

Select Board
Martin Memorial Hall
5259 Route 5, Ascutney VT
Tuesday, January 16, 2024
6:30 PM
REGULAR MEETING

Select Board Members Present: Michael Todd, Kelly O'Brien (remote), August Murray, Wendy Smith, David Fuller

Select Board Members Absent:

Brandon Gulnick, Town Manager

Others Present:

Olivia Savage	deForest Bearse (remote)	
Rika Henderson (remote)	Josh Compo (remote)	
Malia Cordero (remote)	Ray Stapleton	
Annmarie Christensen (remote)		

1 Call to Order

Mr. Todd called the meeting to order at 6:30pm.

2 Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Todd led the pledge of allegiance.

3 Agenda Review

No changes.

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

None.

5 Review Minutes from the Previous Meeting: 1/2/24 & 1/8/24

Additions/corrections/deletions: None

Motion: To approve the 1/2/24 minutes.

Made by: Mr. Fuller

Second: Dr. Murray

Vote: All in favor

Motion: To approve the 1/8/24 minutes.

Made by: Dr. Murray

Second: Ms. Smith

Vote: 4 yay, 1 abstention-Mr. Fuller

6 FY2024 Flood Resilient Communities Fund

Malia Cordero from Mt. Ascutney Regional Planning Commission gave a presentation about the [Flood Resilient Communities Fund](#). Discussion followed about 130 Maple Street, the flood risk, the interests of the owners, details about the grant, and the Town obligations. If anyone has any further questions, please reach out to mcordero@marcvt.org.

Motion: To allow to Mt. Ascutney Regional Planning to move forward with the grant process and to allow the Town Manager or Chair to sign as needed.

Made by: Mr. Fuller

Second: Dr. Murray

Vote: All in Favor

The Select Board reiterated that they would like to make sure that everyone is included in this process, particularly the landowners so they are not displaced if they are residing there.

7 Village Wastewater Committee Policy – Second Reading Continued

On November 20, 2023, the Select Board voted to continue the second reading of the Village Wastewater Committee to the January 16, 2024 meeting.

The next steps are as followed:

- Otter Creek Engineering will submit the 30% reports to the State, and a request to move the project from Otter Creek Engineering to MSK Engineers. The engineer the Town was using recently resigned from Otter Creek and is now working with MSK. Otter Creek has agreed to finish up the 30% report, and then to move the project over to MSK. A request will be submitted to the State to do this. Otter Creek would provide alternatives and one of the alternatives would be a small scale solution for the residents directly affected.
- WID will review and comment on the Reports, and the Town will need to have a 30% review meeting with Emily (WID) and the Board to review and discuss these comments and next steps.
- The engineer will be making initial outreach to Springfield related to Perkinsville to determine whether they have capacity and are willing to allow the Town to connect. The same thing will happen with the Town of Windsor, and the landowners identified with large amounts of suitable soil.

The Select Board reviewed the draft Village Wastewater Committee Policy and Procedures. The Select Board discussed taking the appointment names off the

agenda while the 60% process is underway and that those individuals will still be considered for the appointment.

Motion: To table the second reading and the appointment of Village Wastewater Committee until the engineering firm presents the 60% phase.

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

Vote: All in Favor

8 Q2 Finance Report

General Fund revenues are currently at 54% and expenses are at 52%. The Town will experience another shortfall in General Fund revenue this year, as current use payments came to \$2,875 less than what was anticipated, and interest penalty are coming in at less than budgeted. A snapshot of Q1 & Q2 Revenues and Expenses are below.

