be more in line with recent figures (police chief's recommendation). HazMat revenue is very conservative in the budget.

General Fund Expenses

Employee pay rates have a 6% increase based on an estimate of where we really should be based on limited research at area towns (2% per year); a 1.5% cost of living increase; some “catching up”; and data showing the average wage in Vermont increased by 5% in 2015. Wages at the lower end of the pay scale increased by 8%-9% in calendar year 2016 based on Department of Labor statistics.

Mr. Butler said he had received insurance rates for calendar 2017 (including unemployment insurance) that shows salaries increasing by 15%.

Ms. Murphy repeated her request for pay information on town employees for the past three years.

Ms. Main asked if there is state-wide data on compensation rates for similar positions to use for comparison. Mr. Morris said that such a comparison is difficult because every town is different. VLCT publishes a compensation guide, but the data is not always accurate or helpful.

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Mrs. Esty noted that the administrative officer's compensation went up 76%, town accountant went up 26%, accounts payable went up 76%; but the custodian went up 0%. Mr. Boyer said the custodian is a contract position. Mr. Morris said it will be going out to bid. However it has been discovered that there is no written contract for the position. Mr. Morris has spoken to the trustees about it. It will be revisited.

The Zoning Administrator hours may be increased. Mr. Morris said this was something he had talked to the board about under future planning of the office staff and what the board wants to see coming out of the office – if the town will be moving into more enforcement, village designation, economic development – then it's something the board needs to think about either in the this budget or an upcoming budget. The same thing on the finance director position which has already been discussed. The increase in the accounts payable reflects the fact that the position gets no benefits. Mr. Morris said the position is being advertised for 20-24 hours. Crystal has recommended at least 24 hours.

In summary, some of the pay increases reflect an increase in hours, some are an adjustment in the rate.

Mrs. Esty said she remembers the pay for the accountant as being \$55,000 – not \$63,315. Mr. Morris said that was a current recommendation to do it as of December 1 – it would match Mr. Butler's pay plus overtime for this year. It was not the salary increase. Ms. Main said a 6% increase on \$55,000 would only bring the number to \$58,300. Mr. Morris said the number is based on median pay for finance director is \$63,000. This is also comparable to other town department heads (Wes and police chief).

Ms. Murphy asked for information on computer equipment, computer support, the notes next to each line and the hours that Mr. Butler has to do in IT work. Mr. Butler said that CCI is changing their business model. Previously they entered into a contract with the town and then billed for all of the services they provided at \$116 per hour. The new model will provide more robust services with a higher base rate with virtually no add-on rates for time. In addition some of the equipment we use will belong to CCI. For example the device that provides a critical firewall for the town expired on December 2nd. The software that is on it is no longer supported and we cannot update it without paying a relatively large fee. The hardware is out of date and needs to be replaced. If we were under the new model, CCI would simply provide us with the equipment and it would be in the base rate. However, such is not the case and we will have to replace the device for around \$2000. (This doesn't show in the budget under consideration.) Mr. Butler is anticipating an increase in IT cost of \$8000 if we enter this new agreement with CCI. Ms. Murphy noted, however, that previous years' data show less than \$1500 spent each year. Mr. Butler said that's because we have been avoiding some of the costs that would be provided in the new contract. Also the total

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expense is spread over several line items. He said a complete analysis will be provided to the board.

Ms. Murphy said that the new arrangement with CCI should put a stop to the number of hours Mr. Butler is currently spending on IT work. Mr. Butler said there still needs to be someone in administration with IT skills that will oversee “all of this” to protect the interests of the town. Ms. Murphy said she is certainly in favor of protecting the interests of the town, but what she had been hearing is that there are physically a lot of hours that Mr. Butler was putting in on IT work and these hours were being used in part to justify making the position full time. If the town is going to spend \$8000 to a company that will address all of these things, that should alleviate some of the issues. Mr. Morris said it would be alleviated, but Mr. Butler would be doing a lot of other things – IT was just one of those things that got “put on the plate” that had never been there before. Some of what was presented to the board previously was before this proposal – this proposal is fairly new. Mr. Butler gave some examples of IT projects he felt he should work on – networking all of the departments, for example.

Mrs. Esty asked why the Town Clerk would receive a 6% increase, but not the Assistant Town Clerk. This appeared to be an error.

Ms. Main asked what was budgeted for employee contribution for insurance. Mr. Morris said 5%.

