

Windham VT Selectboard Meeting Minutes
December 17, 2020 Special Meeting

Present via Zoom web conference:

Maureen Bell, Selectboard Chair
Peter Chamberlain, Selectman
Kord Scott, Selectman
Gail Wyman, Asst. Treasurer

Kathy Scott, Treasurer
Joyce Cumming, Selectboard Clerk
Kathy Jungermann, Auditor

Call to order

Maureen announced the meeting and called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m.

Additions to Agenda/Announcements/Reminders

There were no additions, announcements or reminders.

Budget Review: Highway/Roads (with the exception of Payroll)

To date, approximately \$439,000 has been spent in the Highway/Roads budget. Kathy noted that tires for the backhoe were not included; this will add \$1,500 to \$2,000 to the total. The December amounts were estimates in some cases rather than actual expenditures. A surplus of approximately \$40,000 is expected.

The Contracted Services category is proposed to increase from \$26,460 to \$40,900 due to an additional \$10,000 for ditching maintenance and an increase from \$10,000 to \$15,000 for tree services. In response to a question from Maureen, Kathy explained that she included \$300 for water at the garage assuming that bottled water will replace the expense of the water cooler currently being rented. Maureen asked why no expenses were listed for guardrail replacement (that work was done in December of 2019 at a cost of \$13,500). Kord explained that one guardrail repair was made this year using material in stock at the garage. They have yet to bill the individual who caused the damage.

Diesel Fuel prices are down and this category is proposed to decrease from \$35,000 to \$30,000. Fuel use is also down. Kathy explained that she has not billed Windham Elementary School for reimbursement of \$3,500 or the Volunteer Fire Dept. for reimbursement of \$500 this year because she figures it all comes out of the same pocket. Maureen agreed to waive the billing for this year but not as a general practice.

Education & Seminars was proposed for level funding at \$350.

New Equipment is proposed for level funding at \$2,500.

2017 truck payment is proposed for level funding at \$15,921. Payment will continue through 2022.

Loader & grader lease payment is proposed for level funding at \$37,877. Payments continue through 2025.

Equipment-Maintenance Expenses is also proposed for level funding at \$25,000. Kathy noted that the 2011 dump truck incurred repair expenses of almost \$11,600 this year. She suggested it may be time to consider a replacement for this vehicle. Brief discussion followed on the life expectancy of vehicles and factoring expenses into an equipment replacement plan.

Road crew compensation was skipped as this item is slated for discussion in executive session at the end of the meeting.

Road material is proposed to increase from \$128,950 to \$135,000. Kord explained that Richard would prefer to increase spending on stone and gravel (and less on other line items) to address long-term maintenance of roads. Kathy explained that a large sand purchase of \$19,200 was made this month and that additional sand will not be needed. Salt was also purchased at a cost of \$6,380 this month. Road stone was ordered this month at an estimated cost of \$8,000, and is being stockpiled at the vendor for pick-up as needed.

The meeting connection was lost briefly at 10:45 a.m. and resumed at 10:47 a.m.

The category for general supplies was proposed to decrease from \$4,000 to \$2,000.

The category for utilities was also proposed to decrease from \$9,500 to \$7,500 due largely to decrease in use of heating fuel.

Fund balances were shown for bridges and culverts at \$59,906.56, repaving at \$143,068, garage M & I at \$80,182.75, and road machinery at \$34,152. Kathy noted that grant funding of \$9,300 was received for road erosion through MRGP. The 2019 budget surplus of \$39,522 was transferred to the Road Machinery Fund.

Kord noted some “big-ticket” items that need to be considered. Several projects are eligible for grant funding but Town matches are required, i.e., the Route 121 culvert repair which requires a \$100,000 Town match, the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan requires a Town match of \$2,500, and the Better Roads grant will also have a matching fund requirement. In addition, the salt shed repair will cost in excess of the \$80,000 currently in the garage M&I account. And an amount should be determined for the equipment fund to be requested as an article. He wants to keep these costs in mind when deciding how to apply surplus funds from the 2020 budget.

Budget Review: General

Last year, the voters appropriated \$148,276 for the general fund, not including the Windham Volunteer Fire Company which requested \$30,000 as an article which was approved. Kathy included \$30,000 in the Public Safety budget for the fire dept. in 2021—it was not clear whether the fire dept. wanted a separate article or not for 2021. The amount was also not known.

