

TOWN OF WEATHERSFIELD, VERMONT

SELECT BOARD

Select Board

Martin Memorial Hall

5259 Route 5, Ascutney VT

Monday, November 19, 2018

7:00 PM

REGULAR MEETING

MINUTES

APPROVED 12/3/2018

Select Board Members Present: N. John Arrison
Daniel Boyer
C. Peter Cole
Tom Leach
Kelly Murphy

Select Board Members Absent:

Ed Morris, Town Manager

Others Present:

Jeff Epstein	Paul Tillman	Mark Girard	Cerissa Hodgdon
Vincent Graziano	Eric Taylor	Darlene Kelly	Jessie Hanson
Neomi Graziano	Sarah Taylor	Colby Hodgdon	Ray Stapleton
George Ainley	Julie Levy	Josh Dauphin	Tracy Dauphin

1. Call to Order

Ms. Murphy called the meeting to order at 7:01PM.

2. Cady Hill Road Reclassification Hearing

Ms. Murphy opened the public hearing at 7:02 PM and read the public hearing notice.

Interested parties present and participating:

Vincent and Neomi Graziano

Eric and Sarah Taylor

Julie Levy and George Ainley

Jessie Hanson

Highway Superintendent Ray Stapleton stated the reasons for the proposed reclassification included improved traffic safety and saving \$413,000 in Act 64 expense. The section of the road to be reclassified would extend from the intersection with Weathersfield Center Road to the turnaround.

Ms. Murphy said the matter had first been brought to the board's attention by Patricia Kelly, a resident near the intersection, who had witnessed multiple accidents and hang-ups/slide-offs of vehicles attempting to turn the corner. She had urged the board to take some action to improve the safety of the intersection.

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Mr. Arrison asked if the proposed hammerhead would meet the highway standards. Mr. Stapleton said the town would need an easement to do it. It would be consistent with other hammerheads in town.

Julie Levy said she supports the reclassification for safety reasons. She stated that Google sends people down that way for deliveries; something no one seems to be able to get Google to change.

Vincent Graziano asked about the type of gates that would be put up. Mr. Stapleton said he would like to put a guard rail across at the top of the project; there would be a 16-ft gate in a 20-ft opening; a 4-5 ft opening for foot traffic and horses and bicycles to get through. The same would be at the bottom of the project. The gates will allow the town highway department to access the road for maintenance.

Eric Taylor asked if the gate could be padlocked so landowners could get through for property access with a tractor. Mr. Morris said the gate will probably have a lock on it, but anyone wanting to open it would have to contact the highway department.

Mr. Arrison asked if the town is creating a pent road by putting gates up. Mr. Morris said it would not really be a pent road because it's being reclassified as a trail.

Mr. Boyer asked if the paved apron would be removed. Mr. Stapleton said yes.

Mr. Hanson arrived at this point and asked why the town couldn't just put up a sign on Center Road stating "No Right Turn". He said it would save \$413,000 in redoing the intersection. Mr. Stapleton explained that the \$413,000 was what the town would need to spend to bring the road up to Act 64 standards, something the state will require us to do.

Mr. Hanson asked how this proposal had gotten started. Ms. Murphy explained how Ms. Kelly had approached the board about safety concerns.

Mr. Hanson spoke about the how old the road is. Mr. Morris acknowledged it is a very old road and the town wants to protect it because of its historic character. He said the road would be maintained and kept open for people to use. Mr. Leach stated that the town will maintain ownership of the right of way.

Mr. Hanson said he was concerned about being able to get to Center Road as quickly as possible in the event of an emergency. He said he lives alone and has had to get himself to the hospital in the past by the shortest route possible.

Eric Taylor said he was delighted it will be kept as a trail.

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Mr. Hanson had several complaints about maintenance of the road. He also expressed concern about being landlocked if a tree should come down between his property and Perkins Hill Road. Mr. Stapleton assured him that the highway department takes extra care with dead-end roads.

