

Select Board
Martin Memorial Hall
5259 Route 5, Ascutney VT
Monday, November 20, 2023
6:30 PM
REGULAR MEETING
Draft Minutes

Select Board Members Present: Michael Todd, David Fuller, Kelly O'Brien, August Murray

Select Board Members Absent: Wendy Smith

Brandon Gulnick, Town Manager

Others Present:

Olivia Savage	Jarrett Sanderson (remote)	
Ray Stapleton		
Ann Marie Christensen (remote)		
John Arrison (remote)		
Josh Dauphin (remote)		

1 Call to Order

Mr. Todd called the meeting to order at 6:44pm.

2 Executive Session 1 V.S.A. § 313 - 6pm-6:30pm

The Select Board entered Executive Session at 6:16pm. The Select Board exited Executive Session at 6:42pm. No action was taken.

3 Pledge of Allegiance

Ms. O'Brien led the pledge of allegiance.

4 Agenda Review

No changes.

5 Comments from SB, TM, and Citizens on Topics not on the Agenda

Mr. Todd stated that it would be better for this Select Board to have Executive Sessions at the end of meetings.

The Highway Superintendent reminded everyone about the upcoming storm.

6 Review Minutes from Previous Meeting(s): 10/2/23 & 11/6/23

Additions/corrections/deletions:

a. None.

Motion: To approve the 10/2/23 minutes.

Made by: Mr. Fuller **Second:** Ms. O'Brien

Vote: All in favor

Motion: To approve the 11/6/23 minutes.

Made by: Mr. Fuller **Second:** Dr. Murray

Vote: All in favor

7 Accept Joseph Bublat's ZBA resignation

Motion: To accept Joseph Bublat's ZBA resignation, with regret.

Made by: Mr. Fuller **Second:** Ms. O'Brien

Vote: All in favor

This will leave the ZBA with one member and two alternates.

8 Vermont Child Care Financial Assistance Program Payroll Tax

The Vermont House and Senate overrode Vermont Governor Phil Scott's veto of [H. 217](#) which, effective July 1, 2024, imposes a new childcare tax of 0.44% on wages and 0.11% on self-employment income. The tax will be administered by the Vermont Department of Taxes (Department).

Employers are required to pay a 0.44% payroll tax on all employee wages earned in Vermont, an employer may choose to deduct and withhold a maximum of 25 percent of the required contribution (i.e., 0.11%) from employee wages, employers will be required to remit CCC payroll tax payments to the Department in the same manner and frequency as they remit Vermont Income Tax Withholding, with quarterly reporting on the WHT-436 Quarterly Withholding Reconciliation.

The Town Manager presented that Weathersfield will have an estimated \$1,077,530 in wages in FY24. If Weathersfield opts for a .33% / .11% split in this payroll tax, the total estimated cost to the Town will be \$3,555.85. If Weathersfield opts to pay the .44% payroll tax, it will cost \$4,741.13.

The Select Board discussed the implications of this bill and agreed that it would be good to have the Weathersfield State Representative give a briefing for better understanding of the rationale for the overriding of the veto.

Motion: To adopt the Town Manager's recommendation of a .33% / .11% split in this payroll tax.

Made by: Mr. Fuller **Second:** Ms. O'Brien

Vote: All in favor

9 FY25 General Fund Budget

The Town Manager presented the [FY25 Budget Memo](#) (pgs. 29- 34). Some of the highlights were as followed:

The FY25 Proposed Budget has been assembled for all departments/funds in Weathersfield. In FY24, there was a 10% increase in the General Fund. In FY25, the increase in the General Fund has been reduced by 50%, down to a 5% increase overall. Similarly, the change in tax need was reduced from 16% to 5%. The proposed Highway Department budget is increasing by 2% overall and 5% on tax need.

The Solid Waste Fund has the largest increase this year, including a 3% increase in fixed revenue need and a 17% increase in variable revenue need. The permit sticker will remain \$50; however, the punch ticket will need to be adjusted to a minimum of \$4.50. As shown in the Solid Waste budget, the Town is seeing the biggest increase in recycling costs. The Town Manager and the Selectboard Rep. to Solid Waste are working on the issue.

