

**Town of Waitsfield, Vermont**  
**SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES**  
**Monday, January 16, 2012**

**I. Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. at the Town Office by Kate Williams.

**Members Present:** Vice Chair Charlie Hosford, Paul Hartshorn, Bill Parker, Sal Spinosa and Chair Kate Williams.

**Members Absent:** None.

**Staff:** Town Administrator Valerie Capels and Recording Secretary Laura Caffry

**Others:** Darryl Forrest, Fred Messer, Wayne Whitelock, Steve Shea

### **III. Regular Business**

#### **1. Public forum.**

Wayne Whitelock and Fred Messer made a presentation to the Selectboard on behalf of the Masonic Lodge to ask voters to consider property tax exemption for the Masonic Lodge. They are a non-profit, do charitable works, and occupy and maintain a historic building. The Masons are now hosting the Odd Fellows at no charge to the Odd Fellows; the two charitable organizations share the building. The Odd Fellows have sold their meeting hall which had been tax exempt. It is back on the municipal tax role. The Masons feel that the good works they do make them a community resource. They would like to use the money they raise to do good rather than to pay taxes. Their membership has declined so it is harder to raise funds.

The Masons typically give out about \$10,000 per year. The Odd Fellows support community events as well. The Masons hosted the Irene Emergency Headquarters at no charge and covered all the expenses for utilities. Their entire tax bill, municipal and school is over \$4,000.00 per year. The municipal is portion is roughly \$700.00. It was not known whether the exemption would be only for the municipal portion. [UPDATE: If approved, the entire tax bill would be exempt.]

**MOTION:** Mr. Parker made a motion that a special article will be put to the voters at Town meeting asking the voters to decide if the Town will exempt the Masonic Lodge meeting hall located at Main Street for a period of ten years from Municipal taxes. Mr. Hartshorn provided the second. All voted in favor.

#### **2. Budget work shop, including consideration of compensation and benefits. May include an executive session regarding personnel matters.**

There are few remaining questions in the proposed capital budget. However, the trade-in value for the 2005 dump truck that is being replaced is yet to be determined. No matter what the amount of trade-in will be, it is expected that \$147,000 the Road Department Truck Reserve Account is enough to cover the cost of the truck. \$40,000 per year will be put into the Reserve Account this year, as it has been for many years.

There was discussion about the Culvert Replacement Project Reserve Fund. It has a balance of \$13,430. The Budget Task Force recommends funds be added to the Fund each year, however they are not confident about what the target number needs to be. The costs for projects are not entirely known nor is the amount of funding that will be received from State and Federal

sources. Funds of this size have never been added to this reserve account in the past, but there are big culverts that need to be replaced in the near future. They plan to add \$50,000 to the Culvert Reserve Account this year. Last year only \$18,000 was contributed. Mr. Parker stated that municipal bonds rates are currently at a low interest rate. The rate is at 4% over 20 years. Perhaps culverts should be borrowed for rather than having the big impact on the municipal tax rate that using general operating funds does.

The Brook Road culvert will be replaced in 2012. The grant money is in place. The work needs to be done. Preliminary decisions have been made on the timing of other projects; that allows the budget work to be done. Some projects can be pushed back but others shouldn't be. When the bottom line is reached on the draft budget, the timing of projects can be adjusted if need be.

The general municipal budget was discussed. There was discussion whether the \$7,500 for Legal Services of \$7,500 will be adequate. It was agreed that at this point \$7,500 is the placeholder figure.

Mileage Reimbursement is a new line item in the Selectboard budget. Those expenses had been previously been within training and travel, but not all mileage is related to training.

A new section for the Conservation Commission has been created to reduce confusion with the Restroom, Recreation, and Conservation Reserve Fund. The actual spent in 2011 will be updated to show the full \$700 has been spent. That was supposed to be corrected last year; it will have an impact on the historical figures. Some of their work is covered by grants. There is a line items for maintenance of parks in the miscellaneous section. Maintenance of parks now includes mowing of the triangles; it used to be a part of the Road Department. Trail maintenance may go in there in the future as well. Ms. Capels is working to make the budget more clear.

The Road Department 2011 diesel fuel and truck maintenance came in over budget. Increased truck use due to increased work because of the two floods was in large part the cause of expenses being above budget in the fuel line item.

The repair and maintenance number for the 2005 truck cannot be eliminated because the truck will be used for the remainder of the season before it is traded in.

Garage Heat did not decrease as had been expected. Ms. Capels has been tracking data. Insulation was added this year. That will have an impact. Ms. Capels will work with the Energy Committee to analyze the data and to determine what has happened and what can be improved.

The total increase in the road department will be about 25%. Mr. Shea pointed out that last year was the first year of the Budget Task Force's involvement. They prepared a very tight Road Department budget with very little fat. The budget was very hard to stay under especially in such an extraordinary year.

Gravel Pit Management 2012 line is up because of engineering services that will be needed to meet permit requirements. The Road Department needs training in order to meet the permit requirements and removal of larger trees is planned to allow for gravel additional gravel extraction.

The net increase for the Road Department expenses is almost \$40,000. It is largely attributed to repairs, the flooding and work that was pushed back because of the flood. It covers what the Road Department feels they need for 2012.

Employee Benefits is increased over both budget and actual based on increase in wage rates and increase in health insurance. The Health Insurance rate went up and the number of people covered by health insurance increased by one.

