

**TOWN OF WEATHERSFIELD, VERMONT
SELECT BOARD**

**Select Board
Martin Memorial Hall
5259 Route 5, Ascutney VT
Monday, November 4, 2019
7:00 PM
REGULAR MEETING**

**MINUTES
APPROVED 12/16/2019**

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

Select Board Members Absent:

Sven Fedorow, Interim Town Manager

Others Present:

Edith Stillson	Bette Jo Esty	Alex Longton	Darrin Spaulding
Donnie Huntley	Ray Moore	Patrick Adrian, Eagle Times	Howard Page
John Esty	Linda Moore	Fred Kowalik	Jeremy LaVanway
Mary LaVanway	Mychael Spaulding	Tracy Dauphin	Josh Compo
Josh Dauphin	Steve Hier	Darlene Kelly	Ray Stapleton
Abby Friedman, VLCT	Nikita Lenahan	Paul Tillman	

1. Call to Order

Ms. Murphy called the meeting to order at 7:02PM.

2. Agenda Review

The Search Committee is currently meeting upstairs so we will move down the agenda and skip the Search Process item until they are finished.

3. Comments from Select Board and Town Manager

- A. Dan Boyer recognized the road crew and work of the fire departments for responding to Friday's storm and electricity interruption for many community members.
- B. John Arrison reviewed the recent State meeting to discuss their plans to cut down the last remaining Tenney Farm tree, located at the Ascutney Park and Ride. State official, Andrea Wright, will contact the board chair.

Motion: To write a letter to the Governor, CC'd to the Transportation Director requesting an immediate stay to cut down the Tenney Tree, pending further investigation.

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Made by: Dave Fuller **Second:** John Arrison **Vote:** All in favor

C. Interim Town Manager Fedorow stated a debriefing would occur on Tuesday with EOC Tim Austin. Power throughout town is nearly restored with pockets of interruption still in effect.

4. Comments from Citizens on topics not on the agenda

No comments

5. Review minutes from previous meetings – 10/21/2019

Additions/corrections/deletions:

a. None

Motion: To approve minutes as written

Made by: Dan Boyer **Second:** Dave Fuller **Vote:** All in favor

John Arrison commented that the conduct of the Board at the last meeting was unacceptable. “It not only matters what is said, but how it is said.” Michael Todd stated, “Point taken.” No additional agenda item was requested.

6. Town Manager Search Process – VLCT facilitated discussion

Abby Friedman from VLCT and members of the Town Manager Search Committee joined the meeting. Ms. Friedman thanked the board for hiring VLCT to assist with the manager search. She explained that VLCT has a standard process it follows for hiring, but it gets nuanced for each town. VLCT had received 26 applications by the deadline, but application was withdrawn.

Ms. Friedman said she had met with the search committee earlier this evening to provide members with general guidance regarding their role in the search process. Ms. Friedman provided each member with an information packet compiled by VLCT to provide guidance on their function and duties.

Committee members will come to the town office (where the applications are being held) on their own time to independently review each of the applications. Once everyone has completed their initial reviews, the committee will come together to agree on 10 candidates for the first round of interviews. VLCT will schedule the interviews, which will be conducted by the search committee, probably by telephone. Based on the first interviews, the committee will narrow down the pool of candidates to 5, who will be recommended to the select board for the 2nd round of interviews. The 2nd round of interviews will be conducted by the select board.

The process is to remain confidential until the candidates must be interviewed in person.

It is the committee’s intent to have the list of 5 finalists to the select board by the board’s first meeting in December.

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Paul Tillman, chair of the search committee, asked the board to provide the committee with a list of their priorities. The board provided the following in no particular order:

- People skills; thick-skinned
- Stellar supervisory skills; grant-writing skills
- Ability to communicate and give examples of how communication was used in prior jobs with staff, communication skills in tense situations; no ambiguity
- Municipal experience with budgets, leadership; conflict resolution
- Finish what we start; be used to meetings and controversy; organizational skills; prioritization; understand town scale

It was the consensus of the board that the committee could take more time if needed; that one round of phone interviews may not really be enough. They urged the committee not to rush the process.

VLCT will facilitate communication between all parties (board, committee, candidates).

7. Town Forest Update

Nate Stearns, Town Attorney, was contacted a year ago by the prior town manager, although this process actually began while Jim Mullen was town manager. There is no date on the original agreement, Ms. Abbott owed back taxes and an agreement was penned to exchange the value of taxes for an easement through her property. The Town Forest was property donated to the town by a community member, with the Upper Valley Land Trust managing the land.

The letter from Tyler Harwell was addressed by Mr. Stearns, specifically inaccuracies. Ms. Murphy addressed a statement in the letter, "I understand that the Selectmen are considering the donation of this town forest to the State." Ms. Murphy stated there has never been a board conversation on this idea. Mr. Arrison agreed.

