

TOWN OF WEATHERSFIELD, VERMONT

SELECT BOARD

Select Board
Martin Memorial Hall
5259 Route 5, Ascutney VT
Monday, January 6, 2020
6:00 PM
REGULAR MEETING

MINUTES
APPROVED 1/20/2020

Select Board Members Present: N. John Arrison
Daniel Boyer
David Fuller
Kelly Murphy
Michael Todd

Select Board Members Absent:

Others Present:

Paul Tillman	Josh Compo	Darrin Spaulding	
Nikita Lenahan	Edith Stillson	Mavis Ellingwood	
Lisa Slade	Howard Page	Roderick Bates	

1. Call to Order

Ms. Murphy called the meeting to order at 6:04PM.

2. Executive Session per 1 V.S.A. §313(3) Personnel

Motion: To enter executive session per 1 V.S.A. §313(3) Personnel

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

Vote: Unanimous in favor

The board came out of executive session at 6:39 PM.

Motion: To authorize the chair to sign an employment agreement for Town Manager with Brandon Gulnick with removal of stipulation for reference checks

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

Vote: Unanimous in favor

Ms. Murphy thanked VLCT and the search committee for their assistance in the search for a new town manager. Mr. Gulnick will be starting on February 3rd.

3. Agenda Review

There were no changes to the agenda.

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4. Nonprofit Request: Vermont Adult Learning

The first attempt to reach Ashley Daley via telephone was unsuccessful

5. Comments from Select Board and Town Manager

Mr. Arrison asked if the letter to Reading and West Windsor regarding the request for (?) per parcel had been sent. Ms. Murphy said it had not. She provided a copy of a draft of it and asked the board to review and approve it. Mr. Arrison said he felt the letter should have been sent out three weeks ago.

Mr. Todd has draft minutes of the special meeting held on December 21st.

Mr. Boyer thanked the road crews for their hard work in keeping the roads open and passable during the recent storms.

6. Comments from Citizens on topics not on the agenda

Darrin Spaulding filed a written complaint with the vice chair of the board in accordance with the Citizen Complaint Policy. The complaint was directed toward board chair Kelly Murphy. Mr. Fuller accepted the complaint and said it would need to be checked.

Mr. Spaulding had also filed a public records request for all communications regarding himself and AVFD between the Town Manager and the board without Mr. Spaulding's knowledge or presence from the last 2 years. He had received those emails, made copies of them all, and presented them to each of the board members. Mr. Fuller asked that the board be given time to read them before deciding how to proceed.

Lisa Slade asked the board to label agendas as revised when revisions have been made. She also asked that SAPA TV direct the camera to the full board at all times instead of focusing in on whoever is speaking.

7. Review minutes from previous meetings – 12/16/2019, 12/18/2019

Motion: To approve the minutes of the December 16th meeting

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

Additions/corrections/deletions:

- a. Mr. Arrison asked to have the words “on anything” stricken from a sentence on page 5. (*No decisions were made ~~on anything~~.*)
- b. Mr. Arrison asked to change the word “going” to “asking” in the motion on page 6. (*To send letters to Reading and West Windsor indicating that we are ~~going~~ asking to move to a per parcel fee of \$40.*)

It was agreed to table approving this set of minutes to confirm the exact words of the motion.

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Motion: To approve the minutes of the December 18th meeting

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

Additions/corrections/deletions:

Change the spelling of Brendon to Brandon

Vote: 1 abstention; 4 in favor

8. Citizen Complaints & Complaint Policy

Ms. Murphy turned the meeting over to Vice-chair Fuller for this discussion.

Mr. Fuller said the board had asked to see the complaint policy to review as there were questions about how to handle complaints. The discussion focused on Section IV, *Resolution Process*. It became apparent that the policy lacks a timeframe in which to address complaints. The policy also lacks direction on complaints that are filed against the full board, as in the case of Lisa Slade's complaint.

Mrs. Slade filed a written complaint with the Town Manager on December 17th. Ms. Murphy said the complaint had been forwarded via email to all of the board members by Mr. Fedorow with a request for how they board wanted to proceed. No one responded to Mr. Fedorow's email. The complaint had not been addressed by the board in executive session since that time. Mr. Fuller said the complaint had since been addressed in open session and that an executive session was not required. Ms. Murphy pointed out that this was the first meeting of the board since the complaint had been filed. Mrs. Slade maintained that she was entitled to an acknowledgement of her complaint either verbally or in writing which felt she had not received.