There were no other comments or questions. Ms. Murphy closed the hearing at 7:27 PM. The board will take this up and possibly vote on the reclassification at the December 3rd meeting.

3. Comments from Select Board and Town Manager

Mr. Morris said he hopes to present the town forest plan soon.

4. Comments from Citizens on topics not on the agenda

There were no comments from citizens.

5. Review minutes from previous meetings – 11/5/2018

Motion: To approve

Made by: Mr. Arrison **Second:** Mr. Leach

Vote: Unanimous in favor

6. Bottle Redemption Fund – Memorial Flags

Jeff and Lisa Slade asked for \$700 from the bottle redemption fund to replace the flags and some of the poles and brackets along Routes 131 and 106. The estimated cost would be \$1120 (if purchased right away). There is currently \$509.70 in the account.

It was clarified that this is not a Veterans Memorial Committee project.

Motion: To take from the bottle fund \$700 to allocate for the flag replacement.

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

Discussion:

None of the funds came from taxes – all funds were donated by local businesses and residents. The initial amount was \$2500 in 2014. \$500 was received from the bottle fund last year along with \$200 from the Veterans Memorial Committee.

Ms. Murphy asked for clarification about having these requests run through town committees. Mr. Morris said it first happened when Brenda Richardson had requested funds for a project for veterans. The board concluded at that time that the funds had to go through a committee (in Brenda's case, the Perkinsville Church took it on). Ms. Murphy said she had no objections to releasing the money through the Veterans Memorial Committee.

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Mrs. Slade said this project is not related to the Veterans Memorial Committee, but a project that she and Jeff Slade had created. The Town set up a fund in 2014 (when the project first began) in which to keep and disperse the funds. Donations go directly into the fund; Mr. and Mrs. Slade purchase the flags and accessories with their own credit card; they are reimbursed from the fund. This is how it has worked since 2014.

Town Accountant, Darlene Kelly said the auditors do not like these types of accounts as they do not appear to be town funds. The auditors are requiring the town to address them in this fiscal year. She and town treasurer Steve Hier are working through these accounts to determine if the town is acting only as the fiscal agent or if the town truly has control over the money. If the town has no control over the funds, they cannot be on the town's books. (She gave an example of the Friends of the Library – since the town has no control over how they spend their money, their money should not be on the town's books.)

Ms. Murphy asked of the town can allocate money to community members for needs. Ms. Kelly thought the auditors would want the town to have a say in how the money can be spent. Another example – if the town does not have a say over the veterans committee, if they are acting on behalf of the town, but not appointed by the select board, their money should not be run through the town.

Mr. Morris said the town can give money from the bottle fund to anyone who requests it. He said it was the board's own rule that it run through a committee.

It was agreed that the discussion had strayed from the point, but needed to be continued at another time. They revisited the motion and were comfortable enough to vote on it.

Mrs. Slade said they could easily close out the account with this next large purchase by buying an extra flag or two. She wasn't sure how the flags would be purchased in the future.

Vote on the motion: Unanimous in favor

7. AVFD Attorney to Discuss FY2018 Funding – Denise Anderson

Mark Girard asked to have this item postponed to the next meeting.

8. Discussion – Police Contracted Services

(Police Chief Daniels was not able to attend the meeting.)

Mr. Morris provided additional details regarding the cost break down that the board had requested at the previous meeting.

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Mr. Morris said they have spoken with the town of Baltimore since the last meeting; they sounded “semi-positive”. He said this is more in the town's ball park of whether we want to go forward with it or not. He said he would keep the other towns updated on the discussion.

Mr. Arrison said the discussion so far has indicated that with Cavendish and Baltimore on board, there would be 25-33 hours work, yet we would be adding a full time officer. The town of Weathersfield would then have to pay for the additional 7-15 hours. Mr. Morris said there is enough money budgeted to cover it. We are currently looking for a 20-hour a week officer, which is probably the person we would move to a full time position and continue to use some other part time funds as we do now.

Additional patrol hours in Weathersfield would be added in addition to the coverage for these two towns.

