

TOWN OF FAIR HAVEN, VERMONT
SELECTBOARD; Water and Sewer Commissioners; Liquor Commissioners; Cemetery
Commissioners

Municipal Building, Fair Haven, VT – January 25, 2022 -- 6:00 P.M. -- REGULAR Meeting

Zoom Meeting Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82753919550>

Phone: 1 929 205 6099 | Meeting ID: 827 53919 550

UNAPPROVED MINUTES

Members Present: Jeff Sheldon, Rod Holzworth, Glen Traverse, Chris Cole (6:35) Carol Egan (6:50)

Others Present: Town Manager Joseph Gunter, Recording Secretary Claire Stanley, Jim Britt, PEG TV, Health Officer John Lulek, Lorraine Brown, Neil Robinson, Roland L. Greenough, Theresa Greenough, Robert Dollar, Deborah Laiacona, Carl Scott, Paul Corbiey, Sharon Adams, Jack Adams, Linda Barker, Tracy Richards

Call to Order: Acting Chairman Jeff Sheldon called the meeting to order at 6:04 P.M. and led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

Public Hearing on the Local Option Tax: Town Manager Gunter prepared information sheet(s), available to the public and gave an overview of how a Local Option Tax (LOT) works. Tax is collected by retailers; the State returns 70% to Fair Haven; Town holds money in a bank account to be used for voter approved capital projects. Mr. Carl Scott asked what was not understood by voters who voted this down twice. Mostly, folks did not understand that both ballot questions needed to be voted “yes” for the tax to take effect; some thought it was “just another tax”. Mr. Traverse noted, it was voted down by very low margins; it was felt the vote was close enough to justify trying again. Mr. Scott inquired, how much of the estimated \$110,000 revenue is paid by Fair Haven residents, there must be a way to calculate that. Manager Gunter stated statisticians are unable to give an answer. Residents pay either way, in property or option tax; this is more a luxury tax; necessities are exempted from the tax. The tax is paid by everybody including out of Town people who work here such as at school(s) and travelers who stop for shopping or a meal. The Town relies heavily on federal grants for large infrastructure projects that take 3 to 5 years; will continue to apply for available grants. Mr. Robert Dollar said there is waste of money; ex. the dog park on land that could have been used for a tax paying business; and how can we be sure where the money is really going. Mr. Traverse stated the Board went to Local Option Tax because so much of the Town infrastructure needs help. Mr. Corbiey asked, why 2 Articles? Mr. Holzworth explained, it is statutory, the Town has to change the charter to allow for the tax; the Article language is written by the State. Mr. Robinson noted 13 states tax groceries (information from the Center on Budget Priorities); if the \$110,000 (from 1% tax) were added to the operating budget, it would mean a huge property tax increase; also, Fair Haven benefits a lot from PEG TV recording meetings; many Fair Haven residents watch PEG TV for their information. Ms. Barker noted the vote was close both prior times; the information sheet sent to residents should include reasons for that; she voiced concern of impact to local business owners. Mr. Robinson reported Rutland realized double their revenue expectations from Local Option Tax. Manager Gunter

stated \$24,400 was received last year from the PILOT program. If the Local Option Tax is not successful, it can be voted out; it is worth a try; unless we try something, things will continue to be same old, same old. The only way to realize revenue from cannabis sales (if the Article passes) is with a Local Option Tax. The Town expects good benefits from the fireworks sales; most of their sales are from out of State customers. There will be another Public Hearing on February 8, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. at the Municipal Building. Manager Gunter and the Board will try to bring more information for clarity. Mr. Holzworth **moved to adjourn the Public Hearing** at 6:52 p.m.; seconded by Mr. Traverse and passed.

Amendments to the Agenda: Mr. Traverse **made a motion to add *Recognition of Linda Barker*** to the agenda; seconded by Mr. Sheldon and passed

Approval of Minutes: Mr. Traverse **moved to approve the Minutes of the January 11, 2022 meeting** as written; seconded by Mr. Sheldon and passed.