The board agreed that guidance from VLCT would be helpful.

It was unclear how to address the petition that came to the board simultaneously with Mrs. Slade's complaint.

Mr. Fuller turned the meeting back over to Ms. Murphy.

Ms. Murphy was able to reach Ms. Daley via telephone. Vermont Adult Learning (VAL) is requesting \$300. VAL provides adult educational services (reading, writing, math computer skills, etc.) to people over 16. They provide a high school completion program as well. Last fiscal year they served 166 students, 6 of whom were from Weathersfield. One of those 6 obtained their high school diploma. The funds would be used for educational and instructional materials and also food for those that are food insecure. This organization has been funded in the past; but not last year.

9. Approve Warrants

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Motion: To approve the warrants for 1/6/2020 as follow:

General Funds	Operating Expenses	\$37,507.21
	Payroll	\$27,178.68
Highway Fund	Operating Expenses	\$78,456.59
	Payroll	\$43,109.71
Solid Waste Management Fund		
	Operating Expenses	\$10,923.33
	Payroll	\$4,431.94
Library	Operating Expenses	\$0.00
	Payroll	\$6,908.01
Grants	Operating Expenses	\$0.00
Special Revenue	Operating Expenses	\$0.00
Reserves		\$0.00
Long Term Debt		\$0.00
Grand Totals	Operating Expenses	\$126,887.13
	Payroll	\$81,628.34

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

Front-loading the HSAs due to policy changes in mid-fiscal year will put expenditures over budget in this fiscal year.

Vote: All in favor

10. Budget Update

a. Library Budget

Mavis Ellingwood, president of the trustees and Roderick Bates, trustee, presented the library budget. The trustees are proposing a 6% or \$9,000 increase due primarily to employee compensation. They are trying to move the employees' compensation closer to where they should be. There is \$2,000 in this budget for building maintenance as well as \$1,500 for a substitute librarian. Having a substitute librarian will facilitate the library director taking the vacation time to which he is entitled. Volunteers cover some, but not all, of the time the director would be away on vacation. The substitute librarian will fill in the gaps.

The library gets some revenue from the internet providers, but the amount varies widely from year to year. This revenue was not included in the proposed budget for that reason.

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Mr. Boyer questioned the renting of a heat pump. Mr. Bates aid the cost of purchasing one outright was more the library could afford. Mr. Bates said they will revisit the pump later.

Mr. Bates said they have become aware that the library is underinsured. They do not yet know what the proper amount will be, but they may be back at a later date to address it with the board.

Mr. Fuller took exception to the substitute librarian expense. Mr. Bates said the Governor wants libraries “polished” in the State’s quest to attract tech workers to come live in Vermont. The State Library Association is targeting library wages and services as part of that quest.

The Hartford Decision prevents the board from mandating changes to the library’s budget.

Mr. Bates said the library budget has gone up, but so have library hours and services. In addition, the director has taken on a lot more activities with Parks and Rec.

Ms. Murphy asked the board if they wanted to accept what the trustees have proposed or are there questions for them to take back to their board?

Mr. Todd asked if they could get the increase down to 3%?

Ms. Murphy asked about the “media” line increase from \$2000 to \$9000. Mr. Bates said it is a matter of how it’s shown on the budget – this line now represents several lines that were previously listed separately.

Mr. Arrison asked that the trustees try to reduce the budget a bit.

b. Updated Department Budgets

10.b.i. Police

Chief Daniels said the pay scale is not comparable to area wages. The board had instructed the Chief to work with Mr. Fedorow on the matter, but Mr. Fedorow has not been available.

The Chief said the department needs new computers in this fiscal year.

The truck was sold for \$9,000. It appears that the money went into the general fund instead of the reserve. Policy dictates that it should have gone into the reserve. Ms. Kelly is still working on tracing what happened to the funds.

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Motion: To take the expenditure of \$5647.48 for computers for the police department

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

Vote: Unanimous in favor

Mr. Todd said if we put \$20,000 in for the cruiser, it will cause a 7% increase in the budget.

Chief Daniels is proposing a 10% increase for the chief's salary and a 4% increase for the full-time officer. Ms. Kelly expressed concern about requests for raises above what the board had already authorized.

