

SELECTBOARD MEETING  
November 9, 2023  
Minutes

**Present:**

Bill Cleary	Holly Delisle
Lee McClenny	Callie Hamdy
Dave Baczewski	Greg Barrows
John Roberts	Guests: See last page.

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

**CHANGES TO AGENDA**

Removed Recreation Department Budget Request.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Vicky Ross was present. She reported that Uplift Westford, a group that funded wastewater mailings, is a PAC that registered on November 6, the day before the election, and is headed by Essex resident Brian Sheldon. She found it curious that an Essex resident took an interest in a Westford issue. Andre Roy was present. He asked, regarding the Wastewater Ordinance, is that still a draft and does it still have to be finalized and passed? It is still in draft status. It would not be passed unless there was a yes vote. Andre wanted to revise the draft to have the subscribers responsible for the pumping out of their own systems.

**MINUTES**

Bill motioned to approve the October 26, 2023; minutes as amended. Lee seconded. Dave abstained due to absence. Motion passed 2 in favor, 1 abstained.

**ROAD SCHEDULE**

John Roberts, Road Foreman, presented the Road Schedule from October 27, 2023 – November 9, 2023. Bill motioned to approve the Road Schedule. Dave seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

Bill noted that on Osgood Hill, the hill itself has not stayed this nice for such an extended period and he believes this is due to the new roller.

**FY'24 HIGHWAY BUDGET STATUS REPORT**

Greg Barrows, Treasurer, went over the FY'24 Highway Budget Status Report.

**FY'25 HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT BUDGET REQUEST**

The Highway Department is proposing a budget of \$1,032,235.10, a 0.99 percent increase over the previous year. (Carl Rogers notes this budget needs to be adjusted to include next year's salaries, reserve funds, associated expenses, and equipment payments.) Increases were mostly due to increased prices for supplies and contracted services, John said. Bill thanked John for going through with a fine-tooth comb. The Highway Department budget is the single largest percent of the Town Budget, Lee said.

## **FY'25 WESTFORD FIRE DEPARTMENT BUDGET REQUEST**

The Westford Fire Department is proposing a budget of \$86,172. This is up \$37,172 from last year, a 75.86% increase. Garrett Bartlett, Fire Chief, went through the budget line by line. The increases are mostly due to equipment testing and replacement. The biggest expense is the new line item of \$37,172 for the paid on-call proposal they had discussed in August. Garrett reported after doing research, the department discovered it is the only one in Chittenden County that is running on full volunteer status. All other departments are paying their staff members something for their time. Westford Fire is hoping paid on-call will help maintain a larger base of firefighters. They provided comps from surrounding towns. The department's draft stipend policy is \$30 for a training, drill, or meeting; and \$15 an hour for a minimum one-hour call. Currently there are 11 volunteers in Westford. They kept their compensation request simple and low to get their members some compensation while keeping the budget costs as low as they could.

Ben Bornstein mentioned that to the Highway Department and Fire Department's credit they have been working on obtaining the state's Municipal Energy Resilience Grant (MERP) that could help keep some costs down on heating their shared building.

The tanker truck is due to be replaced. The current truck is going to be 30 years old at the time of replacement, and when it was 25 years old the replacement was pushed out. Build times for new trucks are a minimum of 2 years. The department does not currently know the cost, but they are suggesting a 2024 Annual Town Meeting article to authorize the selectboard to borrow up to \$675,000, to be offset by funds from the fire department equipment reserve, to purchase a tanker truck. The department reports about \$60,000 in a reserve fund for this item. They've been talking about refreshing the target pricing for when things are going to be replaced, as that has not been done for some time.

Garrett thanked Carl for meeting with the Fire Department to go over their capital budget. In that discussion they proposed pushing some of their capital budget items out further if it would help with the purchase of the tanker.

Lee said there is no question there is a need for the equipment. He said there is still a need to come up with \$130,000 to make the 20 percent down payment goal for the town's capital expenses.

Garrett said the tanker is required because the town has no hydrants, so the tanker is the truck hauling the water supply.

Bill thinks it is more important to work on the people part of the equation so there is somebody to drive the tanker if we buy it.

Dave asked for clarification – the five-year capital budget also shows the pumper scheduled for replacement in 2026. Garrett said yes, that is correct, however that is one of the items they were looking to push out. Bill asked if anyone had looked into selling the old tanker. Yes, the department had looked into selling their old truck. Because it is 30 years old, it would sell from \$15,000 to \$20,000.

## **FY'25 WESTFORD LIBRARY BUDGET REQUEST**

The Library is requesting a budget of \$94,078 which is an increase of \$4,250 (4.73%) from FY'24. Bree Drapa, Library Director, and the Library Trustees were present. Vicky Ross, Treasurer, made the budget presentation. This budget includes annual increases for the director, assistant, and substitute, as well as an increase for cleaning services.

The library is not included in the Town's contract for IT services. Instead, Bree does that herself to save costs. They wanted to make that point since the library tries to operate as low cost as they can.

