

SPECIAL SELECTBOARD MEETING
November 3, 2022
Minutes

Present: Bill Cleary Nanette Rogers
Lee McClenny Greg Barrows
Callie Hamdy

Guests: See attached list

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. The meeting was held in person and via Zoom.

CHANGES TO AGENDA

Removed Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District and Vermont Family Network.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

AGE WELL FY'24 BUDGET REQUEST

Tracey Shamberger and Emma Kaplin from Age Well were present. Age Well's services allow Vermonters to age in place. They saw a 26%-40% increase for request of services, especially during COVID. Westford residents have utilized services such as wellness programs, meals on wheels and transportation, medical insurance, and long/short term care as well as the Age Well helpline. Vermont is the second oldest state in the country and is expected to grow especially within the next seven years. Adults in rural areas have less access to specialized healthcare. Age Well is asking for level funding at \$1,500.

UVM HOME HEALTH & HOSPICE FY'24 BUDGET REQUEST

Maya Fehrs presented UVM Home Health & Hospice's (UVMHHH) FY'24 Budget request. UVMHHH serves over 4,000 people in the area and have an exceptional volunteer force, having more volunteers than they do staff. They do charitable care which is supported through fundraising. Their budget reflects an increase of \$250 from last year due to the higher cost of care as well as the increase of requests for service.

Ben Borstein was present. He asked if UVMHHH has overcome the challenges in communications when there are same day or morning of cancelations. Families often must juggle to rearrange appointments because they rely on the assistance of UVMHHH. Maya did not have a specific answer to Ben's question. She noted that UVMHHH has struggled with work force challenges and have 22 open clinical positions open which is about 12% of their clinical work force. It is something they are working on and ensuring they are paying competitively.

VERMONT CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING FY'24 BUDGET REQUEST

Linda Meleady from the Vermont Center for Independent Living (VCIL) was present. VCIL is a statewide disability justice organization; their goal is to maintain dignity and independence for disabled Vermonters. VCIL consistently provides services to one or two Westford residents. Services provided by VCIL are home access modification, meals on wheels for those under 60, assistive technology equipment, and more. VCIL is requesting \$100 for FY24. It was noted that previous budgets did not included funds for VCIL.

STEPS TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FY'24 BUDGET REQUEST

Mariah Ogden from Steps to End Domestic Violence (aka Steps) was present. Steps was founded in 1974 and provides shelter for those who have experienced domestic violence as well as a help hotline. Steps served over 2,000 individuals in FY'22; one Westford resident received services. Many clients choose not to disclose where they are from for their safety, so the data is quite skewed in this way. Steps considers all numbers like this underreported. For FY'24, Steps is requesting \$300, which is level funded.

COMMITTEE ON TEMPORARY SHELTER FY'24 BUDGET REQUEST

John Michael from Committee on Temporary Shelter (COTS) was present. COTS helps people who are struggling with housing, often those that are not counted by HUD as homeless. They are Chittenden County's primary provider for those experiencing homelessness; they have two shelters as well as a drop in day shelter with hot meals. The housing shortage is a huge part of the work COTS does because it provides longer shelter stays and more services per individual. A children's mental health therapist was brought on board to help children navigate their feelings of being homeless.

John pointed to Westford's lack of rentals as part of the issues for those that face homelessness. If you sweep over an unoccupied area and think nobody has ever slept there, he can assure you that you are wrong. He has found people sleeping very close to populated areas that have not yet entered services. The housing resource center is available for any family facing a housing crisis. The budget is funded 50% by small fund donations from the public and the rest is a mix of state, federal, and local grants, and private family foundations which allows them to provide service for free. COTS is requesting \$500. It was noted that previous budgets did not include funds for COTS.

GBIC FY'24 BUDGET REQUEST

Sam Andersen from the Greater Burlington Industrial Corporation (GBIC) was present. GBIC works with high tech and value-added businesses in Chittenden County that are dollar importing with revenue for the State of Vermont. Westford's community wastewater system is in the top 10 of GBIC's regional priority projects list. This affords Westford with extra points when applying for NBRC or other grants. GBIC is requesting \$200 however it goes beyond that. If Westford allocates funds, GBIC can tell the state that the Town is supportive of the work they do with businesses in Chittenden County. It was noted that previous budgets did not include funds for GBIC.

