

**TOWN OF WEATHERSFIELD, VERMONT**

**SELECT BOARD**

**Select Board  
Martin Memorial Hall  
5259 Route 5, Ascutney VT  
Monday, November 30, 2020  
6:30 PM  
REGULAR MEETING**

**MINUTES  
APPROVED 12/7/2020**

**Select Board Members Present:** N. John Arrison  
David Fuller  
Joseph Jarvis  
Paul Tillman  
Michael Todd

**Select Board Members Absent:**

**Brandon Gulnick, Town Manager**

**Others Present:**

John Esty (online)	Josh Dauphin (online)		
Ray Stapleton (online)	Josh Compo (online)		
Susanne Terrill (online)			

The Public was permitted to attend this meeting in person. Remote public participation was facilitated via the GoTo Meeting video-conferencing platform and conference calling. The number for people to join or call in to the meeting was published on the meeting agenda and on the Town's website. Mr. Gulnick monitored the calls and the video-platform while Mr. Fuller ran the meeting. The meeting was recorded.

**1. Call to Order**

Mr. Fuller called the meeting to order at 6:38 PM.

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

Mr. Fuller said he has been getting COVID information indirectly around Town and has asked the Town Manager to schedule an emergency management meeting for Thursday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> at 6:00 PM. The meeting will gather together key parties from the Town to talk about how they are handling the current COVID situation – library, town office, food shelves, highway, school, etc.

**3. Review minutes from previous meetings – November 16, 2020**

**Additions/corrections/deletions:**

a. None

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**Motion:** To approve

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

**Vote:** All in favor

Mr. Fuller asked for a brief statement about the recent tax payments that had come in on the 18<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Gulnick read the following:

*In FY18 there were \$53,896 in delinquent taxes for the first quarter and \$100,867 in delinquent taxes for the second quarter.*

*In FY19 there were \$58,365 in delinquent taxes for the first quarter and \$118,575 in delinquent taxes for the second quarter.*

*In FY20 there were \$44,338 in delinquent taxes for the first quarter and \$109,087 in delinquent taxes for the second quarter.*

*In FY21 there were \$53,149 in delinquent taxes for the first quarter and \$127,799 in delinquent taxes for the second quarter.*

*In FY18, the Town billed \$1,343,044 for the third quarter and \$1,352,376 for the fourth quarter.*

*In FY19 the Town billed \$1,511,702 for the third quarter and \$1,527,201 for the fourth quarter.*

*In FY20 the Town billed \$1,511,120 for the third quarter and \$1,565,633 for the fourth quarter.*

*In FY21 the Town will bill \$1,625,433 for the third quarter and \$1,653,261 for the fourth quarter.*

*Findings:* *There is currently \$180,948.15 in delinquent taxes for the First & Second Quarters.*

*In FY21 the Town received 97.35% of taxes billed for the first quarter and 93.63% for the second quarter.*

*In FY20 the Town received 97.66% of taxes billed for the first quarter and 94.24% for the second quarter.*

*There is a 0.46% difference between the first & second quarters in FY20 & FY21.*

Mr. Fuller stated that the Town appears to be falling behind and said the Board should keep an eye on the situation.

#### 4. 2021 Healthcare

Mr. Gulnick said the employees had been polled on their choice of healthcare plans. The employees currently have a high-deductible plan with a Health Savings Account (HSA) (\$3,000 for singles, \$6,000 for families) – Gold (3) HDHP. The Town puts money into the HSAs at the start of the calendar year and pays a portion of the premiums. MVP is the carrier. Employees contribute 9.5% toward the premiums.

To make the Platinum Plan and the Gold (3) HDHP plan even as far as the employer contribution, the employee contribution was increased to 14% for the Gold (3) HDHP plan. There would be three opt-outs, \$42,000 in HSAs, \$247,974 employer contribution and \$28,647 employee contribution. For the Platinum plan, the employees would pay

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9.5%. The employee contribution would be \$21,534; employer contribution would be roughly the same as for the Gold plan. There is no HSA with the Platinum plan.

All of the employees chose the Gold (3) HDHP plan with the HSA when surveyed.