Mr. Fuller felt the Town should consider stopping its pursuit of the easement and gift the land to the State. He made the following points:

- Abbott/Town Forest easement not in place
- No applications have been applied for
- No clear access (2 owners – Abbott, Johnson)
- BCA or Board of Abatement involvement will be necessary
- Present access is in West Windsor
- Asking Board to reconsider -
 - Gift the land to the State park
 - Consider making improvements to existing Town properties instead

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Darlene Kelly stated that the Abbott taxes are now current; however, there is a significant amount of penalties and interest that have accrued over this time.

Not everyone was fully knowledgeable about the history or current status of all of the various components of this project, so Ms. Murphy asked that the interim town manager research the topic and the former Town Manager Ed Morris be invited to the next meeting to join the discussion.

8. Approve Warrant

Motion: To approve the warrants for 11/4/2019 as follow:

General Funds Operating Expenses	\$32,156.97
Payroll	\$14,234.50

Highway Fund Operating Expenses	\$10,175.59
Payroll	\$9,291.92

Solid Waste Management Fund	
Operating Expenses	\$10,442.07
Payroll	\$1,773.47

Library	Operating Expenses	\$0.00
	Payroll	\$1,969.52

Grants	Operating Expenses	\$42,221.46
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Special Revenue	Operating Expenses	\$0.00
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Reserves	\$0.00
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Long Term Debt	\$0.00
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Grand Totals	Operating Expenses	\$94,996.09
	Payroll	\$27,269.41

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

Vote: All in favor

9. Employee Health Plan Renewal

Several employees were on hand to participate in the continued discussion on their health plan renewal options. After meeting with Mr. Fedorow and Ms. Kelly, the consensus of the

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highway department employees was to go with the MVP high-deductible plan with the HSA, but to have the HSA “front-loaded” at the start of each year.

There is a risk to the Town with front-loading the HSAs, because if an employee leaves shortly after receiving the funds, the funds go with them. Ms. Kelly estimated it would cost \$38,000 to fully fund the HSAs.

Mr. Todd had done some research on his own and asked if the MVP Platinum plan had been considered. Mr. Hier said it had been ruled out as it was too expensive for both the town and the employees. Mr. Todd disagreed.

There was discussion about the insurance broker – the cost of the broker, how the fee is paid, whether or not the Town should have one. There was no consensus about the matter.

Ms. Kelly said the town needs to decide before the November 21st open enrollment date.

Motion: To table the discussion to the next meeting (November 19th).

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

Vote: All in favor

Motion: To extend the meeting to 9:30 PM

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

Vote: Unanimous in favor

The discussion continued with the question of the cost increase of the premiums. Donnie Huntley said that the cost to the employees of the platinum plan with 7.5% of the premiums paid by the employees or the high-deductible plan at 9.5% and the HSAs are virtually the same. However, the employees prefer having the HSAs, fully funded up front with 9.5%. Then followed more discussion about how much to put into the HSAs up front. The consensus was to fund 50% up front.

10. Budget Update

Ms. Kelly asked for guidance from the board on how to present the capital needs of the departments (new police cruiser, grader repairs) – special article? Funds from reserves? Full amount in the general fund? The police cruiser needs \$13,000 in repairs, the grader needs \$25,000 in repairs, and the compacter at the transfer station needs to be replaced (\$47,000). And then there is the question of funding for the fire departments.

It was agreed that large capital expenses are never put into the general fund budget, but rather as a separate article with support from reserves.

Ms. Kelly noted that if the article for the cruiser gets voted down, then there will be \$13,000 needed for repairs that won't be in the budget.

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It was agreed to level fund the fire departments.

11. Highway Garage Salt Shed

Motion: To table this item to the next meeting.

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

Vote: All in favor

At 9:33PM:

Motion: to Extend the meeting to 10:00 PM.

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

Vote: All in favor

12. Fire Discussion

Mr. Fedorow said he had been working on creating a single set of SOGs for the two departments. It was to be discussed at the next meeting of the chiefs and Mr. Fedorow on November 19th. However, Chief Dauphin said he would not attend any more of those meetings.

Motion: To start accepting applications for volunteer firefighters for a municipal fire department

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

It was agreed that this would be the beginning of an “exploratory municipal department” and those who choose to apply, would be, in essence, providing a letter of intent to create the new department. The existing departments would continue to operate as they are. This would be an exploratory process with a municipal department as its end result.

Vote on motion: one in favor; 4 opposed – motion fails.

There was no consensus on what to do next.

13. Skyline Drive Ditching Bid

Motion: To accept the bid of Daniel Lesnick for ditching on Skyline Drive.

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

Vote: All in favor

14. Town Office Security Bid

Motion: To table

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

Vote: All in favor

15. Appointments

16. Future Meeting Agenda Items

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17. Adjourn

Motion: To adjourn the meeting

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

Vote: All in favor

The meeting adjourned at 10:10 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