FY24 Budget/Actual Summary Q2 - Table 1					
General Fund	FY24	Q1	Q2	FY24	FY24
Revenues	Budget	Actual	Actual	Total Revenue	% Budget
Tax Revenue	1,267,678	316,920	316,920	633,839	50%
Admin	219,863	98,981	42,216	141,197	64%
Finance	11,000	-	11,000	11,000	100%
Town Clerk	46,265	10,211	10,925	21,136	46%
Listers	15,000	-	-	-	0%
Land Use	6,122	2,493	3,303	5,795	95%
Police	16,000	1,074	10,228	11,302	71%
Gen. Fire	40,000	40,000	-	40,000	100%
AVFD	-	-	-	-	
WWVD	-	-	-	-	
Library	-	-	-	-	
Total Revenues	1,621,928	469,678	394,591	864,269	53%

General Fund	FY24	Q1	Q2	FY24	FY24
Expense	Budget	Actual	Actual	Total Expense	% Budget
Admin	489,133	171,121	109,905	281,025	57%
Finance	115,387	30,232	25,150	55,382	48%
Town Clerk	142,052	42,614	28,142	70,756	50%
Listers	64,673	23,440	9,166	32,606	50%
Land Use	51,066	8,461	13,073	21,534	42%
Police	382,786	98,390	74,365	172,754	45%
Gen. Fire	88,442	44,841	9,733	54,574	62%
AVFD	91,361	31,300	12,746	44,046	48%
WWVD	56,571	20,175	21,130	41,305	73%
Library	140,457	37,389	33,242	70,632	50%
Total Expenditures	1,621,928	507,964	336,651	844,615	52%
Net Revenue/Expense	-	(38,286)	57,940	19,654	

Highway Fund Revenues are currently at 60%, and expenses are at 52%. Expenses are 2% over because the Town made all of the annual principal/interest payments. Revenues are 10% higher than anticipated at

this time of the year because the State of Vermont sent the Town all four (4) of the state aid to highway payments between July-October. Usually these are distributed on a quarterly basis.

Highway Fund - Table 2	FY24	Q1	Q2	FY24	FY24
	Budget	Actual	Actual	Total YTD	% Budget
<i>Total Revenue</i>	1,172,494	397,792	308,812	706,605	60%
<i>Total Expense</i>	1,172,494	326,848	280,966	607,814	52%
<i>Net Revenue/ Expense</i>	-	70,944	27,846	98,790	

Solid Waste Fund fixed revenues are at 99%, and fixed expenses are at 76%. Fixed expenses are higher than anticipated as the Town made our annual payment for the compactor, and wages have increased for the Attendant. Workers' Compensation is at 70% already, which is much higher than anticipated. The Town is currently looking into this to determine why the percentage increased. Variable revenues are currently at 53%, and variable expenses are at 75%. Punch card revenue is coming in at less than anticipated. Variable expenses are \$30,465 over what the Town has received in Variable revenue. The Town Manager has requested the Highway Superintendent and Accountant look into this further to ensure there are no booking errors. If there are no booking errors, the Town has another Transfer Station issue to address.

Solid Waste Fund - Table 3	FY24	Q1	Q2	FY24	FY24
	Budget	Actual	Actual	Total Revenue	% Budget
<i>Fixed Revenues</i>	142,671	141,500	-	141,500	99%
<i>Variable Revenues</i>	192,098	53,652	48,820	102,472	53%
<i>Total Revenue</i>	334,769	195,152	48,820	243,972	73%
<i>Fixed Expenditures</i>	142,671	33,584	66,829	100,413	70%
<i>Variable Expenditures</i>	192,098	47,097	85,840	132,937	69%
<i>Total Expense</i>	334,769	80,681	152,669	233,350	70%
<i>Fixed Revenue/Expense</i>	-	107,916	(66,829)	41,087	
<i>Variable Revenue/Expense</i>	-	6,555	(37,020)	(30,465)	
<i>Total Net Revenue/Expense</i>	-	114,471	(103,849)	10,622	

The Select Board discussed how punch card revenue is coming in lower than anticipated and how there may be a need to increase ticket prices again. Since the Town will be looking to see if there were any booking errors, if there is not, the issue would be on the agenda at the next Select Board meeting. The Select Board discussed briefly some issues like punches not being done accurately, that more people may be recycling, etc. It was concluded that more information and analysis would be needed in order to make a decision.

The Town is undervalued because of rising property values and utilities will probably reduce on the grand list by 9-10%. The Select Board discussed filing a request for an appeal with the goal of getting to freeze the appraisal at the 81% level because the Town had already hired a contractor to do an appraisal.