The Board spent substantial time discussing the available options. Employees were given the opportunity to ask questions and express their opinions.

**Motion:** To fund the HSAs 50/50

**Made by:** Mr. Todd

The motion died for lack of a second.

The consensus of the Board was to fund the HSAs at \$4,000 for a family and \$2,000 for an individual and to front load them.

**Motion:** To offer for 20-21, the MVP Gold (3)HDHP with a 14% employee contribution on the premium with a Health Savings Account and the 20-21 MVP Platinum Plan with a 9.5% employee contribution without the Health Savings Account.

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

**Vote:** All in favor

John Esty asked if insurance opt-outs would be available this year. He said the survey said there would be no opt-outs. Mr. Fuller said it is the policy of the Board to offer the opt-out until such time as the policy is changed.

#### 5. Town Manager Report

**Update on the Website:** Mr. Gulnick anticipates the website will enter the development phase mid-week this week. It should be ready to go live by mid-January.

**Announcement:** The Town received a \$10,000 grant to distribute \$1,000 grants (maximum) to small businesses in Town that have been impacted by COVID-19.

Applications must be submitted by December 18<sup>th</sup>. Applications will be reviewed and voted on on December 21<sup>st</sup>. An internal board has been created to review the applications and make recommendations to the Selectboard.

#### 6. Fire Department Contracts

Rosalie McNamara presented a Fire Department Invoice Tracking System which was created to ensure that bills are paid on time. Multiple questions ensued. Do all bills need the Manager's sign-off? What if the Board doesn't meet for three weeks and checks aren't approved in that time – could that be a problem? Where are the invoices coming from? Must the Fire Departments deliver them to the Town Office? Should the vendors send them directly to the Town Office? This would reduce turn-around time. What

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happens when this system doesn't work? The Board felt the system was too time consuming and should be shortened or sped up in some way.

A Fire Department Liaison position has been created to track fire department invoices, provide monthly report and statement assistance; log and coordinate complaints; coordinates meetings; coordinates events; update the Fire Department webpage; and assist with Fire Department social media. The Principal Clerk is filling the new position. There were no comments from the Board on the position or its tasks.

The Board turned to discussing the contracts.

Emergency medical calls – what is the chain of command when Golden Cross shows up? Should ambulance services be split between the east and west sides of the Town (to compensate for the increased response time from Claremont to the west side)? What services are expected? What services are not expected? Mr. Fuller said that according to Dale Girard, their roll is to “stabilize and transport”. They are required to be licensed, certified, and insured. The roll of the fire department will vary from scene to scene. These rolls are described in state laws and can be referenced in the fire department contracts.

It was agreed that it would be helpful to add language in section 2.1 of the contract to describes rolls, responsibilities and expectations on emergency medical calls.

Mandated number of training events annually – Josh Compo said this was meant to imply joint training between the departments. It was agreed to remove this and any other statement in the contract mandating that the departments get along with each other.

Page 2, section 1.3 – if the contract is terminated, all partially owned assets will be returned to the Town. Question – will the Town pay for the department's share of partially owned assets? The consensus was no, with the hope that in the future there won't be any partially owned assets. Mr. Fuller said he thought the Board needs to take some steps to get to that point. Going to a single department would require having all of the assets, from station to hoses.

Mr. Todd said he had received the following from AVFD “for the contract” – “The members do not agree to turn over the building and the lease and other equipment at this time.” Board members saw this as a significant problem.

Mr. Fuller asked if either department had used the Town's financial contributions in any department applications for a loan/bank statement/line of credit, etc.?

Mr. Arrison asked if any Town-owned asset been used to generate money to purchase equipment that the department now claims as its own?

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Mr. Fuller said he thought the best course of action was for the Town to control all of the finances; to work with the volunteers whom we cannot afford to pay and allow the volunteers to use the machinery that the Town purchases through its financial process.

Josh Compo said he was in favor of Mr. Fuller's idea. He said he would like to see an official request from the Board to both departments to come forward with what those numbers would look like – if they're willing to sell or not willing to sell; or if they're willing to give, etc. – have it come back officially to the Board.