The Meeting House and the Delinquent Tax Collector will be broken out into separate depts. for 2021. The method of compensating the Delinquent Tax Collector as a percentage of revenue will need to be voted as a separate question. Maureen noted that the DEC watershed expense was omitted from the draft budget, and she requested that Kathy add a line item for this in the amount of \$500 which should be listed as MRGP and which is payable in June. The transfer station was budgeted at \$20,000 next year based on an anticipated increase. The payroll amount for the auditors was increased by \$500 from \$2,500 to \$3,000. Kathy combined the legal expenses previously included as line items in the budgets of the Planning Commission, Listers, and Selectboard into a single line item in the Selectboard budget, and increased the total amount from \$3,800 to \$10,000. Maureen noted the need to correct line items in the Listers budget to allow \$250 for education and seminars, and \$250 for NEMRC training. The NEMRC annual license is included in the Town Office budget and this expense increased to \$5,000 in 2020. It is covered in the 2021 budget under Computer Expenses and Continued Services. Brief discussion followed on the move from NEMRC to a new platform for the grand list next year. Joyce suggested that funds for training will be needed on a new system. Kathy said it depends on the platform and she was told not to worry about it by Ernie Saunders at NEMRC.

Discussion followed on the Meeting House which is its own category in 2021 (previously included under Appropriations/Dues/Fees/Taxes). The line item for maintenance of the Meeting House remains at \$7,500. Furnace oil was budgeted at only \$294 next year based on actual cost for 2020 which was an unusual year and the building was not used much. A suggestion was made to increase furnace oil to \$600 for next year. The cost of cleaning was budgeted at \$1,000—a suggestion was made to decrease that amount to \$500 since the building will not be used much during the first half of 2021.

The Planning Commission budget was reviewed. Maureen noted that Bill was not available on the evening the Selectboard reviewed the Planning Commission budget but he requested level funding of all line items with the exception of an increase from \$400 to \$500 for education and seminars. Maureen reviewed the October email she received from Bill. If a line needed to be reduced, he had suggested Consulting Services. All other line items should remain as funded last year (legal services at \$2,000, mileage at \$250, payroll at \$3,500, and printing and copying at \$150). Kathy expressed reluctance to level fund the Planning Commission budget since not much was actually spent in 2020.

The Public Safety budget was proposed for level funding in 2021. Kathy expects the sheriff's dept. contract rate to remain the same next year. She also proposed level funding for emergency management, the constable and the health officer, and SWNH mutual aid. Kord provided an update on communication he has had with Sheriff Mark Anderson about possible shared services of an Animal Control Officer. This will be reviewed at an upcoming Zoom meeting on December 22 at 10 a.m. Kord noted that there would likely be a financial expense associated with this initiative if the other 4 or 5 towns agree to pursue it. Kord anticipates that the cost of a part-time deputy's salary at \$25,000 - \$35,000 will be shared by the participating towns on a pro-rata basis according to population. Kord has requested a written proposal. He suggested including approx. \$2,500 for this in the Public Safety budget. A more definite amount may be available before the budget goes to print. Brief discussion followed on revenue generated by fines and how that money would be handled, i.e., whether the income generated would reduce the town's expense proportionately. Kathy will follow up with the fire dept. on whether or not to include fire dept. funding in the public safety budget or have it voted as a separate article as was done last year.

The Selectboard budget was level funded in most line items. The cost of a Zoom account at \$125 for next year was discussed in October. At that time, the cost of legal services in the Selectboard budget was proposed for an increase from \$1,500 to \$2,000. Kathy said she felt strongly that someone needed to maintain the reins on legal services and she suggested including legal services for all departments in one budget under the Selectboard's authority and increasing the total amount for legal services from \$3,800 to \$10,000. Billing for legal services was delayed this year and this line item is significantly over budget with \$10,178 spent YTD on legal services for all departments. Maureen disagreed with such a drastic increase, noting that the over-expenditure was due mainly to legal expenses associated with the education funding question. Discussion followed on how the additional expense was incurred: approx. \$1,000 was attributable to nuisance animal ordinance and animal cruelty questions, \$1,100 on roads, \$700 for the tax sale, and \$5,800 on school issues. Maureen didn't mind bundling all legal expenses in the Selectboard budget as long as the costs were still broken down by the departments incurring the expense. Joyce asked for clarification that the school budget does not include a line item for legal expenses. Discussion followed on the expenses associated with the tax sale which involved 5 properties at a total cost of \$700. Kathy noted that 14 properties are currently at risk of sale for non-payment of taxes. Kord agreed with the need to break out expenses by department, and the importance of reviewing expenses as they are incurred. Kathy suggested asking the attorney to provide an average spent by other towns on legal services. She also noted that it was unclear who had authority to pursue legal advice on the school issues and how much it would cost. After further discussion, Kord suggested an increase for legal services across all departments from \$3,800 to \$7,500.

