

TOWN OF WEATHERSFIELD, VERMONT

SELECT BOARD

Select Board
Martin Memorial Hall
5259 Route 5, Ascutney VT
Monday, January 7, 2019
6:00 PM
REGULAR MEETING

MINUTES

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:

Colby Hodgdon	Stephen Brown	Chuck Vivian	Ben Waters
Caroline Taylor	Levi Parker	Mychael Spaulding	Tim Austin
Sue Brown	Natoshya Dauphin	J. Compo	Mark Johnson
Darrin Spaulding	David Picknell	Nancy Heatley	Richard Watson
Cheryl Watson	Josh Dauphin	Tracy Dauphin	Rebecca Gogan
Ray Stapleton	Darlene Kelly	Sven Federow	Betsy Koue
Corey Mitchell	Martha Zoerhide	Cynthia Porter	

1. Call to Order

Ms. Murphy called the meeting to order at 6:06PM.

2. Fire Services Discussion (6:00 PM – 7:00 PM)

As had been requested by the Board at a previous meeting, AVFA submitted two proposals in response to the proposed change to a single municipal fire department. AVFA president, Mark Girard, presented the two options to the board.

Option A – (preferred by the AVFA membership) – a bid contract for \$95,000 to provide services. \$95,000 represents the cost of baseline expenses (dispatch, insurances, maintenance, fuel, etc.). They would still fund raise to cover shortfalls.

Option B – to accept the change to a single, municipal department, but with a number of specific conditions covering election of officers, retention of AFVA assets, stipulations on municipal use of AVFA assets and real estate, and more. AVFA opposes a full time chief on the grounds that full time is not necessary.

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Mr. Morris disagreed that a part-time chief could handle the workload that will be required for successfully transitioning the town to a municipal department. He said both departments would appoint the officer staff for the first year. Officers would be a mix from both departments. The hiring committee would be a mix of both departments, the board, the manager, and citizens at large. Final hiring rests with the manager.

Mr. Morris urged everyone to move away from the idea of “station” structure and toward “town” structure. He repeated that buy-in from all parties will be critical to the success of this venture – everyone must be heard, have a seat at the table, and work toward building trust all around.

Ms. Murphy opened the discussion to the public.

Mr. Dauphin asked if the \$95,000 included funding for purchasing motorized equipment. Mr. Girard replied that it covered the cost of payments on the ladder truck. Once the ladder is paid off, the funds would go toward buying a newer truck in about ten years.

Mr. Arrison suggested removing Option A from the discussion. The board agreed.

Motion: To reject Option A.

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

The board said that Option A would not solve the personnel issues that have plagued the departments for so long.

Vote: Unanimous in favor.

Discussion of/Questions on Option B:

Josh Compo asked why AFVA is opposed to a municipal department and how this proposal solves the two-department issue?

Mr. Girard said the membership was not in favor of turning over their assets or the increase in taxes that will accompany this change. He said they felt this proposal had been “steamrolled” and did not like the way it had been presented from the start. He said it is a sense of ownership and pride. They object to the manner in which this has developed. They want a voice in who is chief and who the officers will be.

Ms. Murphy asked if the members can agree that having a municipal department will allow them to just fight fires with less meetings. Mr. Girard said yes, but they feel there are other ways to make it go away (e.g. Option A). He repeated that they want to maintain ownership of their assets. He said he felt that there would have been more cooperation if the proposal had developed more slowly with more discussions.

Ms. Murphy asked how Option B addresses the issues that have been identified in these meetings? Mr. Girard said the town would have authority over the firefighters; it would have

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use of the station and assets; the firefighters would be providing services to the town under municipal management.

Mr. Dauphin asked if AVFA would still agree to the municipal department if the board agrees to a full time chief. Mr. Girard said he would have to bring that back to the membership. Mr. Hodgdon said the membership was split over this issue. They were mainly concerned about an increase in taxes – any increase.

Nancy Heatley, chair of the Planning Board, commented on how difficult it can be to find qualified, part time candidates.

Mr. Austin disagreed that this has been steamrolled – he said it's 40 years overdue.

Ben Waters thanked AVFA for bringing their proposal for discussion.

Mr. Arrison said he had become convinced that a full time chief will be needed to get this off the ground successfully. He said maybe in time it could be reduced to part time with paid on-call firefighters.

Ms. Murphy said we are being watched by other towns in the area as to how we are handling this. She said we have been transparent from the outset and everyone has been given a voice. The board wants everyone to feel they have had their chance to say and ask what they need to, while acknowledging that while they may not have gotten everything they wanted, they have been heard.

Darrin Spaulding said there is a shortage of firefighters everywhere and not just volunteer firefighters.

Ms. Murphy asked if the board was ready to make a decision.

Motion: To move forward with a full time chief

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

Vote: Unanimous in favor

Ms. Murphy asked the board to think about how it will go onto the warrant.