The Town Manager researched the depreciation schedule for property on the grand list. He spoke with the Vermont Department of Taxes, who informed him that the reported inventory decreased slightly in 2022, however, what is decreasing the value on the Grand List is the application (by law) of the town's CLA to the reported inventory at 100%. Weathersfield's Assessor stated that there's no way to tell what the State's valuation will be for the utilities.

Based on the proposed FY25 budget for all departments, the FY25 Tax Rate has been assembled to demonstrate what the FY25 Tax Rate will look like in the case the grand list remains status quo and all budgets are approved as presented. As shown on the Total Municipal Tax Rate calculation below, the tax rate would increase by 0.0232, and taxes on a \$100,000 house would increase by \$22.80 annually (or \$5.70 quarterly). This is a 3.3% increase between FY24 & FY25.

Total Municipal Tax Rate				
	FY25	FY25	FY24	FY23 - FY24
Total Taxes to be Raised	Cost	Tax Rate	Tax Rate	Change in Tax Rate
General Fund	1,373,950	0.4142	0.3942	0.0200
County Tax	24,726	0.0075	0.0079	-0.0004
GF Special Articles	-	0.0000	0.0003	-0.0003
Highway Fund	999,220	0.3012	0.2852	0.0160
Local Education	27,497	0.0083	0.0083	0.0000
Highway Separate Article	-	0.0000	0	0.0000
Fire Department Separate Article		0.0000	0.0121	-0.0121
Municipal Taxes to be Raised	2,425,393	0.7312	0.7080	0.0232

Tax Rates FY14 - FY25			Municipal Taxes on \$100,000 house	
Fiscal Year	Tax Rate	% Change	Taxes	Increase/ Decrease
FY25	0.7312	3.3%	731	22.8
FY24	0.7080	12.9%	708	81
FY23	0.6269	3.7%	627	22
FY22	0.6046	-5.6%	605	-36
FY21	0.6406	2.4%	641	15
FY20	0.6253	-1.9%	625	-12
FY19	0.6375	-2.6%	638	-17
FY18	0.6544	4.2%	654	26
FY17	0.6282	5.3%	628	32
FY16	0.5963	-0.1%	596	-1
FY15	0.5970	5.2%	597	30

The Town Manager presented the [Proposed FY24 Budget](#) (pgs. 39-60) and reviewed each department and their line items. There were a few items in the budget that were highlighted to indicate only an estimate because the Town is still waiting on those exact numbers. There would not be a vote on the budget due to this missing information.

Town of Weathersfield

FY25 Topside Summary

FY2025 BUDGET

General Fund Revenues	FY24 Budget	FY25 Proposed	FY24 - FY25 \$ CHANGE	FY24 - FY25 % CHANGE
GF Tax Revenue	1,307,678	1,373,950	66,272	5%
Administration	220,863	239,796	18,933	8%
Finance	11,000	11,000	-	
Library	-	-	-	0%
Town Clerk	46,265	45,845	(421)	-1%
Listers	15,000	15,000	-	0%
Land Use	6,122	10,500	4,378	42%
Police Department	76,000	76,000	-	0%
Fire Services	40,000	40,000	-	
Special articles(Fire Service)				
<i>Total - Revenues</i>	<i>1,722,928</i>	<i>1,812,090</i>	<i>89,162</i>	<i>5%</i>
General Fund Expenses				
Administration	468,475	475,981	7,506	2%
Library	140,457	148,450	7,993	5%
Finance	115,387	139,491	24,104	17%
Town Clerk	141,402	147,025	5,623	4%
Listers	64,673	54,232	(10,441)	-19%
Land Use	51,066	68,766	17,700	26%
Police Department	442,787	451,621	8,833	2%
General Fire Services	147,989	149,803	1,814	1%
WW Fire Department	76,806	83,538	6,732	8%
AV Fire Department	73,886	93,184	19,298	21%
Special articles			-	
<i>Subtotal - Expenses</i>	<i>1,722,928</i>	<i>1,812,090</i>	<i>89,162</i>	<i>5%</i>
<i>Net</i>	<i>(0)</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	

The Select Board inquired about the fund balances and the accrual system, the long term debt schedule, and the status of reserve accounts. There was inquiry about how there was \$7,200 for the roof at West Weathersfield Fire Department when the roof should have already been paid for. This was due to the cost of some additional repairs that were needed.

