

Windham VT Selectboard Meeting Minutes
January 11, 2021 Special Meeting

Present via Zoom web conference:

Maureen Bell, Selectboard Chair
Kord Scott, Selectman
Bill Dunkel, Planning Commission
Imme Maurath, Auditor

Peter Chamberlain, Selectman
Joyce Cumming, Selectboard Clerk
Kathy Jungermann, Auditor
Kathy Scott, Treasurer

Call to order

Maureen announced the meeting and called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

2021 Budget Review –General Accounts and Highway

Maureen suggested beginning with the General Accounts and reviewing department by department.

In Appropriations/Dues/Fees/Taxes, the Londonderry Solid Waste Group (transfer station) fee was updated to \$24,200. No other changes were reflected.

The Auditors budget showed no changes.

Delinquent Tax Collector is now its own department consisting of wages and employer FICA/Medicare. A suggestion was made to include a line item for legal expenses and reference the line item in the Selectboard's budget where these funds are shown. Likewise a suggestion was made to include a line item for public notices and reference the line item in the Town Office budget where the funds are shown.

Listers/Reappraisal budget showed no changes.

The Meeting House budget showed no changes other than to include a reference for fiber optics as part of the telephone expense.

Bill Dunkel was present to discuss the Planning Commission budget. Maureen reviewed the amounts budgeted by line item. Maureen explained that legal expense funds were reduced to \$1,000 from \$2,000 budgeted last year. The rationale focused on the updates to the Town Plan, the Zoning Regs, and the Energy plan which were completed last year. Payroll has also been reduced from \$3,500 to \$3,000 based on the 6 Planning Commission members currently serving who receive \$500/year. Discussion followed on whether there was any statutory requirement re: the number of members to serve on a Planning Commission. Maureen was not certain if there is any statutory requirement but believes most Planning Commissions have between 5 and 9 members. Brief discussion followed on Tom Johnson's term which is up for renewal this year and whether to refrain from re-appointing him to reach an odd number for majority voting. Bill doesn't see any advantage to having an odd number of members for procedural reasons; furthermore, Bill noted that Tom is a valuable member of the Planning Commission. Bill noted that while Kate Wright has mentioned dropping out, he hasn't encouraged her leaving, and would prefer she remain a member on the Planning Commission. Membership will remain at 6 with

payroll at \$3,000 for 2021. Printing and copying was not budgeted as this can be done in-house. Public Notices is shown in the Town Office budget at a lump sum of \$800 for all departments (up from \$500 at last budget review). Bill is in agreement with the total Planning Commission budget of \$4,730 for 2021.

The Public Safety budget was updated to remove funding for possible Animal Control Officer as a shared service. Maureen will draft an article question for this topic and include the associated expense in the question. Joyce asked whether the funding aspect could be included in the article question based on the advice Maureen received from the Secretary of State's office not to include the funding aspect in the article question to increase the Selectboard from 3 to 5 members. Maureen will check with Will Senning. Imme suggested that the topic of funding could be brought up at the informational meeting by someone familiar with the issue raising the question of the expense for the benefit of others participating in the info meeting who may not be aware of the topic. No other changes were reflected in the Public Safety budget.

The Selectboard budget was reviewed. Kathy S. reported that she had spoken with Alan Partridge who, along with others, has agreed to withdraw the petition to increase the Selectboard from 3 to 5 members. Kathy noted that Alan understood that this is a difficult budget year and is willing to withdraw the petition to avoid the additional expense associated with the increase in membership. Maureen noted that the withdrawal needs to be received in writing. Joyce suggested that line 69, lump sum legal expense, should be eliminated since the detail is reflected in the legal expense by department which follows. She also noted that the \$1,500 budgeted in 2020 refers specifically to the Selectboard and should be reflected on line 74. As for the YTD total expenditure, she suggested breaking it out by department. Following discussion, the Selectboard decided to reflect the YTD total expenditure of \$10,439 on line 74 rather than apportioning the expense between the Meeting House, Delinquent Tax Collector and Selectboard.

The Social Services budget reflects the amounts approved by the Social Services Committee. In addition, there will be two article questions for funding Senior Solutions and SEVCA. Kord noted that at the last meeting he had advocated for funding the West River Community Project. In retrospect, he felt he should have recused himself because he serves on the WRCP Board. He noted that the Social Services Committee had denied the request and he felt he should have accepted their decision. He has informed WRCP that it will not be funded in 2021 and advised them to submit future requests to the Social Services Committee in a timely manner. No funding was shown for WRCP in 2021. In response to a question about Gerda's Equine Rescue, also not funded in 2021, Peter explained that the focus of the Social Services Committee this year was food programs and helping people.

The Town Clerk budget reflected no changes. Imme pointed out that the bottom of the Town Clerk budget needs a double line.

The Town Office budget reflected no changes.

The Treasurer budget reflected no changes.

Zoning/911 reflected no changes.

The total proposed 2021 budget is \$229,662, an increase of approximately 6.6% over 2020. After applying non tax revenue received from civil fines, town clerk fees, town office fees, zoning fees, COVID grant funds and the NEMRC fund balance, and accounting for the current year deficit, the 2021 General Budget totals \$208,521 which represents an increase of approximately 17% over last year. Joyce suggested including the line item for the YTD deficit in the accounting so that everyone understands how the final budget figure was determined. Kathy replied that a determination has yet to be made re: whether to use the long form which lists budget amounts for all line items or a short form showing totals only by department in the Town Report.

Discussion followed on using some of the designated fund balance of \$9,000 earmarked for audit purposes to reduce the general budget further.

Kord requested discussion of a comparative analysis of the 2020 and 2021 article questions. In 2020, all article questions, including the general fund, roads, repaving, bridges/large structures, road machinery and fire company resulted in a total budget of \$795,796 after applying the roads budget surplus to the road machinery fund. For 2021, the comparison amount is \$806,041. Kord suggested removing an article question to fund the road machinery fund at \$10,000 in order to bring the total 2021 budget down to \$796,041, practically level funding.

Kord suggested that the \$9,000 in the designated fund for audit savings could be used to create a reserve fund with broad parameters that could be used to cover discretionary unexpected expenses. Kord referred to information he received from Susan Senning re: this subject. Imme noted that the money would need to remain in a designated account as a reserve fund. Kord noted that it would be possible to borrow money for road machinery if necessary in a crisis situation. Kord will follow up with Susan Senning.

Kord reviewed the designated funds for bridges and culverts, repaving, garage M&I, and road machinery. Kord suggested moving the roads surplus balance of \$45,907 to the bridges and culverts fund, noting that there is a \$100,000 grant match requirement for the Route 121 culvert project.

Maureen reviewed the article questions from last year to finalize the budget proposals.

Motion: To warn a budget article question for the General Fund at \$208,521 for FY 2021—moved by Kord, seconded by Peter—all in favor.

Motion: To warn a budget article question for Winter and Summer Roads at \$482,520 for FY 2021—moved by Kord, seconded by Peter—all in favor.

Motion: To warn a budget article question for Repaving at \$90,000 and Bridges and Large Structures at \$15,000 for FY 2021—moved by Kord, seconded by Peter.

Brief discussion followed on the other article questions for Senior Solutions, SEVCA and shared services of an Animal Control Officer.

Members of the Selectboard thanked Kathy and Gail for their considerable work in developing the FY 2021 budget.

Adjournment:

Motion: To adjourn the Special Selectboard meeting at 5:15 p.m.—moved by Peter—all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce Cumming
Selectboard Clerk