**Motion:** To look at what the financials would be for a total purchase buy-out

**Made by:** Mr. Tillman      **Second:** None

Mr. Fuller said that was not what he was looking for. He wanted to “set the bar here” and declare that, “Any and all machinery is purchased here; should be with town funds only; and only to be used in conjunction with the emergency services of the Town of Weathersfield; would seek this Board's approval to be used in/at that charge only.” He clarified that this would refer to wheeled equipment only. Mr. Arrison wanted to go further – he wanted it to refer to all assets with the exception of the building.

Mr. Arrison suggested asking the departments for the numbers on wheeled vehicles and a second estimate on all assets with exception of the real estate.

Mr. Compo cautioned against limiting the funds to just Town resources and not to eliminate grant funds (Federal or State). Then the question arose, if equipment is purchased with grant (or hazmat) funds, does it belong to the Town or the Department?

At 9:00 PM, Mr. Todd motioned to extend the meeting thirty minutes. Mr. Arrison seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Mr. Compo said currently workman's comp will not cover anyone who is self-employed, which is the majority of the firefighters. He asked if this had been looked into. Mr. Jarvis felt it was addressed in the contract, but Mr. Compo wanted assurance that those who are self-employed are covered, which he felt was not the case with the language in the contract.

Mr. Arrison noted that no one from AVFD appeared to be in the meeting. Colby Hodgdon had been listening for some time, but had since left the meeting. Mr. Arrison stated that the Board was thus having a one-sided conversation, not by the Board's choice. Mr. Todd said this is why he motioned several months ago that a decision be made by December 10<sup>th</sup>. The contract has expired and the contract to extend it has not been signed. So, the Town is operating without a contract.

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Mr. Arrison turned to Article 4, section 4.2. He did not feel the service agreement is a wise move. It won't save the Town any money and the equipment tends to be specialized. He asked to strike it. The Board agreed.

In a discussion about hazmat revenue, Mr. Arrison said that the contract and the hazmat ordinance need to agree with one another, which may not be the case with the new contract.

Mr. Dauphin asked the Board to bear in mind that volunteers have to bring equipment to Dingee or Townline or wherever on their own time. If the Town owns the equipment, then perhaps the Town could be the one to get it where it needs to go (and not the volunteers). The Board agreed.

Mr. Gulnick asked about changes that were made to section 8.4, enforcement.

Mr. Dauphin said he thought they would be getting the contract earlier than just receiving it at this meeting so they could review it. He said they would need some time to do that now.

Mr. Arrison asked when/how section 8.4 was amended. He said he didn't remember seeing it until this meeting. Mr. Todd said this had come up following the last meeting of the Board, after the executive session. It was a conversation that he and Mr. Gulnick had had. They created this section.

Mr. Arrison said the Board was disciplining a someone over whom they have no control. Mr. Fuller said when both departments are on a call, they are working for the Town of Weathersfield. They are covered by workmen's comp. They wear uniforms and drive trucks that all say "Town of Weathersfield" on them. That's why when something happens the focus is on the Town and not the departments.

Mr. Jarvis asked Mr. Dauphin if he had specific concerns with the contract. Mr. Dauphin said he wanted to be sure that pertinent information is shared with the department in a timelier manner than has been occurring. With regard to EMS, Mr. Dauphin said he would be getting a letter to Mr. Gulnick that will clarify the matter. He said for the most part, the department is fairly comfortable with the contract.

- 7. Fire Department FY21 Finance Report**
- 8. Fire Department FY22 Budget Discussion**
- 9. (Date) 2020 Financial Report**
- 10. Appointments**
- 11. Approve Warrants**
- 12. Any Other Business**

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13. Adjourn

**Motion:** To adjourn the meeting

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

**Vote:** All in favor

The meeting adjourned at 9:29 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

*deForest Bearse*

WEATHERSFIELD SELECTBOARD

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N. John Arrison, Selector

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David Fuller, Chairperson

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Joseph Jarvis, Clerk

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Paul Tillman

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Michael Todd, Vice- Chairperson