Motion: To pay for the added repairs needed on the West Weathersfield Fire Department, totaling \$7,200 to come from ARPA funds.

Made by: Ms. O’Brien **Second:** Dr. Murray

Vote: 3 yays, 1 abstention

The Select Board took some time to discuss some of the veto overrides and budgetary impacts. Representative Arrison stated that there is nothing left that should impact the FY2024-2025 budget. The Select Board compared the numbers between the two Fire Departments, indicating a few items for the Town Manager to collect more information on. The Town Manager will put together something that shows an annual reoccurring cost verses a capital purchase, as well as a proposal of options that might increase the finance budget.

10 FY25 Highway Fund Budget

The Highway Department budget has been updated to include the COLA & Healthcare decision. The budget also includes the new Childcare Contribution payroll tax at .33% pending the board’s decision on shares of this tax. Overall, the budget is increasing by \$27,605 or 2%. We used \$46,689 in fund balance last year to limit tax increases, and we propose the use of \$20,000 this year. 6) We also budgeted a new line in the budget “Highway Insurance Benefits (2025) contingency.” Since health insurance costs operate on a calendar year, and we budget based on a fiscal year, we estimated a 10% increase in health insurance costs for 6 months of FY25 (January 1, 2025-June 30, 2025).

Highway Fund				
<i>Total Revenue</i>	<i>1,172,494</i>	<i>1,200,099</i>	<i>27,605</i>	<i>2%</i>
<i>Operating Expenses</i>	<i>1,172,494</i>	<i>1,200,099</i>	<i>27,605</i>	<i>2%</i>
<i>Net Highway</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	

11 FY25 Solid Waste Budget

The Town held a meeting with the chairs of West Windsor and Reading to review the Transfer Station budget, allocations, and variable revenue and expenses for FY25. There was no objection to the budget, but Weathersfield does need to address recycling expenses, and will continue to research and discuss potential solutions.

The Town Manager presented the facts below:

- Over the past 12 months, October 2022 to September 2023, the Town had 93 pulls of C&D and have disposed of 368 tons of C&D material.
- The Town had 54 pulls and disposed of 253 tons of recycling materials.
- The Town had 57 pulls and disposed of 575 tons of municipal solid waste materials.
- And the Town had 12 pulls and disposed of 61 tons of glass.

Over the past 12 months, The Town spent \$65,578 on C&D material, \$67,251 on Single Stream Recycling, \$82,530 on Municipal Solid Waste, and \$3,376 on glass. Based on these estimates and analysis from previous years, and discussion with the hauler, in FY25 the Town is estimating \$69,942 in recycling costs, \$67,948 in C&D costs, \$85,327 in MSW costs, \$3,436 in glass costs, and \$2,760 in compost costs, for a grand total of \$230,852 in variable expenses.

In FY22, The Town punched an estimated 49,787 times. If we have a similar number of punches in FY24, the Town will raise \$211,594 in punch ticket revenue. If the Town receives \$8,500 in other variable revenues, it will have a grand total of \$220,094 in variable revenue, or a \$10,757 shortfall. The punch ticket will need to be adjusted by \$0.25. On the fixed side of the budget, expenses are increasing by 3%, which includes the Childcare Contribution Tax, COLA adjustments, and healthcare increases. The Town has prepared each municipalities allocations, which will not affect the permit sticker cost in Weathersfield for FY25.