This arrangement will work even if Cavendish gets on board and Baltimore does not. It would a bit harder if the reverse were to happen.

Cavendish is having a crime problem, hence their interest in our offer. Currently they contract with the sheriff for speed control. Any revenue generated (through ticket-writing) goes to the town in which it is generated. We're not making money from this – we are proposing a way to provide better police service to all three towns. Any changes in our budget will be offset by revenue coming in.

It was agreed to revisit this discussion.

Mr. Leach asked if the board could get a twice-monthly report on police activities to help the board better gauge the proposed expansion. He said a neighbor had asked him for information he wasn't able to provide. Mr. Morris wasn't sure he could get a twice-monthly report, but he could work on getting an update. Ms. Murphy asked if he could provide a monthly update.

9. FY2019 Budget Update

Ms. Kelly presented the 1st quarterly financial summary report.

Ms. Murphy said the report states that the general fund is on target, yet there is \$45,000 due for the Perkinsville School. Ms. Murphy asked for clarification on how that was going to be paid for. Ms. Kelly said part of it would be paid for by the loss of a full time staff position with benefits.

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It was clarified that this \$45,000 was the last debt payment on the loan for demolition of the additions to the Perkinsville School – it was missed in the budget for this year and now has to be made up. It has nothing to do with the current activities at the 1879 schoolhouse.

Mr. Morris said that additional efficiencies, careful spending, plus the funds for the full time position should cover the cost of the payment.

Ms. Murphy was uncomfortable with not knowing exactly where the money was going to come from. She asked that the board be kept up to date through regular budget reports – either monthly or quarterly.

10. Budget Discussion

a. Police Budget

Mr. Morris said there were not a lot of changes in this budget. It accounts for some movement as called for in the compensation policy. (The chief's salary was increased slightly.) The department went forward with the taser lease.

The figures on this report match the audited figures in the last town report.

b. Fire Department Budget

Mr. Morris noted that the grand list has gone up which is having an effect on the calculated tax rates.

Mr. Arrison noted that the truck bond needed to be added to the Fire Commission budget (11-7-207-53.00 - \$50,384). Previous years it was \$45,800 which represents principal only - not interest. The principal and interest were on separate lines – this year they will be combined.

The fire commission insurance subtotal should read \$21,835 (it shows as \$71,088 on the report).

Subtotal expenses should read \$186,406.

(There was much confusion in this review arising from changes being made at the meeting and the manner in which the report was presented.)

The “Tax Need” is being reported by department this year.

In the fire commission budget, WWVFD has requested \$29,500 - \$25,000 for operations and \$4,500 for gear. AVFD has asked for \$32,000 for strictly operations.

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The board reviewed a budget for a municipal department.

Ms. Kelly said the benefits line needed to be corrected to add in HSA expenses - \$25,023 vs the \$22,827 that's shown.

Ms. Murphy clarified that the board was looking at two budgets for fire services – one via the fire commission, the other via a municipal department with a full time fire chief.

Ms. Murphy asked why the tax needs were different in the two versions and why the hazmat revenue was so elevated on the municipal vs fire commission. It makes sense the expenses would be different, but not the revenue. Mr. Morris said that at present only a very small portion of the revenue comes from the fire departments. He said he took the hazmat revenue line from the combined budgets that the board had created (it was well over \$10,000) and reduced it to a revenue he thought was more realistic if the town were billing. Ms. Murphy suggested using an average of the last 5-7 years instead.

What the town received from the departments was very different from what the departments actually billed for however.

Tax need for fire commission is \$184,415; tax need for municipal is \$228,425 (without various corrections).

The fire truck debt reduction line says Engine and Ladder – represents what AVFD is currently paying for their ladder – it is assumed the town would assume this expense (\$50,384). The next line shows \$5,067 in interest. These should be combined in the fire commission budget. Again, much confusion. Ms. Murphy asked if the \$50,384 is only for the engine. Mr. Morris said it should not be. Ms. Murphy pointed out that under the fire commission budget, the debt reduction was \$50,384. Ms. Kelly said that was both interest and principal. Then she said she picked up the wrong interest – it should be \$5,067. Again the question - “Engine and Ladder” - what does this mean? Ms. Murphy asked that the next draft of the budget show the debt reduction that we are already paying. Then have a separate line showing what we would have to assume in payments if the municipal department goes through.

