

Town of Fairfield Selectboard Minutes

December 12, 2022

In Attendance: Tom Howrigan, Gavin Ryan, Ronald Bocash and Brian Dubie

Road Foreman: Maurice Jettie

Town Clerk: Linda Hodet

Town Administrator: Cathy Ainsworth

Secretary: Melissa

Visitors: NWATV, Dennis Hendy, Peter Burns, Sarah Allerton, Melissa Southwick, Greg Pierce, Bobbie Greene, David Howrigan, Peggy Howrigan

1. Peter, Sarah and Melissa came to present the proposed 2023 library budget. Reviewed the line items. Some items shifting from the library to potentially being funded by the Friends. The library is looking to increase the hours of the part-time person and to offer part-time leave as is customary with all other libraries the area. The issue is that the Town personnel policy says no benefits until 30 hours. Assistant Librarian would be 22 hours. Peter posed the question of whether to change the Town Personnel Policy or to have 2 different policies, one for Library employees and one for everyone else. Gavin: not interested in changing the Town policy. Ron: If the Library is part of the Town, it seems like they should follow Town policy. The Selectboard said if the library chooses add this benefit, they should make their own policy. Cathy mentions that this policy should be referenced in the Town policy. Second issue discussed is an increase in Sarah and Wendy's salaries of 3.5% for COLA and a one-time market rate adjustment to each. Sarah up 11%, Wendy up 6.1%. The third issue discussed was to decrease the budget expenses on books and programming because the library expects the Friends to donate funds specific to these to expenses, as has been discussed library meetings with them. Ron suggested that these expense lines stay the same because the actual expenses will not be gone, just using different revenue. Cathy agreed, saying this could improve transparency. Friends don't want to be tied to a specific donation. Discussion followed. The Selectboard honored the Friends request. They suggested that they could adjust their spending over the year, based on actuals, if needed (spending more from some lines, less from others), as long as the bottom line for taxpayers remains the same.
2. Maurice says the guardrails are due to be installed on Wednesday. 550 truck needs two augers. \$2800. Will take two weeks to come. Ron asks Moe to check in with Sam White who is concerned that Reynolds Rd intersection is widening.
3. David and Peggy Howrigan, Dennis Hendy, Greg Pierce and Bobbie Green appeared to discuss the proposed wind project on Menard Road. Dennis reports that 73 people, around the pond and on the Fairfield Pond Recreation Association, have responded negatively to the project. Dennis wants to know if they did a wind study? He showed the wind map from the Fairfield Town Plan, which was referenced by Jason Day's analysis, that states it "is not replacement for surveyed information or engineering studies." The map shows that projected wind on Menard Rd, at the proposed wind site, is a low wind area. He discussed Jason Day's analysis and reiterated concerns for the pond. Dave Howrigan says power generated by the proposed wind farm, would stay on our side of the substation. Dennis questioned this, explaining the process Vermont has in place to apply

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combined renewable energy to the power grid, for sale to purchase as power credits by companies in and outside of the state, at higher prices. Dave Howrigan asks “Are we in compliance with the Town Plan?”, with these small wind turbines in this location. This was also the question posed by Jason Day in his analysis. Mr. Dubie shared that the Public Utility Commission issued an 8-page document which includes an unprecedented determination, based on Jason Day’s (Project Developer) history and track record missed deadlines and repeated non-compliance, that he be barred from presenting to the PUC. Cathy concurs with Brian’s research, that the Town Plan is the determinate on issues such as these, noting that there are clear excerpts in the Town Plan that say “protect the scenic beauty” and placing limits on land development that impacts the pond. Based on the many perspectives and interests at the table, Tom Howrigan suggests, and all parties agreed, that a legal opinion is needed, to determine if this project fits the Town Plan. Cathy will consult Town Attorney. Parties recognize that this is time sensitive and are hoping for a legal opinion before year end.

4. Linda’s report includes the following: Damian and Stephanie Branon are planning on conserving land on Spring Hill Rd with the VT Land Trust. Budget meeting on Wednesday is confirmed to be at 9am with lunch at noon. Linda has a quote from NEMRC to engage outside assessors: \$18,432 (quoted as an hourly rate, at the high end), as long as there remains a lister in the office to input data. It’s expected that this quote is high as Linda, as lister, would do much of the prep work. This could change if Linda isn’t lister. Ron asks if they can provide a “not to exceed” price quote.
5. Cathy reports that according to our financial management procedures, AP warrants need 3 signatures, but suggests that the SB can edit the procedures to say that warrants can be approved by a motion and have two signatures. Gavin states that this is important to ensure bills are paid on time, if only a couple Selectboard members are available.

Gavin made a motion to change the financial management procedures to indicate that two Selectboard Members can sign approval of AP warrants, so payments may be processed and sent, then the AP can be ratified, by motion of the majority of the board, at the next Selectboard meeting. Ron seconded. All in favor.

6. Cathy says the snow plow and sand rate for the school is not finalized. Reviewed some rough numbers but did not include benefits and cost of equipment. Will be ready for next meeting. Other school contracts are much higher.
7. Cathy is working on closing out the FEMA grant. Huge job requiring many extra hours of work. Has to be completed before Christmas. JD has given some assistance.
8. Cathy has reviewed the budget with Amanda and worked on how to account for last year’s surplus transfer to the Equipment Fund. The townspeople voted to put the surplus into the equipment fund. In order to access the previous year’s fund balance, in the NEMRC accounting system, the program deficit-spends this year’s general fund. Then the difference between last year’s fund balance and this year’s

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deficit-spend is the actual surplus of this year. The Selectboard requests that the transfer be made, and the accounting be explained to voters in the Town Report.

9. Cathy presented the budget YTD with anticipated expenses to year end. We received more revenue than expected so, even though we may be over in expenses she expects there may still be a fund balance. Will be reviewed more fully during the budget planning meeting.
10. Tax sale is 10am on December 21 at the office. A SB member must be present if they want to bid. If there is another bid, the SB will not bid. Check will not be required by the Town on that day if the Town wins the bid. Minimum bid will be approximately \$2200.

Ron made a motion to approve the minutes. Brian seconded. All in favor.

Brian made a motion to approve the warrants. Ron seconded. All in favor.

Brian made a motion to enter Executive Session to discuss a personnel matter. Ron seconded. All in favor. Information only. No Motions resulted.

Gavin made a motion to adjourn. Ron seconded. All in favor.