

TOWN OF WEATHERSFIELD, VERMONT

SELECT BOARD

**Select Board
Martin Memorial Hall
5259 Route 5, Ascutney VT
Wednesday, December 18, 2019
6:00 PM
REGULAR MEETING**

MINUTES

APPROVED WITH CHANGES 1/6/2020

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

Select Board Members Absent: Kelly Murphy

Others Present:

Josh Compo	Joseph Renaud	Bethany Renaud	
Mychael Spaulding	Edith Stillson	Bill Daniels	
Paul Tillman	Darrin Spaulding	Lisa Slade	

1. Call to Order

Mr. Fuller called the meeting to order at 6:10 PM.

2. Agenda Review

There were no changes to the agenda.

3. Non-Profit Request: Vermont Adult Learning

Mr. Fuller attempted to call the representative for Vermont Adult Learning, but received no answer.

Motion: To table to the January 6, 2020 meeting

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

Vote: Unanimous in favor

4. Comments from Select Board and Town Manager

Mr. Fuller announced that Brandon Gulnick had been hired as the new Town Manager.

Mr. Gulnick and his wife, Erica, are from Middleboro, Massachusetts. Mr. Gulnick will start on February 3, 2020.

Mr. Fuller thanked the members of the Town Manager Search Committee.

5. Comments from Citizens on topics not on the agenda

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Darrin Spaulding asked if a select board member can go into a town office and tell employees not to communicate with him (Mr. Spaulding) or they will be fired. Mr. Spaulding said he had been told that the employees are not allowed to talk to him or they would lose their jobs. He said this person uses their own cell phone to send text messages to him. Mr. Spaulding said he is a department head and as such is entitled to be kept informed.

Mr. Spaulding was advised to submit a citizen complaint form. Mr. Spaulding said he would do that, and then asked how this board member would vote on the complaint. Mr. Fuller said he could not speculate on that.

Mr. Spaulding asked the board if there had been any email conversations about AVFD between Mr. Morris and other board members? Mr. Boyer and Mr. Arrison answered absolutely not. Mr. Arrison said he had not had any emails from Mr. Morris since Mr. Morris had left the Town's employ.

Mr. Spaulding said he has been asking for two years for any emails with Mr. Morris regarding AVFD. (He later said he was seeking all correspondence between the board and the Town Manager regarding AVFD.) Darlene Kelly advised Mr. Spaulding to file a request for information with the Town Manager. She said VLCT could provide guidance on how to comply with the request.

6. Budget Update

a. Admin Update

- 2% increase in tax need
- PILOT revenue has decreased by approximately \$2500
- The Town Manager salary line has been adjusted for the new manager
- a 2% cost of living increase was added to the budget for all employees
- water salary is offset by water revenue
- Admin health insurance is down because the new manager has a different plan from the previous manager
- Secure Shred is coming in now partly at the request of the Police Department (\$20/month)
- IT services have been adjusted as requested at Monday's meeting
- The town report has gone up a lot; we split the cost with the school; \$9000 is the cost to print the report;
- Ms. Kelly reached out to auditors to ask them for a summary of the audit; they will provide a single statement that the audit has been done and is available at the Town Office; their licensing requires that the full summary is printed in full (70 pages) or not at all; it is spelled out in the contract; the Town cannot choose what it wants to print from the audit in the annual report
- We can provide our own financial information in the report ("budget to actuals"), but we cannot make statements from the audit

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- Copier lease has gone up a little bit; should not be paying overage because the number of copies was increased (in the lease agreement)
- Increased the cost of the Town Forest access
- Insurance has gone down because PACIF received a credit which they are passing on (this does not include health insurance)
- Abatements represent a 3-year average
- NEMRC's annual support of their software has increased by 45%; we also get support from them for the listers' software; disaster recovery; they maintain a backup of our records offsite so they can rebuild our accounting and our tax base in the event of a system crash; there are other companies that can provide this service; there would be a major cost incurred to convert to another company; keeping ahead of cyber threats is, in part, driving the cost increase; CCI also has a backup of our data, possibly including NEMRC data
- Delinquent taxes – there was one tax sale last year and Mr. Fedorow is in the middle of one right now; some legal expenses will be incurred; this year's budget is the same as last year's; there was a small error in the delinquent tax revenue that will be fixed by the next review of the budget
- The county tax amount isn't known until January; it should be less than what's shown in the budget (which is just an estimate)
- No change in ambulance services
- MMH is roughly the same
- Heating oil and electricity are averages
- Need to have a discussion with the Fire District about the water billing
- Building maintenance needs to increase to cover expenses for work on the alarm system; rugs are serviced every few weeks
- There is \$48,000 in the MMH reserve; it can only be used for capital improvements to the Hall (\$5,000 minimum); there are no other funds for MMH – the auditors had the agency funds moved into the general fund (fund balance)
- Funds for the heat pump for MMH were taken out of the budget (\$14,000 previously transferred to reserve to cover); \$500 was left in for the heating system maintenance; there is no money for emergency repairs
- The Cemetery Commission has put in a request for \$1500 for repairs to the access road to the Grout Cemetery; Ms. Kelly wasn't clear as to whether this request should be in the admin budget or in highway; Mr. Morris had asserted that this was a Town-owned right-of-way, but if it's a Class 4 road, should the Town be maintaining it?
- There is \$42,302 in unassigned fund balance

b. Police Budget

- The department will be asking for a new cruiser this year;
- Chief Daniels and Ms. Kelly disagree about how much money should be in the reserve account; (\$15,000 vs \$11,000)
- Chief Daniels said we sold the truck for \$9600 plus there was \$5000 passed by the voters for the cruiser reserve fund

