

TOWN OF FAIR HAVEN, VERMONT

SELECTBOARD; Water and Sewer Commissioners; Liquor Commissioners; Cemetery Commissioners
Municipal Building, Fair Haven, VT – December 28, 2021 -- 6:00 P.M. -- REGULAR Meeting

Zoom Meeting Link: [https://us02web.zoom.us/j/828 10349 558](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82810349558)

Phone: 1 929 205 6099 | Meeting ID: 828 10349 558

UNAPPROVED MINUTES

Members Present: Chris Cole, Jeff Sheldon, Rod Holzworth

Others Present: Town Manager Joseph Gunter, Recording Secretary Claire Stanley, Aaron Kerber, DPW, Nate Saxon, DPW, Health Officer John Lulek

Call To Order: Chairman Chris Cole called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. at the **Town Garage for a site visit.** Mr. Sheldon inquired re: a capital plan; is anything near time for replacement purchase. Mr. Kerber described trucks, their age and explained their use noting there are two large trucks used for downtown street plowing with smaller equipment clearing outlying streets. It takes approximately 3 ½ to 4 hours to do all areas once; when necessary will start over if there are available drivers and all trucks are working. He explained which trucks are equipped to deliver sand, salt, or magnesium chloride (brine) and how the work is negatively impacted if any of the equipment is inoperable. Mr. Kerber said the cost of the large truck plow and wing assembly is about \$3,000 and lasts about 3 years. He spoke re: needed maintenance; schedules; continued communication between drivers coordinating routes to be able to cover as much as possible; and that their nightmare is the disruption of work if one of the large trucks goes down for any reason. The loader is used mainly to clean up the downtown area, loading trucks for snow removal. There was discussion about down time and the cost of parts and repair; that DPW does not need “nice shiny new” equipment, but reliable equipment that does not require continued expensive repair and lost time. Mr. Saxon noted, at present, are making both purchase and repair payments on the “green machine” truck. Some repair parts are kept on site. Members visited another section of the building where sidewalk V-plow, blower and sand drop trailer are stored. There was conversation re: recent incident of plowing up lawns and ideas for mitigation; when and how each piece of equipment is best for the job. Mr. Kerber stated DPW is working to digitize files, water/sewer systems; hoping to soon having digitized work orders for easier access. A separate break room is required so that workers are eating away from exhaust and/or any fumes. The group moved to the other “barn” building housing the sand truck, van and other machinery including the waste water generator. Mr. Kerber stated he appreciates Board members taking an interest and making this visit. Mr. Sheldon stated again to put eyes on capital budget items. Mr. Saxon stated he has worked here for eight years and this is the first time Board members have made an official visit. He noted there is a purpose to their requests, that requests to the Board are not made frivolously.

Chairman Cole resumed the meeting at the Municipal Building at 7:03 and thanked Mr. Kerber for his time to show DPW equipment to Board members.

Members Present: Mr. Traverse (on phone), Ms. Egan

Others: Jim Britt, Peg TV, Paul Corbiey, Chip Greeno, Chuck Greeno, Carl Scott, Town Accountant Jenny Bertrum, Linda Sienkiewicz, Jim Heller, Linda Barker (on phone)

Chairman Cole led the meeting in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

Amendments to the Agenda: Mr. Sheldon **made a motion to add** Under New Business: Tax Stabilization request; seconded by Mr. Holzworth and passed unanimously.

Approval of the December 14, 2021 Minutes: Mr. Sheldon **moved to approve the December 14, 2021 Minutes as presented;** seconded by Mr. Holzworth and passed.

Five Minutes for Public Comment: The Board heard from Mr. Carl Scott who read a prepared statement asking the Board to reconsider their consensus to include Local Option tax on the March ballot. He questions the procedure to include the subject by adding it to the agenda without notice, noting it had been voted down twice; feels the tax is regressive impacting lower income folks disproportionately; and are Fair Haven residents getting back more tax money than paid in the tax. He urges members to get all the facts before making a decision to put it before the voters making sure it is beneficial to Fair Haven. Manager Gunter stated the State estimates the 1% Local Option tax could realize \$160,000 collected by the State; of which Fair Haven receives \$110,000 (70%); 30% stays with the State rolled into the PILOT program; Fair Haven received \$30,000 from the PILOT program last year. Tax funds planned for infrastructure. Chairman Cole thanked Mr. Scott for his statement.