HOPE WORKS FY'24 BUDGET REQUEST

Catherine Ducasse from Hope Works was present. Hope Works has a 24/7 hotline for those that experience sexual violence; they do safety planning and provide emotional support. A lot of their work is medical advocacy. They often work with victims of human trafficking, homeless people, and those who experience domestic violence. Hope Works has a legal advocacy for victims that helps victims fill out paperwork and connect with lawyers if one is needed. They have a clinical therapist and do prevention work at colleges and high schools. Catherine was unable to provide numbers for Westford clients because they only track information that is disclosed to them; their chat line is anonymous. Hope Works is requesting \$300, which is an increase from the current fiscal year.

GRADER & DUMP TRUCK REPLACEMENT

Charlebois is offering \$50,000 for trade in of the 2017 Western Star. This would bring the purchase price of a new truck to \$113,000. A purchase and sales agreement are required to

secure a slot on the wait list for the truck as well as the grader. John would like to get on the lists; there is no cost to the Town at this point. The Board agreed to purchase and sales agreements to secure slots for the equipment.

CORRESPONDENCE

A group of Westford residents and town officials met regarding recent issues with homelessness in Westford. The conversation centered on being able to get homeless individuals to communities that have more resources as well as protecting town employees. The recent homeless individual stopped in Westford because it seemed like a safe place. Nanette felt the meeting went well. It is her goal that town staff feel and are as safe as possible. It was noted that homelessness has increased around the country and Westford is not immune to it. The group felt it is good stewardship to find the best humane and kind way to help guide these individuals to the communities with available resources.

The Minute Clerk for the Planning Commission submitted their resignation. A notice for a new clerk has been posted.

Some residents have approached Bill regarding ARPA funds and the wastewater project. People have said that whether the wastewater system moves forward is still up to a bond vote. The issue many people expressed is that the vote has not yet taken place. Greg found it interesting because wastewater projects are one of the top three on the approved uses of ARPA funds. It seems strange that people do not want to use the Town ARPA funds for the wastewater system. In Greg's opinion, it is not Town money that will be used. Bill feels that because the guidelines changed on how the Town can use it, it is town money. Before the ARPA guidelines changed wastewater spending would have been a slam dunk.

Barb Peck's opinion is this is a hot button topic. She was contacted by a person who wants the wastewater project to continue. The person contacted her because Barb has experience with writing petitions. The person hoped that Barb would help with a petition for a bond vote in March. Barb contacted Melissa and Melissa said a petition vote would not mean anything because it would not be an informed bond vote. Melissa could not answer for the Planning Commission, but she does not think it would make any difference because the Planning Commission would still go forward with their plan for an informed bond vote. People are concerned that the money would be lost. Barb thought it would be nice to at least find which way the wind is blowing on the wastewater project.

Ben Bornstein contacted Bill to find out what the Selectboard expects of Westford's CCRPC representative. Bill's response was to be a recon agent for Westford; to pay attention to the initiatives to see if Westford needs to be involved and to keep the Board informed.

It was noted that the resident who assists the Fire Warden with website issues regarding the burn permit system has not submitted time for compensation, although funds have been budgeted based on a request from the Fire Warden. The person has advised that they do not want to charge for their time. The Board stated they are willing to compensate the person if they change their mind.

COMMUNICATION

The Planning Commission will advertise the Minute Clerk position.

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EXECUTIVE SESSION

Bill Cleary made a motion to enter Executive Session at 7:32 p.m. for a personnel matter, seconded by Lee McClenny. Motion passed: 2-0. People in attendance were Lee McClenny, Bill Cleary, and Nanette Rogers. The Board exited Executive Session at 8:56 p.m. No action was taken.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lee McClenny, Chair
Selectboard

Callie Hamdy
Minute Clerk

GUEST LIST

Ben Bornstein
Barb Peck
Tracey Shamberger (Age Well)
Emma Kaplin (Age Well)
John Michael Longworth (COTS)
Mariah Ogden (Steps to End Domestic Violence)
Sam Andersen (GBIC)
Maya Fehrs, UVM Health & Hospice
Linda Meleady (VT Center for Independent Living)
Catherine Ducasse (Hope Works).