Mr. Traverse **moved to approve the Minutes of the January 14, 2022 meeting** as written; seconded by Mr. Sheldon and passed.

Recognition of Linda Barker: Manager Gunter reported that he nominated Linda Barker to Main Street America who in conjunction with Civics Plus recognize public service volunteers. Ms. Linda Barker was awarded a certificate for **Outstanding Public Service Volunteerism** for her work in fund raising for Fair Haven -- playground equipment; dog park; also, her dog Murphee is "Dog Mayor" who visits schools and shut-ins. Congratulations to Linda Barker and thank you for your efforts.

Five Minutes for Public Comment:

Ms. Lorraine Brown expressed concern that painting the Park fence was not included in the budget. She noted the Park is the most beautiful in the State; the fence should have been painted two years ago; efforts will be made to raise funds to do the painting. Chairman Cole noted the Board considered using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds.

Ms. Tracy Richards read a prepared statement expressing concern re: the lack of high-speed internet and reliable phone service; has the Town developed a telecommunication plan. The Town is currently operating with a substandard power grid with spotty service negatively affecting schools, businesses and Town in general including First Responders. She noted the State has **The Vermont Telecommunications Plan** for expanding and supporting in rural areas, and provides a Connectivity Fund up to 6 million dollars a year to build broadband in the State. What is the Town doing to access these revenue sources? What is/are the issues? She notes access to upgraded telecommunications system would attract new homeowners and businesses, improve our education system and business growth. Mr. Lulek reported on a televised news article stating high school students in a New York Town had taken over the Rescue Response because of difficulty in recruiting. Why does Vermont require college and special training? Ms. Richards replied that Vermont has very strict regulations. Ms. Richards asks that everything be

done to participate in the State Telecommunication plan for good access to broadband. Copies of the statement were given to members. Chairman Cole thanked Ms. Richards for her comments.

Ms. Deborah Laiacona commented re: when sidewalk is cleared, the snow is piled up against their fence and now the fence is damaged. She contacted Manager Gunter and was told DPW Supt. is in charge of plowing. She has received no response from Supt. Kerber. She has been told to submit a paid invoice to the Town for reimbursement. There was also a problem of lawn damage while plowing. Mr. Sheldon stated members had been to a DPW site visit where these issues were discussed. It is unusual to have "mud season" in December causing lawn edges to be plowed up. DPW is trying to find better ways to successfully plow sidewalks. Ms. Egan suggests a bit more care and forethought for quality work.

Town Manager Report & Communications: Manager Gunter reported:

- * Voters guide to be sent to the printer this week.
- * **Police** reported three (3) arrests, two leaving the scene
- * Dispatch is changing back to Regional
- * **DPW** reports chipping away at small snow events that use as much or more resources; Mr. Gunter will find out how much salt/sand is used compared to average
- * DPW has been helping out the Water Dept.; have thawed one frozen line and five frozen meters
- * Wastewater upgrade has progressed to gladly moving to the new Control building
- * Mr. Traverse inquired, is there an opportunity to cut brush (Bolger Road)
- * The Water Dept. has seen an uptick of appx. 20,000 gallons from the South tank. Have been checking meters and not able to find a leak. If anyone finds a leak, please contact the office
- * The "trailer park" has used more water because of a leak
- * Have started the **Pet Mayor** program at the Grade School with application sheets; they have requested a hiking trail and workout equipment in the area behind the school building. Chairman Cole cautions re: concern for wetland issues; will contact the Principal re: the apparatus being a lure for unwelcome adults
- * The Lockburn Ave. trailer was sold for \$2300.
- * Continue to work on Gantt sheets, showing project progress

OLD BUSINESS:

Policy Review Class 4 Roads: Members reviewed the Class 4 Highway Policy discussing maintenance, needs and responsibility re: class 4 roads. Some language was changed including b. ii. from Highway "foreperson" to "Superintendent", and adding 5. f. "classified as trail". Manager Gunter will make the changes and bring the policy to the next meeting for signatures.

