

TOWN OF WEATHERSFIELD, VERMONT

SELECT BOARD

Select Board
Martin Memorial Hall
5259 Route 5, Ascutney VT
Monday, December 20, 2021
6:30 PM
REGULAR MEETING

MINUTES

Select Board Members Present: David Fuller
Joseph Jarvis (remotely)
Kelly O'Brien
Paul Tillman
Michael Todd

Select Board Members Absent:

Brandon Gulnick, Town Manager

Others Present:

Darrin Spaulding			
Ray Stapleton			
Ben Waters			

1. Call to Order

Mr. Fuller called the meeting to order at 6:33 PM.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Comments from Select Board and Town Manager and Citizens on Topics not on the Agenda

Mr. Tillman said he had received some phone calls asking about the discussion on internet services in town and asking where the discussion stood. Mr. Gulnick said the board will resume the discussion on ARPA funds at the first meeting in February (2022). He thought the board could talk about it in more detail then.

There were no other comments from anyone.

4. Review minutes from previous meetings – 12/6/2021

Additions/corrections/deletions:

- a. Barb Thompson should be changed to Barb Thomas

Motion: To approve (with correction)

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Made by: Mr. Todd **Second:** Ms. O'Brien
Vote: All in favor

5. Town Manager Update

The auditors will attend the first meeting in January. They have done reconciliations from July 2020 (cash and expenses).

The Town website has been updated. Pages have been added for the Board of Civil Authority and the Board of Abatement (where agendas and minutes will be posted). The site will continue to evolve.

Martin Memorial Hall Repairs – The RFP was advertised. A bid conference was held. Two companies showed up. A third came in today to take a look. Bids are due January 6th. Bids will be opened January 7th, and awarded on January 10th.

Holiday Town Office Hours: Offices will be closed Thursday, December 23rd at 12:30 PM and reopening the following Monday. The same thing will be repeated on December 30th.

6. FY23 General Fund Budget

Mr. Gulnick used a power point presentation to present the budgets to the board and the viewing public.

General Fund Overview

Revenues

- Revenue is increasing by 0.36%
- General Fund tax revenue – proposing to increase by \$33,000 (due to a shortage of revenue in the administration budget)
- In FY22, administration budget was \$264,577; this becomes \$216,654 in FY23 for a \$47,000 shortage in revenue
- Finance sees an increase in revenue of \$23,000 - this is new revenue from sharing accountant services with the town of Windsor (70% in Weathersfield, 30% in Windsor) – this offsets the expense of the accountant.
- Library revenue decreases by \$50
- Town Clerk revenue increases by \$8,400
- Listers decreases by \$4,000
- No change in Land Use or Police Department revenues
- Fire services revenue decreases by \$16,000, due to the Town taking over all of the fund raising and offsetting it with tax revenue
- Proposing to increase use of fund balance by \$9,500 (using \$45,418)

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Expenses

- Administration decreases by \$2,927
- Library increases by \$5,700
- Finance increases by \$39,000
- Town Clerk increases by \$19,000
- Listers decreases by \$11,000
- Land Use decreases by \$13,000
- Police Department increases by \$10,000
- General Fire Services decreases by \$48,000 (due to pay-off of WWVFD truck)
- WWVFD increases by \$9,000
- AVFD decreases \$2,400

General Fund Details

Administration Revenue

- Proposing to increase revenues by 3% (\$32,999)
- Tax Collection Revenue decreases by \$49,000
- PILOT revenue decreases by \$1,910
- Interest decreases by \$250
- Other sources of revenue increases by \$3,249
- Increase in use of fund balance by \$9,445

Administration Expenses

- Personnel increases by \$15,240
- Ascutney Water District #2 Reimbursement increases by \$506
- Office Expenses increases by \$3,770
- Utilities increases by \$1,596
- Legal and consulting decreases by \$1,000
- Insurance decreases by \$619
- Tax collection decreases by \$185
- Contracted services increases by \$38
- Martin Memorial Hall decreases by \$3,740
- Other Town Services decreases by \$500
- 1879 Schoolhouse – no change
- Appropriations – according to the Town policy, any request greater than \$500 must go on the ballot. It is not included in the budget. If all of this year's appropriations are passed by the voters, it will increase the budget by \$18,000.
- Overall decrease in expenses of \$2,927

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Finance

Last year we had an executive assistant to finance; this year we are sharing an accountant with Windsor, so the tax need has increased by \$16,000. It is offset in the administration budget by moving unused benefit expenses into the finance budget.

Listers

The listers budget decreases by \$11,052. There was some discussion about whether customer service is being maintained with the reduction in personnel in the office and if the Grand List will be ready in April. It was suggested that the website be utilized to enhance accessibility to services.