The Select Board discussed at length whether or not filing an appeal would be worthwhile, the benefit it would have for citizens, what information would be needed, if it would be a waste of time, and if it would make the problem getting worse. The Town needs a clear response from the State about equipment verses a non-movable assets. The Town is going to be raising taxes, without any special articles, by a few more cents as a result. The Chair and Vice-Chair will get together and create an outline of the item they want to look into.

Education Grand List (from 411):	\$331,137,477
Equalized Education Grand List (EEGL):	\$458,737,010
Common Level of Appraisal (CLA):	72.18% or 0.7218
Coefficient of Dispersion (COD):	23.34%

Mr. Fuller gave an update about his meeting with the school. The homestead tax rate last year was \$1.66. This year, it will be \$1.96. Even if they lowered the budget, the State has set the education tax rate so it wouldn't matter. Mr. Fuller had suggested to the school doing what the Town had done with a previous account that had been set aside for tax losses, and when that account was resolved, gave back two cents to the tax payers. The school has not yet done the non-homestead rate. The Select Board discussed the formula the state uses and how the Grand List is not growing. The topic will be added to the next meeting's agenda.

10 Police Cruiser Capital Plan

The Select Board discussed whether or not it is worth purchasing the new car and took a quick poll of the Select Board opinion: Dr. Murray and Ms. Smith both felt ok about the decision; Mr. Fuller and Ms. O'Brien wanted to review the whole package again. Mr. Todd stated that he would at least like to have a discussion about it and therefore, the Select Board would revisit the topic.

The Select Board reviewed the capital replacement plan for police cruisers. The Select Board discussed how Weathersfield has never had three police cars and has never spent this much money on them. More topics discussed was the loss of the SIU grant and how there used to be more state police involvement and how there is not an officer for the third car at the moment.

The Select Board discussed how other towns are offering sign on bonuses for police officers and how that makes it challenging to be competitive in hiring

market. The Select Board discussed how crime only seems to be increasing, how the estimate was only good for a certain amount of days, and that the Select Board always has the ability to rearrange the budget, but that the price and the ARPA fund will not be forever. The Select Board discussed interest rates and the benefits of putting funds in a reserve account.

Mr. Todd stated that the Select Board had entered into a plan and asked the rest of the board if they had any desire to change that plan. The Select Board did a roll call and all members of the Select Board voted in favor of the actions that the Select Board had previously made.

Police Cruiser Capital Plan					
YEAR	Description	Addition	Withdrawl	Balance	Notes
	Balance, 09/30/2023			\$21,464.71	
FY23	Annual Contribution	\$10,000.00		\$31,464.71	
FY24	Annual Contribution	\$40,500.00	\$57,500.00	\$14,464.71	Replace Cruiser 1
FY25	Annual Contribution	\$20,000.00		\$34,464.71	
FY26	Annual Contribution	\$20,000.00		\$54,464.71	
FY27	Annual Contribution	\$20,000.00		\$74,464.71	
FY28	Annual Contribution	\$20,000.00		\$94,464.71	
FY29	Annual Contribution	\$20,000.00		\$114,464.71	
FY30	Purchase Cruiser	\$25,000.00	\$65,000.00	\$74,464.71	Replace Cruiser 2
FY31	Annual Contribution	\$25,000.00		\$99,464.71	
FY32	Purchase Cruiser	\$25,000.00	\$66,500.00	\$57,964.71	Replace Cruiser 3
FY33	Annual Contribution	\$25,000.00	\$66,500.00	\$16,464.71	Replace Cruiser 1
FY34	Annual Contribution	\$25,000.00		\$41,464.71	
FY35	Annual Contribution	\$25,000.00		\$66,464.71	
FY36	Annual Contribution	\$25,000.00		\$91,464.71	
FY37	Purchase Cruiser	\$30,000.00	\$70,000.00	\$51,464.71	Replace Cruiser 2
FY38	Annual Contribution	\$30,000.00		\$81,464.71	
FY39	Annual Contribution	\$30,000.00	\$70,000.00	\$41,464.71	Replace Cruiser 3
FY40	Purchase Cruiser	\$30,000.00	\$70,000.00	\$1,464.71	Replace Cruiser 1
FY41	Annual Contribution	\$30,000.00		\$31,464.71	
FY42	Annual Contribution	\$30,000.00		\$61,464.71	
FY43	Annual Contribution	\$30,000.00		\$91,464.71	