Ms. Murphy asked about the Land Records Computer Lease. What is it and why has the budget varied so much over time? Mr. Butler said he didn't think we had done a good job accounting correctly for this over the last few years, but he felt he is closer to doing so this year. The town has a contract with Cott Systems at \$325 per month to put all of the land transactions through a scanner and be digitized to be available online. The Clerk charges \$10 for recordings - \$7 goes to vault reserves; and the remaining funds go to two other things. The money paid to Cott is recovered through some of these fees. He said it is complicated. The \$4000 budgeted for next year represents the sum of lines 116 and 117 in the budget from last year.

Mrs. Esty noted that the clerical employees in the Listers budget were not receiving the 6% pay raise. Mr. Butler said that is because that line does not come from the payroll system. All 6% raises are for employees in the payroll system.

Mrs. Esty said she was having a hard time with the 76% increase for the zoning administrator. Mr. Morris said this had been mentioned earlier and is there for discussion purposes. Mr. Butler said a year ago we budgeted for 24 hours. This was increased to 29 hours as an interim step. Now the proposal is to move to 40 hours. He said the whole

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planning and zoning budget is increased from \$38,783 to \$82,282. Legal expenses are increased to \$5000 and there is \$1000 for GIS development, but the bulk of the increase in the total budget is due to the increase to full time and the associated costs. There are no significant increases in revenue for this department. Mrs. Esty said this position had been full time once before and the hours were cut. Mr. Cole suggested providing administrative support rather than increasing the administrator's hours. Mr. Morris agreed that this had been part of the discussion on where town staff should be heading. Ms. Murphy said any such changes must be driven by the needs of the town. She asked for more information on which to justify them.

Ms. Main asked why the FT police officer pay was increased by 19%. Mr. Butler said this may have been from a merit increase in addition to the 6%. Mr. Morris said that Larry had passed his one year during the budget freeze. He said it should not have been 19%, but it should be a little bit more than 6%. He said he had asked for 8%. He will look into it.

Mrs. Esty asked about the transfer to cruiser reserve. Mr. Butler said that's the amount (\$14,400) needed to set aside to avoid borrowing for the next police cruiser (based on current prices and a 4-year cycle). The cruiser debt service and interest lines ultimately would be eliminated. The same principle should be applied to Wes's pick-up. We should not be borrowing money to replace the smaller vehicles.

Mrs. Esty was very concerned about the budget for animal control. Mr. Boyer said the town has to give Ms. Sullivan her stipend as she would not charge for anything. He acknowledged that this is not in compliance with the policy. Mr. Morris said he would look into the question of workers compensation (none is shown in the budget).

Mrs. Esty asked why the Planning Commission recording secretary received a 19% pay raise and none of the other recording secretaries received a raise.

(Motion: To continue the meeting beyond 9:00 PM.

Made by: Mrs. Esty **Second:** Ms. Murphy

Vote: Unanimous in favor)

Mrs. Esty asked that all recording secretaries receive the same 6% pay increase.

It was noted that Golden Cross Ambulance Service is still the same fee as in several years previously.

Highway services to dry hydrants has been increased to \$2500. This line has been historically under-funded.

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Mr. Butler said, in reference to the note about a 3% increase in insurance in the Fire Commission budget (and all throughout the budget) – it represents a cushion of about \$6,000, because our 2017 premiums are coming in lower than 2016 premiums. The 3% increase seen in multiple lines will be eliminated and replaced with the actual 2017 rates.

Mr. Butler said he is also working with the League on coverage – there are some anomalies – one fire station is on a replacement cost basis, the other station is different and he cannot find anything to indicate why this is so. He also cannot find anything to document the value of the two covered bridges. Without a new appraisal it is difficult to determine what coverage is adequate. (This coverage is expensive.) Mr. Morris said this is one of the finance director tasks that Mr. Butler has been undertaking without getting compensated for it. Extensive insurance discussions uncovered a fire truck that was being covered that the town hadn't owned for a couple of years. Ms. Murphy said these are the types of things she wants to see on a list to justify any increases in compensation or changes in positions.

Fire department stipends increased to \$40,000. Mr. Morris said this started at \$52,000. He asked the chiefs to go back and rework that number based on what they really needed. They came back with the \$40,000 that they felt would really help them offset their expenses so they didn't have to fund-raise quite as much. It would also help them replace turnout and protective gear that is going out of date that they haven't been replacing. Mrs. Esty stated that there is a reserve for those items. Mr. Butler said there isn't as much as they need to spend. Mr. Morris said they have fire hoses that are 30 years old – these should be replaced every 10 years. They should also be tested annually which represents another expense.

Mr. Morris continued that the fire department stipend has been in the \$15,000 - \$20,000 range for a very long time (15-18 years). Mr. Butler said this number should have been climbing steadily over that time like everything else.