Land Use

The land use budget decreases by \$13,000. It is believed that the transition is working well. There was discussion about how customer service is maintained with the LUA in the office only one day a week and how timely enforcement will be achieved in light of the fact that the new LUA already has a full-time job in addition to his position as LUA. There was also discussion about the compensation package for the position.

Mr. Gulnick said there is a shortage of revenue of \$44,000 in the FY22 budget that he is still working to close. FY22 administration budget – appropriation revenue \$43,600 – line #11-6-101-01.17 - this was mis-budgeted – there were appropriation requests that we didn't put on the ballot, so the revenue didn't come in nor will it come in. It has not been budgeted for FY23.

Police Department

This budget has already been approved.

Town Clerk

Revenues

- The Town Clerk is seeking a 12% increase in her tax need.
- Operating revenues are increasing by 17%.
- Computerization is increasing by 33%.
- Vault fees are decreasing by 9%.
- There is an overall increase of \$18,962, \$10,000 of which will come from taxes.

Expenses

- Personnel budget has an increase of 14%— the Town Clerk has hired a deputy clerk (welcome back Marion Ballam; Ms. Ballam is working 24 hours a week)
- Office expenses – no change
- Reserve Transfers increase by \$1,620 (offset by increase in computerization revenues)
- Vault expenses increase by \$2,500
- Transfer to Rabies – no change

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- Overall budget change of 14%

Library

- Tax need is increasing by \$5,813
- Personnel is increasing by \$2,393 (there are 2 part time employees; wages are increasing by 3%; there is a decrease in insurance benefits of \$366)
- Administrative expenses are increasing by 16%
- Building and maintenance decreases by 20%
- Dues and membership increase by 14%
- Media increases by 5%
- The library trustees have approved this budget.

Ascutney Volunteer Fire Association

- Expenses are decreasing by 3%
- There is a 22% increase in tax need due to taking over fundraising revenue. The department used to use fundraising to offset operating expenses (heat, phone, internet, lights, etc. This was not money used for equipment). The Town is absorbing those costs in a phased manner - \$11,000 last year; \$11,000 this year. This explains the decrease in the expense budget with an increase in the tax need.
- Telephone and internet expenses were taken over, but not budgeted for last year, so that line will be overspent this year.
- That having been said, the Town doesn't want to give up the chicken barbeque on the west side or the garage sales in Ascutney. If the departments fundraise and they buy any kind of equipment or add-ons to a truck with the proceeds it will be treated as a donation to the Town.
- Chief Spaulding said his department will continue with fundraising until the ladder truck is paid off.

West Weathersfield Volunteer Fire Department

- This budget does not include the officer or training stipends. This will be taken up for both departments in a separate discussion.
- The tax need increases by 12%
- There is an 11% increase in expenses
- Personnel expenses increase by 3%
- Office expenses increase by \$2,600 (70% due to emergency recording software)
- Utilities increase by \$1,100
- No change in insurance cost
- Communications increases by 14%

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- Fire Equipment/PPE/Hose Testing increase by 10%. WWVFD does their own hose testing annually. AVFD hires an NFPA-rated company to test their hoses and ladders. The company repacks the hoses when they are done. Any hose that failed is tagged and a report is generated. If a hose fails at a scene that was not tagged, the testing company assumes the liability. It was unclear how the hose-testing funds for WWVFD are spent, as the volunteers are not paid to do the annual testing. The board wanted to relieve the WWVFD of their testing duties and have it done the way AVFA does. Mr. Gulnick said he would look into it.
- Fuel increases by 11%
- The accounting expense is for someone to do the department's taxes.
- The department is asking for an additional two hours of legal expenses (total of five hours). The reason was not known. It was noted that AVFA only has \$5 in their line for legal expenses (possibly just a placeholder for this line item). Mr. Gulnick said since there are no contractual negotiations scheduled for next year, he has offered the Town's counsel to the departments. WWVFD endured a legal expense last year for an issue they had – that may be the reason for the increase. There was concern on how the Town can pay for independent legal counsel if the issue is with the Town itself. No changes were made, however.

General Fire Services

- This budget includes:
 - Emergency Management
 - Fire Hydrant Electrical Service
 - Dry Hydrant Maintenance
 - Highway Service to Dry Hydrant (discontinued in FY23)
 - Fire Truck Interest Expense
 - Truck Bond Debt Reduction
 - Fire Truck Purchase
- Tax revenue will decrease by 637% because the fire truck is being paid off this year

Fire Departments Stipends Discussion

Officer and Training Stipends and Firefighter Pay

Mr. Gulnick shared the pay programs for Charlestown (NH), Cavendish and Chester. (Only Cavendish is a volunteer department.) Cavendish pays its firefighters by the call and per training event. The Chief and Deputy are paid hourly up to 20 hours a week.

Weathersfield Proposal

Pay per Call

550 calls/year (70% AVFA, 30% WWVFD)

Average 5 members/call

Training Stipend

24 Trainings/year

30 members/training (15 members/dept)

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\$15/member/call
Total Cost \$41,250

\$25/member/training
Total Cost \$18,000

Some guidelines and definitions would need to be developed before this could be implemented. This proposal does not include the officers.