Solid Waste Fund				
<i>Total Revenues</i>	<i>334,769</i>	<i>377,749</i>	<i>42,980</i>	<i>11%</i>
<i>Total Expenses</i>	<i>334,769</i>	<i>377,749</i>	<i>42,980</i>	<i>11%</i>
<i>Net Solid Waste</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	

The Select Board discussed doing a site visit to look at how the transfer station operates and to see the volume of use. The cost of recycling needs to be addressed. The Select Board discussed how every time they increase fees, prices go up again. The cumulative deficit was discussed and how that clearing it up will solve a lot of the issues and figuring out who is responsible for the balance of that. It was also discussed how adding the deficit to the next year's budget may help, having a special article and/or using a reserve account.

The Select Board discussed how recycling should be encouraged, and how higher rates may lead to more trash on the road sides. Discussion followed about visiting other stations to evaluate if there's anything different Weathersfield could be doing and how a cost-benefit analysis on weighing trash might be beneficial. The Town Manager will have a discussion with partner Towns about different options.

12 Police Crusier Invitation for Bids

The Select Board expressed concern about having to buy two police cars at the same time in the future, how challenging it would be to keep the mileage evenly distributed and the future implications of this. The Town Manger would like the opportunity to create a capital plan. The Select Board concluded that there was no harm sending it out for bid.

Motion: To approve the Invitation for Bids on the Police Cruiser.

Made by: Mr. Fuller

Second: Mr. Todd

Vote: All in favor

13 Village Wastewater Committee (Second Reading Continued)

The Select Board discussed how the agreement with Otter Creek does not require a committee and how the Town may not need one. The Select Board concluded that the conservation commission should be involved and that a public input meeting could even be put together need be. The Select Board would like to hear the Otter Creek presentation before taking further action.

Motion: To continue the second reading of the Village Wastewater Committee to the January 16, 2024 meeting.

Made by: Ms. O'Brien

Second: Mr. Fuller

Vote: All in favor

14 Town Manager Update

a. Select Board Annual Report

The Select Board Annual Report is due by the end of December so that it can get sent off to the printers. The Chair and the Town Manager will get together and assemble a draft report to give to the Select Board for review.

b. Thanksgiving

The Town Office will be closed on Thursday, November 23, 2023 for the holiday.

15 Appointments

- a. Budget Committee (5 Vacancies)
- b. Conservation Commission (1 Vacancy)
- c. Energy Coordinators (1 Vacancy)
- d. Green Up Coordinator (1 Vacancy)

- e. Lister (2 Vacancies)
- f. Parks and Recreation (1 Vacancy)
- g. Veterans Memorial Committee (2 Vacancies)
- h. Village Wastewater Committee
 - i. Ann Marie Christensen
 - ii. John Arrison
 - iii. Mark Richardson
- i. Zoning Board of Adjustment (2 Vacancies)

16 Approve Warrant

To approve the warrants for 10/2/2023 as followed:

General Funds	Library
Operating Expenses: \$18,042.33	Payroll: \$2,408.35
Payroll: \$17,316.74	Operating Expenses: \$28.50
Highway Fund	Parks and Rec Reserves: \$128.35
Operating Expenses: \$66,684.05	Special Reserves: \$50,992.48
Payroll: \$9,003.25	ARPA-MMH Generator:\$404.01
Solid Waste Management Fund	Grand Totals:
Operating Expenses: \$28,155.17	Operating Expenses:\$164,434.89
Payroll: \$1,980.71	Payroll:\$30,709.05

Made by: Mr. Fuller

Second: Ms. O'Brien

17 Any Other Business

The Select Board recognized that there were two Select Board meetings that would be impacted by holidays and that there were a need to reschedule them.

Motion: To change Select Board meeting dates to Tuesday, January 2, 2024 and to Tuesday, January 16, 2024.

Made by: Dr. Murray

Second: Mr. Fuller

Vote: All in favor

18 Adjourn

Motion: To adjourn the meeting.

Made by: Mr. Fuller

Second: Ms. O'Brien

Vote: All in favor

The meeting adjourned at 8:54 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Nichole Gagnon

WEATHERSFIELD SELECT BOARD

Michael Todd, Chairperson

Wendy Smith, Selector

August Murray, Selector

Kelly O'Brien, Clerk

David Fuller, Vice-Chairperson