Mr. Arrison asked how much of an increase in the grand list did she plug in. Ms. Kelly said \$110,356 above what our current tax rate is set at.

c. Highway Budget – Center Road Paving Discussion

Mr. Morris said this is mainly a continuation of the discussion on Center Road. In the previous discussion, the board considered loaning ourselves the money vs taking out a bank

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loan. Mr. Hier provided the board with additional information – current interest rate on our money (reserve funds) is 0.2%. Last year it was 0.3%.

\$200,000 in a Money Market account at 0.3% interest earns \$3,000 over 5 years. In a CD at 1%, it earns \$10,000.

Mr. Morris said we would save \$24,000 if we loaned to ourselves.

Ms. Murphy said she was uncomfortable with this concept on the grounds that the town could be caught short of cash if another disaster like Irene should happen. Mr. Stapleton said it would be no different than if we were borrowing from the bank. Ms. Kelly said we would probably have to refinance the debt. Mr. Arrison suggested a tax -anticipation note.

Mr. Morris said we are in a pretty good spot with 13% in fund balance and 10% undesignated general funds. He said we've done a good job over the last few years in setting those up. The idea was to keep those funds for a catastrophe. Another part of that was talking about doing similar things as these - saving on interest during loan processes and being able to pay ourselves back. He said we are sitting on about the same amount of cash as we had on hand during the Irene emergency. Right now we have a little over \$100,000 in each – general and highway – plus we have about \$100,000 in nondesignated funds. It is fiscally prudent. By all national standards we are right where we should be.

There is also \$200,000 in the lister reserves. Since we are still several years away from needing a town-wide reappraisal, most of that money would come back to the reserve before we would need it. It can be considered cash on hand in an emergency. (Spending it would probably call for a town-wide meeting however.)

It would be up to the treasurer to figure out where the funds would best come from.

The auditors are very comfortable with this idea – we have sufficient cash and strong financial management. It would be an extremely safe loan.

The board will need to decide how to fund the repaving of Center Road before the highway budget can be set. The current draft of the budget sets paving at \$80,000.

(The highway budget sheet was not included in the board's packet.) The tax rate sheets that the board had include the \$80,000. Last year the rate was 0.2987; 0.2875 is anticipated for this budget (with the \$80,000 still in).

d. Administration

The benefit line was increased by \$4,000 to include the HSA.

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IT services were increased from \$13,000 to \$15,900, because we continue to add new computers on the system.

Expense reimbursements include mileage, hotel costs, some trainings. Other expenses include things like special occasion gifts.

The phone expense went from \$2700 to \$8300: \$394 x 12 (\$4728) plus cell phones at \$300 per month. The cell phones were merged into one line. (Again there was confusion over what this represented.) Mr. Morris said they are looking into upgrading the phone service for the whole town – not just the office. Our current service is antiquated. Mr. Morris said he is looking at multiple carriers for the upgrade. Comcast's offer is the one in this budget draft. They are looking at pulling cable internet into the highway garage which would allow highway to upgrade to an online phone system. It would cost \$16,000 to bring cable to the highway department. However Comcast said they would absorb that cost if the town signs up for a town-wide system. It would also bring internet to the transfer station. The \$394 monthly cost above includes this upgrade. The phones would be leased from Comcast under this proposal.

The police department phone cell phone expense was included in this budget line and it shouldn't have been.

There was an error in the labeling of the Admin Revenue subtotals.

The County Tax and County Courthouse revenues and expenses don't match. The figures shown are carried over from last year because the final figures aren't received until the very last minute.

The website is still under construction. (It's close.)

The library budget has its own page now (out of appropriations).

