

# TOWN OF WEATHERSFIELD, VERMONT

## SELECT BOARD

Select Board  
Martin Memorial Hall  
5259 Route 5, Ascutney VT  
Wednesday, January 3, 2018  
7:00 PM  
REGULAR MEETING

### MINUTES APPROVED 1/15/ 2018

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

**Select Board Members Absent:**

**Ed Morris, Town Manager**

#### **Others Present:**

John Esty	Darlene Kelly	Nancy Nutile-McMenamy	Mike Todd
Wes Hazeltine	Roderick Bates	Donald Huntley	Josh Dauphin
Edith Stillson	Mavis Ellingwood	Tom Leach	BJ Esty

#### **1. Call to Order**

Ms. Murphy called the meeting to order at 7:00PM.

#### **2. Comments from Select Board and Town Manager**

Mr. Boyer thanked the highway crew for their hard work during Christmas Eve and into Christmas Day. He said he appreciates their sacrifice from family time to take care of the Town's roads.

Ms. Murphy announced that the Board will be meeting jointly with the School Board on January 8<sup>th</sup> primarily to discuss budgets. The Select Board meeting will continue in a separate area following the joint budget discussion.

Ms. Murphy asked the Board members to submit input for the Board's annual report.

#### **3. Comments from Citizens on topics not on the agenda**

Ms. Nutile-McMenamy said she was writing an article for the Vermont Standard and her own blog and questioned the expenditure of \$1512 on a Christmas party for Town employees. She said that the funds for it had come out of a "miscellaneous" line that only contained \$1200 and questioned why this line was overspent.

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Mr. Morris said this practice started in 2005 and at that time cost \$700-\$1000. It was restricted to just the town office staff plus a few select others. He said he had expanded the practice to include the DPW and the library (anyone employed for more than 10 hours a week). He said the dinner was more of an annual recognition dinner (milestones, achievements, etc.) than a holiday party. It was an opportunity for employees who might not work together to get to know one another.

Mr. Morris said he is moving the expense out of the “miscellaneous” line and into a “recognition” line. He is budgeting \$1500 for it, though he acknowledged that there may be times when that amount is exceeded.

Ms. McMenemy said she had never seen this done by any governmental entity she had ever worked for – that usually employees and spouses are required to purchase tickets to such gatherings. She felt the process should be more transparent, i.e. ensuring that the expense line includes the word “dinner” so taxpayers will know what the money is being spent on.

Mr. Boyer said it bothered him to think that taxpayers would begrudge recognizing the highway crew for not being with their families on Christmas Eve and Day because of having to be out plowing the roads. Ms. McMenemy countered that that was the highway crew and not office employees who only work four days a week.

Mr. Cole said he hoped that Ms. McMenemy would write her article without characterizing the event at a “party”. He said it was a recognition dinner and asked her to please be careful how she characterized it. He also said that she was implying that people who work for the government or non-profit organizations do not deserve recognition for the work they do.

Ms. McMenemy said she had a problem with the way that this was done and begrudged that it had cost \$1500. She said it could have been a potluck or at a less expensive restaurant.

Ms. Main asked if it could be done at a time other than during the holiday to reduce the impression that it was/is a holiday party.

Mr. Morris said he sees this as a good team-building and morale-lifting event. He is trying to restore the employees' morale and mitigate their sense of not being appreciated.

Ms. Murphy agreed with Mr. Cole that government and non-profit workers deserve recognition. She cited the high cost of rapid employee turn-over and the benefit of

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investing in the employees. She said she saw it as money well-spent. She said it was ridiculous to do it at another time of year just so it doesn't look like a Christmas party – it should be done at an optimum time for everyone involved, at the best available price and to support local business (as opposed to going outside of Town in search of a lower price).

Mr. Hazeltine said the former Town Manager Ernie Torpey used to take the employees out to dinner at Christmas. That was in 1982 or thereabouts. Different managers have done different things over the years.

#### 4. Review minutes from previous meetings – 12/18/2017

##### Additions/corrections/deletions:

a. None

**Motion:** To accept the minutes of December 18, 2017

**Made by:** Mr. Boyer **Second:** Mr. Cole

**Vote:** Unanimous in favor

#### 5. Personnel Policy (3<sup>rd</sup> Reading)

The Board reviewed the personnel policy for the third time.

Ms. Main asked why the probationary period is so long (one year). Mr. Morris said it used to be 90 days but that former Town Manager Jim Mullen had changed it on the grounds that it gives people sufficient time to work out issues that may arise.

There was discussion about comp time and how it works, who is entitled, how it is accrued. Thus far the auditors have not had an issue with comp time as it is currently applied.

Computer use is monitored by CCI – they notify the Town when there is unusual activity or if the Manager requests a report. Ms. Murphy and Ms. Main suggested adopting a set schedule of monitor reports to stay aware of computer use by the employees.