INVENTORY LABEL	CURRENT VEHICLE (Year, Make, Model)	CURRENT MILEAGE	YEARS IN OPERATION	AVERAGE ANNUAL MILEAGE	USEFUL LIFE - NEW	REMAINING LIFE
Cruiser1	2016 Ford Explorer	122,000	8	15,250	120,000	-2,000
Cruiser2	2021 Dodge Charger	35,300	3	11,767	120,000	84,700
Cruiser3	2023 Ford Explorer	7,018	1	7,018	120,000	112,982

11 Town Manager Update

a. Delinquent Taxes

The Town Manager presented the [Delinquent Tax Report](#) (pages 25, 29-31). The Select Board mentioned that citizens showed up to the tax sale, but that no one from the office was there. The office was closed due to

Martin Luther King Day and there was some miscommunication with the attorney.

b. Appointed Officials

The Principle Clerk has assembled a list of the current appointed officials. This list can be found on pages 25-27 in the [Select Board Packet](#).

c. Tax Rate & Budget History

The tax rate and [5 Year Budget Report](#) (pages 32-46) will be what goes into the Annual Report. It shows what the rate will be if all the Articles pass based on the Grand List and a 5 year budget history. The Town audit has been delayed so it could not be included so the Town Manager just used the FY23 budget for now. The Select Board took some time to review items and discussed the implication on the tax rate.

12 Appointments

- a. Budget Committee (5 Vacancies)
- b. Conservation Commission (1 Vacancy)
- c. Energy Coordinator (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 (Pending)
- i. Zoning Board of Adjustment (2 Vacancies)

There were no appointments, but this is a list of vacancies.

13 Approve Warrant

To approve the warrants for 1/16//2024 as followed:

General Funds

Operating Expenses: \$28,487.81

Payroll: \$31,025.33

Library

Payroll: \$4,813.46

Operating Expenses: \$0

Highway Fund

Operating Expenses: \$17,059.34

Payroll: \$29,074.03

Grand Totals:

Operating Expenses: \$59,878.69

Payroll: \$69,439.54

Solid Waste Management Fund

Operating Expenses: \$14,331.54

Payroll: \$4,526.72

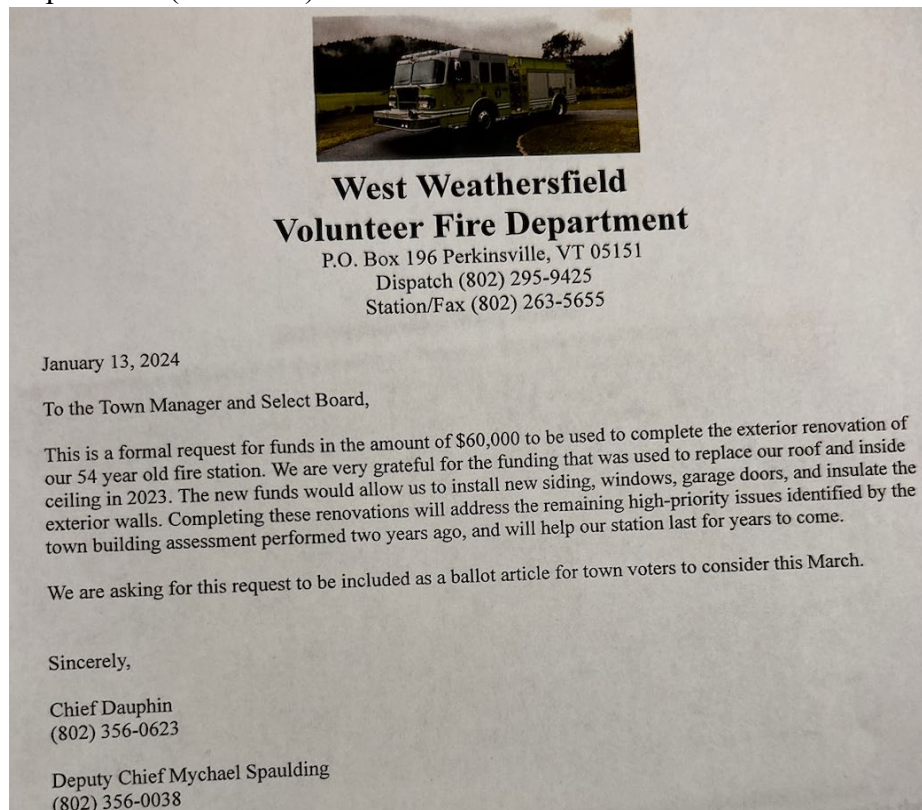
Made by: Dr. Murray

Second: Mr. Fuller

Vote: All in Favor

14 Any Other Business

The Select Board had received a request from the West Weathersfield Fire Department (see below):



The Select Board discussed how this is a request for a ballot Article, but that seems limited in that building assessments were part of the ARPA plan and that perhaps this should be an ARPA expense. The Select Board agreed that this is capital maintenance repair and therefore would need to be funded eventually. The Select Board committed to using ARPA funds for this and it will require the bid process prior to allocating the funds.

The Select Board took a general consensus to using ARPA funds for the repairs to the West Weathersfield Fire Department as requested in the letter date January 13th, 2024 and received by the Select Board on January 16th, 2024. Roll call: Dr. Murray-yay, Ms. Smith-yay, Mr. Fuller-yay, Mr. Todd-yay, Ms. O'Brien-yay. The Fire Department will put together a scope of work so that The Town Manager can put out an invitation for bids.

The Select Board had a discussion about the wording on special Article 11 and how it is asking for an immediate tax increase of three cents. Mr. Fuller suggested changing the language to say something such as: shall the voters of Weathersfield authorize the Select Board to borrow up to \$150,000.00 to complete the purchasing package of replacing the backhoe. The Select Board agreed that given the tax increases,

particularly with the school, there needs to be some flexibility to make adjustments if needed.

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	1,347,409	0.4062	0.3942	0.0120
County Tax	24,726	0.0075	0.0079	-0.0004
GF Special Articles	21,033	0.0063	0.0003	0.0060
Highway Fund	987,690	0.2977	0.2852	0.0125
Local Education	27,497	0.0083	0.0083	0.0000
Highway Separate Article	100,000	0.0301	0	0.0301
Fire Department Separate Article		0.0000	0.0121	-0.0121
Mun. Taxes to be Raised	2,508,355	0.7561	0.7080	0.0481

Motion: To amend Article 11 to read: to authorize the Select Board to borrow up to \$150,000.00 for a term of up to 7 years for the replacement of the 2009 backhoe (not in budget).

Made by: Mr. Fuller **Second:** Ms. Smith

Vote: All in Favor

The year on the backhoe needs to be verified for the motion. As a result of this change, the cost came to \$2,408,355, a three penny drop in the tax rate.

The Highway Superintendent spoke briefly on how the temporary bridge is almost done. Time was given to discuss the town garage and the Select Board mentioned how a separate bay might be needed for equipment.

15 Future Agenda Items

- Grand List
- Transfer Station Revenue
- Hiring a Police Officer

16 Adjourn

Motion: To adjourn the meeting.

Made by: Mr. Fuller **Second:** Ms. Smith

Vote: All in favor

The meeting adjourned at 8:36pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Nichole Gagnon

WEATHERSFIELD SELECT BOARD

Michael Todd, Chairperson

August Murray, Selector

David Fuller, Vice-Chairperson

Wendy Smith, Selector

Kelly O'Brien, Clerk