Mrs. Esty said she would rather see line items for fire hose and testing at \$10,000 rather than the \$40,000 stipend. Mr. Morris said this wasn't in there (the \$40,000) – it was just one of the things that was brought up. He said he can get their break-down of where the money will be going. Mrs. Esty said she feels it will be necessary to have this information to be able to justify it to the voters.

Ms. Murphy asked for the total cost of fire services, meaning the total of the town's expense (\$201,768) plus the amount raised by the departments in fund raising. Mr. Butler estimated the fund-raising at about \$20,000 from each department. The total cost of fire services to the town is around \$250,000.

There was discussion on the impact to the budget of purchasing fire trucks. Mr. Morris said that the analysis of how the trucks are purchased and paid for is another task that a finance

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director would undertake. Mr. Butler said that better financial analysis and planning is necessary to prevent large fluctuations in the tax rate.

Mrs. Esty said she has been paying for the Weathersfield Directory website herself. She would like an article to request funding for the directory. She would like \$50 for the website and \$500 to underwrite the next printing of the directory.

Ms. Main asked about items in the appropriations budget – some items are receiving funds despite no record found of voting to do so and one being funded despite a “no” vote. Mr. Butler said the “no” vote is an error. It was clear that this practice needs to be clarified and more closely followed.

Ms. Murphy asked for clarification of the Transfer to Perkinsville School Capital Reserve line. Mr. Butler said this was done “in a really bizarre way”. A budget of \$70,000 was set to do rehab work on the schoolhouse. We borrowed \$70,000 then sold the Tenney Hill property and repaid \$61,000 (or so) of the \$70,000 so there is an outstanding loan payment that will be paid of shortly. In the meantime, the \$70,000 was earmarked to spend on the schoolhouse. We should have taken the \$70,000 and set it aside in a reserve account. Expenses would be charged against the reserve. This wasn't done. So the \$70,000 is comprised of \$30,000 spent in (FY)15, another \$30,000 spent in (FY)16 and a little bit spent in (FY)17. There is \$10,500 left now. He is assuming this will be spent in the balance of FY17. It was never budgeted.

Mr. Boyer said there was mold to be removed, new heating system, etc. The town voted to authorize borrowing \$70,000 for these expenses, which would be paid for by selling the Tenney Hill property.

Mr. Butler asked the board how much should be placed in the reserve in order to fund meaningful improvements to the building in the future. Ms. Main asked what the plan for the building is so the board can determine what's a reasonable amount to budget. Mrs. Bearse said that “phase 1” of the project was to get the south classroom up to code as quickly as possible to facilitate housing the food shelf. This has been substantially completed except for the handicap ramp. There is insufficient money left for the ramp because of the work done on the ell. Phase 2 will be to bring the north class room up to code and have the occupancy rating increased so that the entire building can be occupied. At that point, the building will provide the only handicap accessible public meeting space on the west side of the town. Beyond that, the restoration of the building will have to be discussed and agreed upon. The board asked for a plan for the future of the building with itemized associated expenses.

10. Appointments

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There were no appointments.

11. Approve Warrants

Motion: To approve the warrants for 12/5/2016 as follow:

General Funds	Operating Expenses	\$22,255.36
	Payroll	\$13,670.47
Highway Fund	Operating Expenses	\$3,660.56
	Payroll	\$8,600.52
Solid Waste Management Fund		
	Operating Expenses	\$1,818.01
	Payroll	\$646.86
Library	Operating Expenses	\$59.77
Grants	Operating Expenses	\$0.00
Agency Monies	Operating Expenses	\$0.00
Reserves		\$661.90
Grand Totals	Operating Expenses	\$28,455.60
	Payroll	\$22,917.85

Ms. Murphy asked that funds expended from the “Aide to Weathersfield Residents in Need” fund be made anonymous.

Made by: Mrs. Esty **Second:** Ms. Murphy

Vote: Unanimous in favor

12. Future Meeting Agenda Items

The board will hold a special meeting on Monday, December 12th at the Weathersfield School. This meeting will convene in the school immediately following conclusion of the joint meeting with the School Board. The purpose will be to finish the initial review of the budget.

13. Adjourn

Motion: To adjourn the meeting

Made by: Mr. Cole **Second:** Mrs. Esty

Vote: Unanimous in favor

The meeting adjourned at 9:56 PM.

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Respectfully submitted,
deForest Bearse

WEATHERSFIELD SELECTBOARD

Daniel E. Boyer, Chairperson

C. Peter Cole, Selector

Kelly Murphy, Clerk

Lynn Esty, Vice-Chairperson

Amy Beth Main, Selector