Bree has a 100% success rate on grants. Grants do not allow them to cover normal operating expenses. Bree said the library budget is leaner than she would like it to be, and it represents an offset of as much as they can make without sacrificing library services. When the selectboard deliberates on the library budget, Bree and the trustees want to be there. If the library budget is not fully funded, they will need an opportunity to tell the selectboard which services they will have to cut.

#### **FY'25 TOWN CLERK BUDGET REQUEST**

The Town Clerk is submitting increased budget requests for both Town Clerk and Board of Civil Authority (BCA)/Elections.

The total request for town clerk is \$48,696.84, an approximately 8% increase due to salary increases.

The total request for BCA/Elections is \$5,070.00, a 50% increase due to increased needs in supplies.

#### **FY'25 TREASURER BUDGET REQUEST**

Town Treasurer Greg Barrows reviewed his FY'25 budget requests, which are included in the Town Clerk's budget.

#### **REVIEW ROUGH DRAFT OF FIVE-YEAR CAPITAL PLAN**

Carl and Holly presented a spreadsheet draft of a new five-year capital plan. After speaking with department heads, they updated cost estimates and equipment needs. They will continue to work on this and present an updated version at an upcoming selectboard meeting.

#### **CONSIDER REQUEST FOR SCHULTZ TRAIL CROSSING FOR FOREST MANAGEMENT**

Addison Kasmarek, representing GreenLeaf Forestry for Norm Schultz, requested permission to cross the Schultz Trail for forestry purposes, as part of Norm's current use forest management plan. This was approved last year, but the project was delayed due to weather. Bill motioned to approve. Dave seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

#### **CONSIDER STONE SHORE MUNICIPAL CONSULTING'S PROPOSAL FOR GRANT MANAGEMENT SERVICE**

Town Administrator Holly Delisle explained that Ron Rodjenski, owner of Stone Shore Municipal Consulting, LLC, could be hired to take over the maintenance of the grants former town planner Melissa Manka had in progress. His job would be to monitor those and help out in the planning department until a new town planner is hired. Bill made a motion to approve the contract as presented. Dave seconded. The motion passed 3-0.

#### **DISCUSS OUTCOME OF WASTEWATER BOND VOTE**

The November 7 vote saw the wastewater bond fail. Town Clerk Callie Hamdy said there have been a number of inquiries about reconsideration. She explained the reconsideration process, saying that it is her opinion as an elected official that the information should be provided neutrally and the engagement of a voter's rights should not be discouraged, regardless of one's personal opinion.

There was a lengthy discussion by selectboard members and those present at the meeting and on Zoom about the project.

Lee said his understanding is that if there is a petition for reconsideration, there is an open question that the town needs to refer to legal authorities, "as to whether anything substantive or significant can be changed with regard to the project, or whether that spoils the second consideration process."

Lee said that there is unanimity among the selectboard that they do not wish to enter into discussion of the ordinance between now and Town Meeting Day. Bill and Dave agreed.

The selectboard is going to ask the town attorney for legal advice before the planning commission's November 20 meeting as to whether the planning commission can do any more work on the wastewater project at this point.

#### **DISCUSS PLAN FOR REQUIRED VDP GRANT CLOSEOUT**

The Vermont Community Development Grant for the 1705 Project requires a public hearing before the end of the year to close out the grant. Bill motioned to hold a public hearing as part of the Thursday, Nov. 30, Selectboard meeting. Dave seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

#### **FY'24 GENERAL FUND BUDGET STATUS REPORT**

Greg Barrows, Treasurer, went over the FY'24 General Fund Budget Status Report.

#### **ACCOUNTS PAYABLE AND PAYROLL WARRANTS**

The board reviewed and signed the accounts payable and payroll warrants.

#### **CORRESPONDENCE**

A few budget items came in, and they were put aside for a future selectboard meeting.

#### **COMMUNICATION**

Holly will send out a communication about the new five-member selectboard, terms, requirements for running, etc.

#### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Bill motioned to enter into executive session to discuss a personnel matter. Dave seconded. The motion passed 3-0 at 9:08 p.m.

#### **ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lee McClenny, Chair, Selectboard

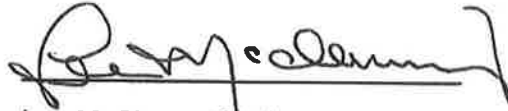
Callie Hamdy, Minute Clerk

## GUEST LIST

Dick Lavallee	Bree Drapa
Tess Lavallee	Helen Sterling
Carl Rogers	Maureen Wilcox
Deb Jorshick	Addison Kasmarek
Garrett Bartlett	Mark Drapa
Vicky Ross	Melissa Manka
Sheila Franz	Seth Jensen
Kim Guidry	Ron Rodjenski
Ira Allen	Carol Winfield
Barb Peck	Ben Bornstein
Erin Panattu	Andre Roy
Basil Panattu	Pat Hechmer
Dave Lavallee	Ora Moore
Lori Johnson	Becky Roy
John Quinn	Mary Ann Bassford
Steve Willard	

ADOPTED this 30 day of November, 2023.

WESTFORD SELECTBOARD



Lee McClenny, Chair

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David Baczewski



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William Cleary