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- Ms. Kelly said the reserve has shown a balance of \$11,000 for the past couple of years
- A new cruiser will cost \$38,000 (\$29,000 for the cruiser itself- through the state bid list - plus equipping it with a new cage and console; should be able to use our old lights)
- will need \$20,000-\$25,000 from the taxpayers, depending on how much is in the reserve
- the current cruiser has over 100,000 miles on it, the warranty has run out; 4500 hours of idling time; the entire exhaust system was replaced for \$3,000 two weeks ago (was covered under the warranty before it ran out)
- repairs will now come out of our pockets
- it will likely start needing more repairs due to its age and the number of miles on it
- Mr. Arrison wants to see this as a line in the budget instead of a separate article
- Mr. Fuller said capital purchases usually go on the ballot as separate articles; the \$29,000 is not in this budget because of that practice
- Chief Daniels would like to hold onto the old cruiser so it could be used as a second vehicle - as a spare car for use by the town office personnel to do town business, go to trainings, etc.; its cost would be offset by reduced mileage reimbursements
- Chief Daniels prefers the Ford Explorer as his cruiser of choice
- The department will need new laptops with mounting stations and chargers next year (\$7,000 on the State bid list)
- Mr. Arrison noted that the revenues continue to decline. Chief Daniels said they have lost one part-time officer to injury; the other part-time officer is unable to put in a lot of hours; one part-time officer was hired a couple of months ago so the revenue (from traffic tickets) should start to increase
- Chief Daniels said he has been asking for pay raises for his officers for the past four years and every year it gets taken out of the budget. Last year one of his officers went to Ed Morris – behind Chief Daniels’ back – and that officer got a pay raise (when no one else did). Chief Daniels is upset that people are being treated differently within his department. He asked for a discussion about equal pay for the full-time officers (himself and the one other full-time officer).
- The board had directed that pay raises be 2% across the board for this budget.
- Mr. Fuller directed Chief Daniels to discuss his request with the interim manager; then the interim manager will present it to the board on January 6th
- Ms. Kelly cautioned against entertaining independent requests for raises; don’t treat different departments differently

c. Fire Department

6.c.i. WWVFD Notification Letter

The board received a letter from the WWVFD asking the board to follow through with the creation of a municipal fire department, and stating that if

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that does not happen, they request negotiation of a new fire agreement. They do not wish the re-enter into the current agreement.

There was no discussion on the letter.

6.c.ii. Petitions related to fire discussion

The board received a letter from Lisa Slade asking the board to stop the discussion on the motion to form a municipal fire department. The letter was accompanied by a petition with about 100 signatures asking the board to rescind that motion. There followed more discussion from all parties on the matter with no resolution. It was agreed to move on to the budget.

6.c.iii. 2020-2021 Budget Discussion

- Ms. Kelly received input from each department;
- Two weeks ago, the budget was level-funded; that is no longer the case
- \$30,000 was put into the motorized reserve fund in anticipation of a new truck for AVFD
- There is currently \$59245.75 in the motorized reserve fund.
- The \$30,000 request would be a separate article.

Motion: Put on the ballot \$30,000 for (motorized) fire apparatus (acquisition) reserve fund

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

Vote: All in favor

Discussion on the budget continued:

- Revenues are stagnant
- No recording secretary as the Fire Commission has been disbanded
- Dispatching services are increasing to \$19,304 because of toning two departments on all calls

There was discussion on why both departments are toned for all calls. Chief Dauphin said it was a recommendation from the Wood report based on the lack of available volunteers during the day. It also reduces response time.

Both departments agree to discontinue the practice except for structure fires and car accidents with entrapment. However, this will not reduce the expense to what it has been in the past. It was agreed to leave the budget number as it is for now and to ask dispatch for their best estimate of the cost without dual toning.

- The line for dry hydrants was reduced from \$10,000 to \$5,000 because amount in reserve and ease of obtaining grant funds
- The rainy-day fund could be used to cover unanticipated repairs
- It was agreed to reduce highway service to \$500; the highway revenue line will be reduced by the same amount

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- PPE was reduced to \$3,000 for each department
- AVFD is requesting \$27,000 appropriation
- WWVFD is asking for \$41,750 – \$25,000 appropriation with additional \$9,000 for stipend for training (new request) and \$7,750 for officer and maintenance

At 9:00 PM, Mr. Todd motioned to extend the meeting for 30 minutes. Mr. Arrison seconded the motion and all were in favor.

- The board discussed with Chief Dauphin the request for volunteer stipends. Mr. Arrison felt this action was akin to creating employees and urged caution. Mr. Compo said the funds would incentivize volunteers to show up to trainings
- It was ultimately agreed to give both department \$27,000 appropriations

There were no other questions.

Mr. Todd reminded the board that the fire agreement expires in June and urged the board to start talking about it right away.

7. Adjourn

Motion: To adjourn the meeting

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

Vote: All in favor

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 PM.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Respectfully submitted,
deForest Bearse

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N. John Arrison, Selector

Daniel E. Boyer, Selector

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David Fuller, Vice-Chairperson

Kelly Murphy, Chairperson

Michael Todd, Clerk