The Fire Department numbers have already been reviewed with the Town of Fayston and should not be revisited unless it is really needed because it takes both towns to do so.

The Police Program has changed substantially. The Town will no longer maintain a vehicle. The cruiser is expected to be sold. The Sheriff's department is interested in buying back the video recorder the Town had purchased. We have a new constable. There was agreement to add a new line item with \$800.00 for training and mileage. The insurance figure may be high. This area will be revisited by the Task Force.

That number for Special Appropriations is fairly flat. Two more organizations may be asking via special article for \$250 each.

Mr. Hartshorn reported that the Cemetery Commission investments are not currently providing enough funds for anything beyond mowing. Without additional funds they will not be able to perform additional maintenance such as fence repair and stone cleaning. They will ask for a special article at Town Meeting. They believe \$24,000 would cover all the work they would like to do. Their investments would cover mowing for this year, but last year they didn't do all the maintenance they typically do. They expect their investments will cover mowing but not fence repairs. There was agreement to include a special article for \$10,000.

Fire Hydrant maintenance is a new line item in the Miscellaneous section. Maintenance of Parks is up because we are now mowing the mounds at the Lareau Swimming Hole. It also now includes mowing of the triangles that was in the Road Department.

Discussion followed about the budgetary procedures for special articles. Historically, the numbers from the Special Articles has been included in the budget and on the warning as an article. The auditor pointed out that this is redundant. There was agreement to rename the Special Articles section to Contribution to Reserves to more accurately reflect the line items included in this section and no longer include them as an article. A new section for actual Special Articles will be added at the bottom of the budget that relates to voter-approved articles. This will be a logistical improvement for Town Meeting Day. The change will be explained in the Selectboard report.

For Capital & One-Time Expenses the total is \$555,367 but a large portion is offset by grants, much of which is in hand. Ms. Capels will add a Net Balance line, which will show the actual figure is much lower. Grants applied for but not yet secured will be marked with an asterisk and explained

Bridge Street Storm Drainage is in the capital budget as a placeholder. The cost is not yet known or if grants will be available. There was agreement to include borrowing a 5-year loan as an option.

The Brook Road Culvert is prosed at \$177,782 but there is an offsetting grant.

Flood Expense Debt Service is a new line item. There is also a new line item for Fire Department FEMA Grant Repayment. The Department had taken in grant money, but they did not use it all and it needs to be paid back.

Under Revenue the Penalty Fee figure is missing. It is a "wash" with the expense paid to the Tax Collector. The figure is listed in the expense section; it needs to be listed in both places or the "wash" won't be reflected properly.

The Road Department State Aid for Highways number is substantially below last year because the State advanced some funds for 2012 in 2011.

Overall debt service is down. That is helpful because the flood line of credit will come due in the future. Approximately \$380,000 has been borrowed to date. Reimbursements will be put directly against the principal.

\$0.3251 is the projected tax rate for 2012. It was \$0.2879 in 2011. That would be an increase of \$.0371. There was agreement to apply the Budget Stabilization Reserve funds to offset some of the increase, with some left in it to keep the fund alive.

A 3 ½% wage increase across the board is included. In 2011 the increase was 2%. In 2010 no cost of living increase was given. It basically reflects the increase in the cost of living. It is a relatively small amount as part of the Town's budget at \$12,000, but the increase would mean a lot to the people receiving it. Additionally, some wage grades may be changed for specific positions, within the Road Crew, using comparisons to comparable positions in other towns.

One position's base rate will be bumped effective January 1. The Road Foreman position will be adjusted to make it more comparable to other Towns. The Town of Waitsfield Road Department wages are lower than average. Any adjustments based on performance will be discussed in executive session.

MOTION: Sal Spinosa moved to go into executive session to discuss personnel matters. Bill Parker seconded. The Selectboard met in executive session from 10:15pm to 10:30pm. Upon returning to open session, the following actions were taken:

MOTION: Charlie Hosford made a motion, seconded by Sal Spinosa, to approve the following compensation for municipal employees: 3.5% pay increase for municipal staff; \$20.50 for Rodney Jones with a \$0.50 increase upon completion of his CDL; \$18.00 for Joshua Rogers; and \$17.00 for Kenneth Bagley. Kenneth Bagley is to receive an increase to \$16.25 retroactive to January 1, 2012. All voted in favor.

### **3. Consideration of use of Hurricane Irene gravel for water project.**

The question has been asked if the Town would sell gravel to the water project at the Town's cost. It could save the water project approximately \$1,000 and save the Town the cost of moving the gravel for storage. Ms. Capels consulted with Mike Kline at the Agency of Natural Resources and confirmed it is allowable. It may turn out the contractor cannot use it this year. .

MOTION: Paul Hartshorn made a motion, seconded by Sal Spinosa, to authorize the sale of the gravel to the water project at the Town's cost. All voted in favor.

### **4. Review of preliminary draft Town Meeting warning.**

This was tabled due to the late hour.

### **5. Review of preliminary draft Selectboard Report.**

This was tabled due to the late hour.

### **6. Bills payable & Treasurer's warrants were paid.**

### **7. Selectboard roundtable.**

This was tabled due to the late hour.

**8. Approval of minutes.**

This was tabled due to the late hour.

**9. Town Administrator's report.**

This was tabled due to the late hour.

**IV. Other business.**

**1. Correspondence / reports received.**

No discussion.

**V. Adjourn.**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura A. Caffry  
Recording Secretary

reviewed by

Valerie Capels  
Town Administrator