(At 9:00PM)

Motion: To extend the meeting 30 minutes

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

Vote: Unanimous in favor

There is currently \$138,670.30 in the rainy-day fund.

There was discussion about possible savings in the budget in other areas that might offset increases. The current proposed budget is showing a 5.7% increase based on what has been presented thus far. Ms. Kelly confirmed that this budget includes the general fund budget which includes the library, police, land use, listers and town clerk. Ms. Kelly included a separate article for the cruiser (\$27,000); fire services shows the proposed changes made at the last meeting. There was discussion at that meeting of a possible \$30,000 reserve article for motorized (fire) equipment. The highway budget may either include a grader payment or it could be pulled out as a separate article.

Mr. Fuller asked that the \$9600 for the truck be found to help pay for the cruiser. He also asked to see what surrounding towns are paying. He said he was okay with the Chief's request for the cruiser.

Mr. Arrison said he wants all department heads to know when a change is being made to their budgets.

10.b.ii. **Fire Services**

Fire Apparatus Acquisition Fund – the name of the reserve voted on by the voters; used for capital purchase of motorized firefighting equipment

Motion: To have a special article for fire equipment – motorized fund – at \$30,000

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

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Ms. Kelly asked if the Town is going to own another fire truck. Ms. Murphy said the money is going into a reserve – this is not a decision to purchase (or not) another truck.

Vote: All in favor

Motion: To fund FY20-21 for fire services \$174,632

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

Vote: All in favor

10.b.iii. Town Clerk

There is an 8% increase (\$7700) in the Town Clerk's budget.

It was agreed that the Town will revisit copying fees after Town Meeting (not changed since 1996). Copying fees are not in the Clerk's jurisdiction. Clerk fees are mandated by the State and can't be changed locally.

The board agreed to remove the \$2,000 for clerical wages on the grounds that the funding could be found elsewhere.

Motion: To approve the Town Clerk's budget at \$109,597

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

Vote: All in favor

10.b.iv. Land Use

There is a 10% change from last year to this year in the land use budget.

Mr. Fuller asked not to finalize this budget at this time due to lack of information on how the Interim Town Manager will transition back to the Land Use Administrator position.

The board agreed to table to the next meeting.

10.b.v. Listers

There is a 24% change in the listers' budget from last year, because last year's budget was subsidized by funds from the Act 60 fund. It could be done again this year, but it takes away money for the (eventual) reappraisal. The board asked that the actual cost of the reappraisal be provided to compare with the amount already set aside for it.

c. Solid Waste

d. Highway

There is a 4% change in the Highway budget.

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Motion: To extend the meeting another 30 minutes

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

Vote: All in favor

The board agreed to stop the budget discussion at this point and take up item #11.

e. Nonprofit Appropriations

11. Discussion Fire Special Article for Municipal Department

The board agreed to put to the voters the question of creating a single volunteer fire department. The method of getting to the voters was the question. The board agreed that it would be best to put it on the ballot, but the board was unsure if that could happen as there is no money associated with the question. It was agreed to ask the town attorney, the town clerk and VLCT if it is possible to put a non-money article on the ballot.

Mr. Fuller said that if AVFD is not on board, a single department will not happen.

Josh Compo said that it's time both departments honored whatever the voters want.

12. Salt Shed Discussion

Motion: To authorize Ray to send out an RFP with a 30-day timeline for contractors to submit proposals to remove the cement cover and built a wood truss roof on the salt shed

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

Vote: 1 in favor, 4 opposed

Motion: To extend the meeting 10 minutes

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

Vote: All in favor

After discussion, the motion on the salt shed RFP was changed to be less restrictive.

Motion: To send out an RFP for replacement of the roof on the salt shed

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

Vote: All in favor

13. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday

Motion: To deny the request to make Martin Luther King, Jr. Day a holiday

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

Vote: All in favor

There will be an extra meeting of the board on January 13th at 6PM to continue the discussion on the budget.

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14. Appointments

15. Adjourn

Motion: To adjourn the meeting

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

Vote: All in favor

The meeting adjourned at 10:06 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

deForest Bearse

WEATHERSFIELD SELECTBOARD

N. John Arrison, Selector

Daniel E. Boyer, Selector

David Fuller, Vice-Chairperson

Kelly Murphy, Chairperson

Michael Todd, Clerk