Ms. Murphy, as chair of the Board, oversees Mr. Morris's time sheets and expense reimbursements.

**Motion:** To approve the personnel policy as written

**Made by:** Mr. Boyer **Second:** Mr. Cole

**Vote:** Unanimous in favor

#### 6. Introduce Finance Director

Mr. Morris introduced Darlene Kelly, the Town's new Finance Director. Ms. Kelly will start work on January 15<sup>th</sup>. Everyone welcomed her aboard.

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### 7. Fire Services Discussion

#### a. Budget

WWVFD had reported maintenance in their (town report) budget, but Mr. Dauphin had clarified that this did not represent apparatus maintenance – it was “very, very small stuff”. All major repairs were run through the Fire Commission equipment repair line. The only repair not paid for through the Fire Commission budget was the turbo repair to the brush truck which was paid for out the department's own funds. He said they spent about \$1800 on it.

Mr. Girard (AVFD) had previously reported that the ladder maintenance was \$3371.66. \$3953 was spent on additional repairs to other apparatus (total repair outside of Commission budget \$7324.66).

Mr. Morris had recommended moving \$2000 from the department funding lines to the maintenance line on the assumption that this was the amount spent by each department on maintenance. He said the Board needed to discuss this in light of the new information just received.

Ms. Murphy stated that the annual allocation was increased by \$10,000 to provide funds for turnout gear and hoses. The remainder is for department expenses.

Mr. Dauphin said operation expenses for his department are around \$24,000 annually, so with only \$22,500 they have to make up the difference each year. He said he would likely be using part of the \$10,000 to offset this cost. He also said there would be enough left over for some small purchases and two sets of gear (\$2,000 ±).

Mr. Morris recommended moving \$2000 from the allocation to the repair line to make AVFD repair line \$9500 and WWVFD would become \$8500. Mr. Dauphin didn't think his department would exceed the \$6500 currently shown. (It was ultimately agreed to leave the \$2000 where it is with the understanding that as long as the bottom line remains the same things within the budget could be moved around as needed.)

Ms. Murphy returned to the annual allocation. She asked for clarification of the \$10,000 that was added in FY17. Mr. Morris said it was intended to be used for hose, turnout gear, etc. so these could be purchased annually without having to pull money from the reserves. Ms. Murphy said she would like to see the \$10,000 show up in line item dedicated to its intended purpose. Mr. Morris suggested waiting until they have more detailed expense data before itemizing the allocation.

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Ms. Murphy asked if there would not be any more money placed in the reserves if it was all going into the budget. Mr. Morris said the reserves should be for a specific purpose and for bigger items – things that are not annual expenditures. He felt that fire hose and turnout gear are important items to run a fire ground and should be considered annual expenses. Mr. Boyer said that the reserve had originally been set up to cover events when hose or turnout gear were unexpectedly damaged and needed to be replaced quickly. Mr. Morris said that some of those expenses can be covered by insurance. Other large items (like air packs, radios, etc.) can be obtained with grant funds (when available) or through the reserves.

Mr. Dauphin said that the money his department is spending is overseen by the Town Office, a system he is happy with. He said that funding for turnout gear should be in the budget as it is an item they need. Replacements should be made on a regular rotation schedule. He agreed with Mr. Morris that the non-motorized reserves should be for long-term equipment that should be replaced according to NFPA and Federal guidelines. Money should be put in the reserves regularly because there may not be any grant funds available when the equipment needs to be replaced.

Mr. Cole agreed that further itemization of the allocation should wait until there is at least a year's worth of data. The controls that are currently in place are sufficient for now.

Everyone agreed that things are moving in the right direction.

Mr. Dauphin presented his proposal for providing a personal stipend to firefighters to incentivise training. Training is his number one priority. According to his records, 850 hours were spent in training last year for firefighters to retain their certifications. He asked for \$9000 a year for drills - \$25/member x 15 members x 24 drills a year.

Mr. Dauphin asked for an additional \$1000 for hose testing – 10 hours/member x 10 members x \$100/member. This is a fairly labor-intensive job. (It would cost \$6000 if we had to pay an outside company to it.) This should be getting done according to the Woods report. It is not happening now.

These numbers were calculated for WWVFD only.

Other ways to provide incentives (e.g. per call) were discussed, but paying for training remained the simplest idea from a budgeting standpoint.

Ms. Murphy suggested raising the miscellaneous line to \$2000 and allocate \$1000 per department for hose testing. The \$1000 would be shared evenly between whatever members show up on hose-testing day.

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Ms. Main asked that the line be changed to “Hose Testing”. It was agreed that this would be a new line of its own with \$1000 for each department to be divided equally between the members that help test the hoses.