Policy Review Capital Improvement: Mr. Traverse stated, it seems like the five year Capital Program changes quite regularly. Both Mr. Holzworth and Ms. Egan stated it is their experience that the first year should be fixed, but it is unrealistic to expect the plan not to change the next four years. There was lengthy discussion including: ideas for better management of criteria / financing; given that the Board changes, it is difficult to normalize; that funds need to be

allocated with a Capital Plan; what are expectations of DPW. Manager Gunter will re-draft and return to the Board for further discussion and signature.

Policy Review Reserve Funds: Members reviewed the Reserve Fund Policy making some changes to minimum and maximum amounts; added Emergency that is now at \$350,000; Mr. Sheldon suggests changing the title to include Emergency, Fund Balance and Water and Sewer; it is felt that these amounts be reviewed yearly to avoid errors. Manager Gunter will make changes and bring a new draft to the Board for review and signature.

NEW BUSINESS

Road Mileage Certificate: Mr. Sheldon **moved to approve the Road Mileage Certificate** as presented; seconded by Mr. Traverse. Mr. Holzworth noticed the total mileage was 36.540, and has been 26 + in the past. Is that because 10.540 of State Highway is included in the total which the Town does not maintain? It was determined that the numbers from the State are correct and the motion carried unanimously. Members signed the document.

Municipal Project Manager Appointment: Mr. Traverse **made a motion to approve the appointment of Eric Hall** from the Rutland Regional Planning Commission as Municipal Project Manager for the Sidewalk Improvement Grant; seconded by Mr. Sheldon. Mr. Holzworth questions, does he report to the Fair Haven Town Manager or Rutland Regional; shouldn't we have a contract before appointment approval? Mr. Traverse said at this point, anything we can do to move the project along should be done. The motion carried with Mr. Holzworth dissenting.

Letter to Agency Secretary Joe Flynn -- Agency of Transportation (AOT): This letter is a request to gain support and consideration for a 5% match grant to replace the Adams Street Bridge. The Town is working with the Rutland Regional Planning Commission to get our project forwarded to the State Master Priority List which is done in April. Some language changes are suggested and will be brought back to the Board for review and approval. It is expected that the Adams Street Bridge replacement project is still several years away.

Audit Request for Proposal (RFP): One proposal was received -- from RHR Smith, our current auditor -- for \$14,500 for the next 3 years, an increase of \$2,000. Town Accountant Jenny Bertrum highly recommends this firm. Mr. Holzworth **made a motion to accept the proposal from RHR Smith not to exceed \$14,500; to authorize Town Manager Gunter to sign the three-year contract with the possibility of an additional single audit not to exceed \$2,000**. The motion was seconded by Mr. Sheldon and passed unanimously.

Salt Shed Grant: Information was received today re: a Tarp System for the salt shed which is considerably less expensive than the State requirement of an engineered building. It could be partly funded with the received \$51,000 grant with the remainder paid with Town funds. There was discussion re: durability. Mr. Holzworth stated his company has one that members can visit -- he said it is very durable. Manager Gunter will make further inquiries; more to come.

Parking Lot: Mr. Traverse said he would like to see “Munger Road” on the next agenda

Board Roundtable: None

Review of Financial Reports:

Checkbook Status: \$1,897,092.79

Mr. Sheldon **moved to approve payment of the Payroll warrant for \$31,672.11**; seconded by Mr. Traverse and passed unanimously.

Mr. Sheldon **moved to approve payment of the General Fund Warrants of \$736,243.41**; seconded by Mr. Traverse. Included are payments for BC/BS and Naylor & Breen. The motion passed unanimously.

Executive Session: Mr. Traverse **made a motion to enter into executive session** at 9:00 p.m. with Town Manager Gunter to discuss personnel, 1 V.S.A. 313 (a)(4); seconded by Mr. Holzworth and passed unanimously.

The recording secretary was excused at this time.

The board came out of executive session at 9:55p.m.

Ms. Egan made a motion to **adjourn**, seconded by Mr. Cole; meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted

Claire Stanley

Jeff Sheldon, Board Clerk