Mr. Lulek commented that a tax sale held Christmas week seems unnecessary.

Department Head Reports: Mr. Kerber Dept. of Public Works (DPW) Superintendent reported:

- * Recent ice storm was not severe but impactful requiring large amounts of salt and sand.
- * Earlier, the warm weather and rain caused muddy conditions on dirt roads
- * Mr. Kerber thanked Board members for their visit tonight
- * The Adams Street bridge water leak was completed; came in under budget
- * The National Guard building has completed installation of their new water system
- * Weekend of December 18-19, there was a significant water line leak at the wastewater treatment facility; estimate loss of 200,000 gallons; much work and equipment was impacted/destroyed; all is covered by insurance including payment of water loss
- * Except for the water leak event, the wastewater upgrade is going well; still experiencing delays in delivery of materials and equipment
- * The electrical work at the water plant is expected to commence soon
- * The Adams Street sewer pump generator control panel is received, not installed; generator is not received; manual manipulation is still required to keep the pump working

Town Manager Report & Communication: Manager Gunter reported:

- * **Police** Dept. reported the holidays were good to the Department

- * Calls are down
- * Continue to do traffic enforcement
- * Prepared General and DPW Fund balance sheets (in members' packets)
- * Made updates to the Local Options Tax sheet (in members' packets)
- * Coordinating with the State re: replacement of the Main Street water line (before the State paves downtown)
- * Three (3) Committee reports have been returned with suggestions for spending American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds
- * Met with "Flavor the Cow" for the Stewarts Shops opening event
- * It is suggested to wait until 2023 to submit bids for Lights in the Park and Park and Ride
- * Downtown sidewalk contract is moving along; meeting with contractor mid-January
- * Wetland permit is received; now can use the dog park
- * The auditor can do accounting system training in May
- * Developed 3 Gantt sheets, showing project(s) progress
- * Received a thank you note from a Bigelow Hill resident who thanked the Town for keeping the road open during the ice storm event
- * Manager Gunter asked if the Board is in favor of sending out the voters' guide again this year. Members' consensus is it was helpful; keep to facts; yes send it
- * There was discussion re: including that both articles need to be voted "yes" for the Local Option tax to take effect. Mr. Traverse said folks need to understand that both articles need to have the same vote

OLD BUSINESS

Fireworks Permit: Manager Gunter stated the contract (in members' packets) was sent to the Attorney; he is happy with it. Mr. Greeno stated he is O.K. with it; it is exactly what he was looking for. Mr. Sheldon noted the contract needs to have a section for vendor name and contact information. Mr. Sheldon **made a motion to approve the Fireworks sales permit** as amended; seconded by Mr. Holzworth. Mr. Greeno stated he appreciates the time and effort put forth by this Board to allow their business. The motion carried unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

Further discussion about Town Garage visit: Mr. Sheldon commented appreciation for Mr. Kerber and Mr. Saxon's time tonight. Mr. Holzworth stated he would like to see each piece of equipment work time. Chairman Cole commented it is good to get out in the field; would be a good idea to make time to visit the water plant, transfer station, sewer plant. Mr. Holzworth stated he does not agree that equipment needs to be replaced because of age; rather define a different measure of need to replace. To categorize "down time", wear and tear vs event/hazard; feels digitalizing would help.

Grant Match for Playground: Manager Gunter reported signing a contract to purchase and install the playground apparatus and the need for \$16,087 to match the \$49,953.55 grant for the playground equipment. At Mr. Traverse's inquiry, yes there is money in the Match fund for

this purpose. Mr. Sheldon **made a motion to authorize the expenditure, not to exceed \$16,087**, from the Grant Match fund for the playground equipment; seconded by Mr. Holzworth. The vendor has stated they expect to have it built by April; it can be installed in four (4) days; the cost includes a multi-colored rubber safety surface. The motion carried unanimously.

Trailer Tax Sale -- 8 Lockburn Avenue: Taxes have not been paid since 2017 -- owe \$3,409.77 in back taxes. The trailer is occupied by the property owner, not the trailer owner who lives in Poultney; mobile homes and property are taxed separately; property taxes are current. Manager Gunter inquires, does the Board want to bid on it. Mr. Traverse stated, don't know what we would want it for. No action was taken.