In response to a question from Peter about mileage, it was suggested to reduce or eliminate mileage line items as most meetings are currently handled remotely via Zoom and will likely continue that way through the first half of

2021. Brief discussion followed on mileage expense in the auditors' budget to cover the cost of picking up the town reports. Kathy Jungermann agreed to look into the cost of having the books delivered. Discussion following on mileage expenses incurred by Zoning officials in reviewing properties. There was no line item for this in the Zoning budget as it is covered under payroll.

The Social Services budget was reviewed. No funds were proposed for Gerda's Equine Rescue, LGS Ed foundation, and West River Community Project. In response to a question about LGS Ed foundation, Peter noted that members of the Social Services committee have reported that scholarships are generally funded through the Lions Club and/or Rotary, not through Social Services, hence the decision to cease funding through the S.S. budget.

The Town Clerk budget was proposed for level funding across most line items with the exception of contracted service-clerk training for which no funds were listed for 2021. Kathy suggested that training could be covered under seminars/workshops which was budgeted at \$200. Maureen asked Kathy to review this with Mike.

The Town Office budget was reviewed. Computer Expense and continued services is budgeted at \$8,500 for 2021. Kathy confirmed that the cost of NEMRC at \$5,000 is included in the \$8,500. Computer Security and maintenance was budgeted at \$2,000 for next year. Consideration is being given to changing vendors for computer maintenance. Kathy proposed spending \$1,500 this year for new computers/monitors with cameras for remote meeting capabilities. Vance is looking into these costs. Kathy is also requesting another computer for the Treasurer's Dept. so that she and Gail can work in different programs simultaneously. A suggestion was made that Kathy discuss the cost with Mike since he will likely have a more moderate approach toward this expense. The cost of COVID cleaning supplies will be covered by a grant this year, but the expense for 2021 is budgeted at \$2,080 for office cleaning and \$300 for supplies. In response to a question from Joyce about the amount of \$4,874 for liability property insurance, Kathy explained that she has hoped that insurance coverage through PACIF would be less expensive, but that was not the case. Maureen asked about the minor amount budgeted for workers comp insurance since \$450 was spent in 2020; Kathy confirmed that \$31 was correct. Brief discussion followed on the counter divider for Town Office that Joe Lamson was to construct. This work has not yet been done. Maureen noted that the work must be completed by year-end in order to be covered by the grant. Brief discussion followed on Town Meeting 2021. Maureen will attend a webinar on the topic this afternoon. She expects it will be handled similarly to the general election, but with an informational meeting on Zoom. The annual town report will be out in advance of the informational meeting. Candidates for office do not need to petition to have their names included on the ballot but must submit a consent form to the Town Clerk by the 6th Monday prior to Town Meeting.

The Treasurer's budget was proposed for level funding in most line items. Kathy requested an additional \$600 for seminars and workshops in 2021 for training on a new platform.

The cost of FICA in the Zoning budget was missing.

Non-tax revenue received in 2020 totals approx. \$9,875 to date. Kathy will provide an update when year-end numbers are available.

Having noted that she missed the opportunity for public comment at the start of the meeting, Maureen called for public comment

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Executive Session: Payroll for Highway/Roads

Motion: To enter into Executive Session at 11:47 a.m. for the purpose of discussing compensation for members of the road crew—moved by Peter—all in favor.

Motion: To exit Executive Session at 11:58 a.m. and return to the public meeting—moved by Maureen—all in favor.

Motion: To adopt the pay structure for the road crew members as proposed by the Treasurer for 2021—moved by Kord—all in favor.

Before adjourning, Kathy suggested a change in the budget format for next year. She will develop a few draft options for the Selectboard to review. Maureen requested the info by Friday when she plans to distribute the agenda.

Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn the Special Meeting at 12:01 p.m.—moved by Peter—all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce Cumming
Selectboard Clerk

Attachments:

--Highway Roads budget proposed for 2021
--General budget proposed for 2021