WWVFD is looking for the stipends as an indication of the Town's appreciation of their services and to help retain volunteers.

It was agreed that more research and discussion over the course of the next year is needed for this.

There were no more comments or questions regarding the FY23 General Fund Budget.

Motion: To accept the FY23 General Fund Budget as proposed, dated 12/20/2021

Made by: Mr. Todd **Second:** Mr. Tillman

Vote: All in favor

7. AVFA Fire Truck Purchase

Chief Spaulding recapped his request for a new truck (first presented in September) - \$360,000 for a 2,500-gal tanker quoted by Dingee Machine. The quote was good for 45 days. He said it could go on the ballot as not to exceed \$390,000 to account for price increases. This would replace the 1995 Ford that carries 1250 gallons of water with a 1250 pump. The new truck would have a 30-gal foam tank; a compartment to put airpacs in; 2-person cab; a small pump to minimize the length of the truck (so it will fit in its allotted space in the station).

The wheeled fund reserve account currently has \$122,854 in it. If \$100,000 were used from the reserve and the balance financed over 5 years, the annual payment would exceed \$50,000.

Questions were raised on how this would be financed; how the price was derived; and whether this is the type of truck we need given the majority of the calls to which we respond. How will this fit into the long-term debt schedule?

It was agreed to table this for now. Mr. Gulnick will gather more information for later discussions.

8. FY23 Highway Fund Budget

Much of this budget has been discussed and agreed upon at previous meetings.

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There is an estimated \$108,000 fund balance. After consulting with Town Treasurer Steve Hier, Mr. Gulnick reduced the tax need by \$16,429. This budget includes two payments on the grader. \$76,000 is used from the fund balance.

The Highway Equipment Acquisition reserve fund contains \$154,283. Highway Capital Maintenance and Improvement account has \$186,164. After the Kendricks Corner Road project is completed, the balance will be \$99,000.

The auditors will have a more concrete figure at the January 3rd meeting.

Mr. Stapleton wants the remaining \$31,000 (from the fund balance) to go into the reserves because there will be a lot of grants coming up that will require matching funds. There are also guard rails that need work if the prices come back down.

To be continued...

9. Replacement of 2012 Plow Truck

The truck will cost \$120,000-\$130,000. Mr. Gulnick was asked to craft a couple of articles on financing the truck purchase for the next meeting. The old truck will most likely be put up for private sale (worth about \$20,000 appraised value).

10. Establishment of a Reserve Account for Reclamation of the Bow Pit

Mr. Stapleton said this has been in the highway budget as a line item for the past five years. It is supposed to have been accumulating, but because reclamation doesn't happen every year, it goes back into the fund balance. Mr. Gulnick was asked to draft an article for the warrant.

11. Conservation Commission Policy 3rd Reading

The Commission asked that the word "protect" be changed to "conserve".

Motion: To approve the changes to the policy on the 3rd reading dated December 16, 2021.

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

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Tillman (yes), Ms. O'Brien (yes), Mr. Jarvis (Yes), Mr. Fuller (yes), Mr. Todd (no)

12. Errors & Omissions Certificate

Motion: To approve the errors and omissions certificate by the listers for 2021, dated December 16, 2021

Made by: Mr. Fuller **Second:** Mr. Jarvis

Vote: All in favor

13. Proposed future agenda items

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- Finalize the highway budget
- Fire
- Articles for the new truck
- ARPA funds discussion

14. Approve Warrants

Motion: To approve the warrants for 12/20/2021 as follow:

General Funds	Operating Expenses	\$12,060.19
	Payroll	\$16,543.51
Highway Fund	Operating Expenses	\$14,601.78
	Payroll	\$8,658.43
Solid Waste Management Fund		
	Operating Expenses	\$15,403.47
	Payroll	\$1,539.05
Library	Operating Expenses	\$0.00
	Payroll	\$1,983.60
Grand Totals	Operating Expenses	\$42,065.44
	Payroll	\$28,724.59

Made by: PT **Second:** MT

Vote: All in favor

15. Any Other Business

16. Executive Session – 1 V.S.A. §313

Motion: To go into executive session under 1 VSA §313 for personnel and to include the town manager

Made by: Mr. Tillman **Second:**

Vote:

No action was taken following the executive session.

17. Adjourn

Motion: To adjourn the meeting

Made by: Mr. Tillman **Second:** Mr. Todd

Vote: All in favor

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 PM.

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Respectfully submitted,
deForest Bearse

WEATHERSFIELD SELECTBOARD

_____,
David Fuller, Chairperson

Joseph Jarvis, Selector

Kelly O'Brien, Clerk

Paul Tillman, Selector

Michael Todd, Vice- Chairperson