Motion: To include (the cost of a full time municipal fire chief) in the general budget – not as a separate article

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

Vote: 1 opposed, 4 in favor

Motion carries.

The next meeting on this discussion will be on Thursday, January 10, 2019 at 6PM – 8 PM.

The board took a 3-minute recess.

3. Comments from Select Board and Town Manager

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It was agreed to meet jointly with the school board at the next regular meeting of the select board to discuss budgets (January 21st).

4. Comments from Citizens on topics not on the agenda

There were no comments from citizens.

5. Review minutes from previous meetings – 12/10/2018

Additions/corrections/deletions:

a. None

Motion: To accept the minutes of the 12/10/18 meeting as written

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

Vote: 1 abstention; 4 in favor

Motion carries.

Review minutes from previous meetings – 12/17/2018

Additions/corrections/deletions:

a. None

Motion: To approve the minutes of the 12/17/18 meeting as presented

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

Vote: 2 abstentions; 3 in favor

Motion carries.

6. Continuation of Zoning Bylaw hearing from December 3rd, 2018

(Mr. Cole facilitated this discussion as Ms. Murphy had not attended the first part of this hearing.)

Mr. Cole said the board had requested non-substantial changes to the definition of *building height*; to sect. 3.2.4 *habitat areas* by removing the word *near*; and to Accessory Dwelling units by adding unfinished basements to the definition of habitable floor space.

Land Use Administrator Sven Federow said the Planning Commission had agreed to the requested changes.

Mr. Leach asked if there was a definition for *unfinished basement*. Mr. Federow said he would look to the listers' definition if needed.

There were no further questions from the board or the audience.

Motion: To accept the changes to the interim zoning bylaws as presented.

Made by: Mr. Arrison

Mr. Federow said these are not interim bylaws. Mr. Arrison agreed to remove the word *interim* from his motion.

Motion: To accept the changes to the zoning bylaws as presented.

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

Vote: 1 abstention, 4 in favor

Motion carries.

Mr. Cole closed the public hearing.

7. Social Services Appropriation

(Mr. Arrison recused himself from the discussion and stepped down from the table.)

Social service organizations seeking funding from the town and present to make their request included Hospice and Visiting Nurses; HCRS; Friends of the Meetinghouse; SEVCA; WISE; VT Association for the Blind; Green Mountain RSVP; Volunteers in Action; MT. Ascutney Prevention Partnership; Senior Solutions; and the Current.

The Red Cross representative could not be reached by phone.

VT Green-Up and Meals on Wheels gave their presentation via the phone.

The VT Rural Fire Protection Task Force did not present.

Any requests under \$500 can be voted on by the board and put in the budget. The board eliminated those organizations that did not show up or answer the phone.

The board will vote on the requests at the next meeting.

8. Authorize moving ERAF payment to Highway Maintenance Reserve

Mr. Morris said these funds are for emergency road repairs and administrative expenses that were incurred following a July 2017 storm. Mr. Morris recommended moving the funds to the highway maintenance reserve for future road repairs because they originated from road repair expenses.

Motion: To place the \$26,290.10 ERAF payment in the Highway Maintenance Reserve.

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

Vote: Unanimous in favor

9. Budget Discussion

a. Capital Discussion

9.a.i. Highway Budget – Center Road Paving Discussion

9.a.ii. Fund Balance use

9.a.iii. Capital Expenditure

b. Budget Overview

The total tax rate increase at this moment is 1.84 pennies (using last year's school budget). Ms. Murphy said she wanted to get that down to 1 penny, which will require trimming \$30,000 from the budget. Mr. Arrison and Mr. Cole suggested leaving it up to Mr. Morris and Ms. Kelly to find that \$30,000.

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At 9:01PM, Ms. Murphy asked for an extension of 15 minutes.

Motion: To Extend the meeting to 9:15 PM.

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

Vote: Unanimous in favor

It was agreed to continue the budget discussion at the January 10th meeting following the fire discussion.

10. Review warning for Town Meeting

11. Appointments

12. Approve Warrants

Motion: To approve the warrants for January 7, 2019 as follow:

General Funds	Operating Expenses	\$29,050.66
	Payroll	\$22,829.86
Highway Fund	Operating Expenses	\$59,249.70
	Payroll	\$16,889.42
Solid Waste Management Fund		
	Operating Expenses	\$9,040.66
	Payroll	\$2,185.19
Library	Operating Expenses	\$1,628.62
	Payroll	\$2,766.06
Grants	Operating Expenses	\$848.50
Agency Monies	Operating Expenses	\$1,209.70
Reserves		\$0.00
Long Term Debt		\$0.00
Grand Totals	Operating Expenses	\$101,027.84
	Payroll	\$44,670.53

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

Vote: Unanimous in favor

The meeting adjourned at 9:09 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