Planning Commission Volunteer: Fair Haven resident Ms. Linda Sienkiewicz has expressed interest in serving on the Planning Commission. Ms. Linda Barker sent a letter of support for Ms. Sienkiewicz. Discussion was re: some Commission members have commented they need help and would like to increase the number of their members. Mr. Sheldon noted they had specifically asked the Board to reduce their numbers from nine to five and if they need to increase membership, the Commission will need to make a recommendation to the Board. Manager Gunter will reach out to Phil Adams re: this matter.

Tax Stabilization Request: Manager Gunter reported a request from M.T. Associates was received at 1:00 p.m. today. All necessary application and papers were submitted for their request for a 50% tax stabilization. The property, corner of Washington and Fourth Streets is now valued at \$30,000; the site improvements planned by Dunkin Donuts will raise the site value to \$144,000. The matter was tabled to the next Board meeting; Manager Gunter will contact them to acknowledge receipt of the request.

FY 23 Budget Review Continues: Town Accountant Ms. Jenny Bertrum attended and answered questions noting no significant increases in the Accounting Dept. She stated there is a decrease in salaries due to Ms. Fidolfi's retirement and the new Office Assistant hired at a lower salary. She went on to explain questions re: benefits, retirements, unemployment and insurance premium fluctuation as employees change insurance plans.

Mr. Jim Heller spoke re: Emergency Management and Fire Dept. The Dept. averages about 100 calls per year; have done 104 so far this year; pay hourly minimum wage to each responder. He noted cost for general maintenance, batteries @ \$85 each, firehouse phone line, cell phones. A five year agreement was recently signed with the Washington County Dispatch service, the preferred service; their cost has gone up from \$100 to \$300/month; the fire siren is \$30/month. He reported being in the process of applying for a grant to replace air packs -- were refused the last time application was made -- the grant ran out of funds before they got to Fair Haven. He spoke to the annual cost of service of the trucks and the need to purchase turn out gear for new and qualifying members.

Manager Gunter prepared General and DPW fund balance sheets (in members' packets). There followed lengthy carefully considered discussion re: how best to use the funds: should it be allocated to the Grant Match in anticipation of available future grants; should this go before the voters; do small projects such as painting the Park fence (\$7,000), paint the Municipal Building trim (\$50,000), hire a Rec Director (\$10,000), etc. It is the consensus of the Board to allocate \$150,000 of the General fund balance to the Grant Match reserve fund; use \$50,000 of the DPW fund balance for the Vehicle & Equipment reserve fund. Manager Gunter noted the DPW budget is 98% spent; the General fund is over due to a law suit and other legal costs. Mr. Traverse noted he feels the Board has done the best it could by reviewing the proposed budget line by line searching for ways to stay within the 3%; this is where we are. Ms. Egan **made a motion to approve the 2022-23 budget** as presented showing a 3.65% increase; seconded by Mr. Traverse. There is expectation to have the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) list done in the near future. The motion carried unanimously.

Parking Lot: Manager Gunter added two items: Class 4 Roads Policy; Capital Policy

Board Roundtable: Chairman Cole reported he will have the Board Report for the Town Report this weekend.

Review of Financial Reports: Checkbook Status: \$974,468.57

Mr. Sheldon **moved to approve payment of the Payroll warrant for \$33,941.53**; seconded by Mr. Holzworth and passed unanimously.

Mr. Sheldon **moved to approve payment of the General Fund Warrants of \$129,969.83**; seconded by Mr. Holzworth. Included are payments for BC/BS and PACIF. The motion passed unanimously.

Executive Session: Ms. Egan **made a motion to enter into executive session** at 10:22 p.m. to discuss labor relation agreement 1 V.S.A. 313 (a)(1); seconded by Mr. Holzworth and passed unanimously.

The recording secretary was excused at this time.

The Board came out of executive session at 10:45 pm. Mr. Holzworth motioned to adjourn; Ms. Egan seconded; Meeting adjourned at 10:46

Respectfully submitted,
Claire L. Stanley

Jeff Sheldon, Board Clerk