The miscellaneous line will drop back to \$100.

The allocation of \$32,500 will not be changed to reflect the Town's commitment to repair all of the equipment.

### **8. Fiscal Year 2019 Budget Presentation**

#### Library Budget

Roderick Bates, Mavis Ellingwood and Nancy Nutile-McMenemy presented the library budget to the board. The library is proposing to increase the Director position to full time. He would assume supervision of town-wide programs such as the Town Festival; perhaps publish a town newsletter; and chair the parks and recreation committee. Data shows that library user ship has significantly increased over last year's number, perhaps due to the work of the youth librarian and the significant public outreach from the current director.

It was pointed out that the wage shown for the director on the budget sheet was incorrect. It should be \$35,193, which reduces the % increase.

The director's job description should be rewritten to include more general public outreach as opposed to library public outreach.

This change from part time to full time will encourage the current director to stay. Over the past few years, the directors have tended to use Weathersfield as a stepping stone to full time positions elsewhere. Longevity among employees is important to the town – this will help achieve that.

#### Police Budget

The reduction in ticket revenue reflects the department's change in focus from tickets to crime reduction (drugs, opioid epidemic).

When asked if we have enough police coverage, Mr. Morris said yes and no. It may be time to pursue the regional approach as was discussed a few meetings ago.

Everyone was okay with the numbers as presented.

Budget discussions paused here to interview the candidates for the open Board seat.

The Board should be ready to vote on the final budget on 1/15/2018.

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**Motion:** To extend the meeting until done.

**Made by:** Mr. Boyer

Ms. Main asked that the extension of time be limited.

**Amended Motion:** To extend the meeting by 30 minutes.

**Made by:** Mr. Boyer   **Second:** Ms. Murphy

**Vote:** Unanimous in favor

### 9. Select Board Candidate Interviews

Candidate: Josh Savage – not present.

Candidate: Tom Leach - resident on Henry Gould Road. Mr. Leach has been involved in each of the towns he has lived in. He plans to run for this seat in March.

Candidate: Mike Todd – has been on the Select Board before, is currently on the Planning Commission – he just wanted to help out until town meeting. He thought the appointment would have been done before the budget was this far along. He was not sure about running for the seat. He wants to stay on the Planning Commission.

(Back to the budget ...)

#### Planning & Zoning

No changes were made to this budget. Note: The Planning Commission has not seen it.

**Motion:** To extend the meeting an additional 29 minutes

**Made by:** Mr. Boyer       **Second:** Mr. Cole

**Vote:** Unanimous in favor

Listers – no changes.

Town Clerk – no changes.

The Board completed its first time review of all sections of the budget. It appears that there will be a 4% increase without the school and county budgets. Ms. Murphy asked the Board members to look through the budget again in preparation for the meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup>.

Special articles will be discussed at the next meeting. The non-profit requests also need to be reviewed.

### 10. Appointments

No appointments were requested or made (aside from the appointment for the vacant select board seat.

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### **11. Approve Warrants**

**Motion:** To approve the warrants for 1/3/2018 as follow:

General Funds	Operating Expenses	\$23,932.15
	Payroll	\$11,949.81
Highway Fund	Operating Expenses	\$11,752.56
	Payroll	\$11,799.50
Solid Waste Management Fund		
	Operating Expenses	\$5,262.32
	Payroll	\$1,305.50
Library	Operating Expenses	\$169.59
	Payroll	\$1,543.02
Grants	Operating Expenses	\$0.00
Agency Monies	Operating Expenses	\$0.00
Dry Hydrant Fund		\$5,700.00
Reserves		\$325.00
Grand Totals	Operating Expenses	\$47,141.62
	Payroll	\$26,597.83

**Made by:** Mr. Boyer      **Second:** Mr. Cole

**Vote:** Unanimous in favor

### **12. Executive Session as per 1 VSA §313(3)(Personnel)**

**Motion:** To enter executive session as per 1 VSA §313 (3) Personnel

**Made by:** Mr. Boyer      **Second:** Mr. Cole

**Vote:** unanimous in favor

The Board came out of executive session at 10:04 PM.

**Motion:** To appoint Tom Leach to take the vacant select board position.

**Made by:** Mr. Cole      **Second:** Mr. Boyer

**Vote:** Unanimous in favor

### **13. Future Meeting Agenda Items**

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**14. Adjourn**

**Motion:** To adjourn the meeting

**Made by:** Mr. Cole      **Second:** Ms. Main

**Vote:** Unanimous in favor

The meeting adjourned at 10:07 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

*deForest Bearse*

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Daniel E. Boyer, Selector

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C. Peter Cole, Vice-Chairperson

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Amy Beth Main, Clerk

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Kelly Murphy, Chairperson

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