At 9:00, Ms. Murphy called for a motion to continue the meeting.

Motion: To continue the meeting to 9:30 to finish the agenda

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

Vote: Unanimous in favor

The budget will be updated and revisited

11. Approve Culvert Engineering Grant

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Motion: To ask the Town Manager to apply for \$30,000 worth of grant funds through the upcoming FEMA grant programs for the purposes of engineering culverts on Lottery Land and Green Valley Road.

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

This would add \$7500 to highway expenses budget for the match. We can't do any kind of in-kind work as it's for engineering.

Vote: Unanimous in favor

12. Discuss and Approve VOREC Grant

Mr. Morris said the more a town puts into the project the more favorably the application is looked upon for approval. On that basis he would like to talk in the grant about the whole project – the parking lot and the trail – and then base a lot of the trail-building on volunteer work. He said he has been approached by STAB (Sport Trails of the Ascutney Basin) – they built most of the mountain bike trails on the other side of the mountain. They are also working with the Ascutney Trail Association, which does a lot of work on the hiking trails. They are also collaborating with the Green Mountain Horse Association. It seems there would be enough volunteers to build our trail.

Mr. Morris would like to apply for up to \$100,000 for the parking lot and trail easement.

Mr. Morris is working with the state to get the easement across state land that we thought was Charlie Johnson's land.

We currently have a purchase and sale agreement with the Abbotts for the parking lot. We are purchasing their land by writing off their back taxes.

Mr. Leach asked if Mr. Morris needed a motion “to apply for the \$100,000 worth of grants”. Ms. Murphy said yes. Mr. Leach said, “I'll make that motion”. It was seconded by Mr. Arrison.

Motion: To apply for the \$100,000 worth of grants

Made by: Mr. Leach **Second:** Mr. Arrison

Ms. Murphy asked that there be handicap accessibility. Mr. Morris said the handicap accessibility will come from the state park side – it would be pointless on this side.

Vote on the motion: Unanimous in favor

13. Town Report Distribution Discussion

The board agreed to ask the voters if the town could stop mailing the town reports.

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14. Boat Access Discussion

Mr. Morris identified a location off the end of Sunset Boulevard that would make a suitable location for a public boat access. Vehicles can drive to within 20+ feet of the water. The prudential committee for the fire district has no objections. Parking would be located more than 200 feet from the wells. There are some small grants that are available this summer that would be sufficient to cover the cost of gravel for the access. There may be some small expenses associated with having the access. The access could be gated.

Consensus of the board was to have Mr, Morris move forward with developing this plan.

Motion: To move forward with the plans for the boat ramp

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

Vote: Unanimous in favor

15. Appointments

16. Approve Warrants

Motion: To approve the warrants for 11/19/2018 as follow:

General Funds	Operating Expenses	\$23,983.51
	Payroll	\$15,030.29
Highway Fund	Operating Expenses	\$64,772.99
	Payroll	\$8,759.52
Solid Waste Management Fund		
	Operating Expenses	\$10,400.11
	Payroll	\$1,444.55
Library	Operating Expenses	\$5,058.30
	Payroll	\$0.00
Grants	Operating Expenses	\$3,914.36
Agency Monies	Operating Expenses	\$150.00
Reserves		\$1,110.00
Long Term Debt		\$0.00
Grand Totals	Operating Expenses	\$109,389.27
	Payroll	\$25,234.36

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Made by: Mr. Arrison **Second:** Mr. Leach

Library payroll was omitted by mistake. Ms. Kelly assured the board that the librarian was paid.

Vote: Unanimous in favor

17. Future Meeting Agenda Items

18. Adjourn

Motion: To adjourn the meeting

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

Vote: Unanimous in favor

The meeting adjourned at 9:23 PM

Respectfully submitted,

deForest Bearse

WEATHERSFIELD SELECTBOARD

N. John Arrison, Selector

Daniel E. Boyer, Selector

C. Peter Cole, Vice-Chairperson

Tom Leach, Clerk

Kelly Murphy, Chairperson