

TOWN OF FAIR HAVEN, VERMONT

Selectboard, Water & Sewer Commissioners, Liquor Commissioners, Cemetery Commissioners

REGULAR MEETING -- Tuesday, September 19, 2023 -- 7:00 PM

Zoom Meeting Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85646551688>

Phone: 1 929 205 6099 | Meeting ID: 8564 655 1688

UNAPPROVED MINUTES

Members Present: Glen Traverse, Bob Richards, Chadd Viger, Jason Coupal, Rich Greenough

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Town Manager Joe Gunter, Recording Secretary Claire Stanley, Steven Wilson, PEGTV, Rose Anne VanLew, Mike LaDuke, Lillian Billewicz, Johnathan Billewicz

Call to Order: Chairman Bob Richards called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led the assembly in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Elected Auditors: Mike Stannard read a prepared statement, introduced Lillian Billewicz and Glen Roberts, the two other elected auditors. His statement (available at the office) started with a history of his ancestral family's involvement in Fair Haven's Town management. He stated that they, the auditors, are looking to have the Town operations be as transparent as possible and hope to build a relationship with Town officers. They have reached out to other Towns seeking information on their procedure(s) and request that the Board draft a policy for auditor's responsibilities. He stated that their job is to advise the Select Board, they cannot write policy. Mr. Coupal inquired about the two detailed complaints referred to. Mr. Stannard noted that a committee member had asked for documents that were denied; another person had worked for the Town, and it took a long time to get paid. Chairman Richards noted that this complaint was addressed; the person was paid within 30 days of work done. Ms. Billewicz asked that the statutes be read by Board members before policy is written citing those statutes that apply. Mr. Traverse noted that policy for future Board(s) and Board members need to include some kind of project proposal and plans; setting priorities; exact future plans; when funds are used, how will they be replaced. Mr. Traverse noted the auditor's requests are, 1) policy consideration; 2) Select Board responding to complaints; 3) track the budgets of outside programs for transparency, ex. dog park, rec, concerts; 4) sequencing large projects with more projection. Chairman Richards asked that auditors give the Board specific "wants"; that nothing asked is outrageous; that you are welcome back to this Board anytime. Mr. Traverse asked that minutes be taken at meetings. Ms. Billewicz addressed the daily purchasing routine; that they are trying to help as best they can. Chairman Richards thanked them for their time and efforts.

Amendments to the Agenda: Mr. Traverse **made a motion to add "Listers Errors and Omissions"** to New Business; seconded by Mr. Greenough and passed.

Approval of Minutes: Mr. Coupal made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 5, 2023, meeting as presented; seconded by Mr. Viger and passed.

Five Minutes for Public Comment: None

Department Head Reports: Water Dept. Chief Mike LaDuke reported there is a new intern, college student Blake Sheldrick, so far doing a good job. Plan to finish up odds and ends jobs by the end of the year. No further problems with the recent water main break. Tests are coming back good; the south tank is full; have corrected the open/close times at airport valve; chemical costs still increasing; Jason from Aldridge and Elliott will come to inspect the break sight.

Town Manager Report & Communication: Manager Gunter reported:

- * Police report 2 arrests (71 yr. to date)
- * 53 traffic/municipal violation (1259 yr. to date)
- * 22 written warnings (441 yr. to date)
- * 0 parking violation (37 yr. to date)
- * 1 car crashes (27 yr. to date)
- * Completed 15 sets of civilian fingerprints (377 yr. to date)

Manager Report

- * The Municipal Energy Resilience Program grant assessment on the Town Hall will start in October. This to show the energy improvements made -- ADA improvement; furnace; insulation.
- * The budget process has started
- * The business grants are submitted -- waiting for results
- * The Aldridge and Elliott engineer is coming Monday to inspect the recent water main break
- * Received the bill from the contractor that worked the break -- \$23,104
- * Parts are received for repairs at the playground trailer to be done in the next couple weeks
- * DPW cut back the bush on Academy St. There was no response from the homeowner after contact by letter or from home visit by Manager Gunter
- * At Mr. Greenough's inquiry, no applications are received for the open Supt. of Public Works position. Manager Gunter said many Towns are recruiting people with this skill set
- * At Mr. Greenough's inquiry, the Town Hall construction is slowly being finished -- have been more that patient with this timeline

OLD BUSINESS

Sidewalk Grant Discussion -- Funding: Manager Gunter presented a list of four possible funding sources (grants) for the project (one with possible no match); matching funds were moved to the Park lighting project last year. Sidewalk construction is moved back to 2025; class 1 paving moved back to 2026. We have a signed contract for the Park and Ride/Lights in the Park project that is fully funded ready to go. Jim Heller is Project Manager for the Park and Ride/Lights in the Park project. Rutland Regional is the Project Manager for the Sidewalk project. Chairman Richards noted this is a perfect time to include the Auditors in the process. With three active projects, the Town is highly qualified for these grants. Mr. Coupal inquired if

grants are not received, what more is the Town's financial obligation. There should be some sort of deadline to cut our losses in that event. The in-hand State Bike and Ped grant (\$398,000 applied for in 2019) is good to 2026; there are some engineering costs yet to come. There is no risk until 2025.

Sidewalk Grant Discussion -- Hardscape for Seating: College student (s) artists renditions are on the wall of the Town Hall conference room. Project manager needs decision to complete engineering design. Members discussed pros and cons of both grass and cement, including maintenance. It is the consensus of the Board to have the mini park project part grass and part cement.

Listers Errors and Omissions: Listers noticed a "computer glitch" error for the Sharon Parker parcel of property. Mr. Traverse **made a motion to accept the Listers Errors and Omissions statement** showing a \$16,600 taxable value Grand List difference. The motion was seconded by Mr. Greenough and passed unanimously.

At Mr. Viger's inquiry, the Town is not at the threshold for reappraisal. Chairman Richards explained the values criteria. Manager Gunter said so far, not yet there. He will inquire what would be the approximate cost and should the Board budget ahead for reappraisal.

NEW BUSINESS

Budget Discussion and Guidance: Manager Gunter requests guidance re: what increase the Board expects in the budget; this year needs guidance on adding a Recreation Director position. As in the past he expects to present a budget with only operating expenses with an A La Carte list of items considered a benefit to the Town, ex. cameras for the playground. This provides the Board with options to add to the budget rather than having to cut items. Mr. Viger said yes, a Rec Director is needed. Mr. Traverse stated he would not support a budget with with a 4% or more increase; adding positions is expensive, Rec Dir., DPW Supt., help in the office are needed; need to know these costs before adding. There followed lengthy discussion. Mr. Coupal noted this Board has an obligation to do what the Town needs, to support what is best for the majority of the Town. We are not explaining why these items are needed; it is a small noisy minority not supporting. People would more likely support with better knowledge of what is needed. Mr. Greenough noted the group that attended the Board meeting re: needs of the playground and recreation also spoke to the fact that the Rec program(s) could/would generate revenue and would not cost a lot in the long run. We need to do some things such as small sidewalk projects that folks would see; ditching; there are not enough people in DPW to do the work -- we need bodies. If people knew that, they would support the budget. This Board has a responsibility to do what is best for most of the people in Town, including the children. Chairman Richards stated that we have been telling the Town year after year that we level fund the budget. This is not true since inflation has not been included in budget calculations. In fact, our budget has decreased. Ms. VanLew suggested a Rec director could be part-time DPW or part-time administrative assistant. Mr. Greenough stated the main goal is infrastructure and public safety. Mr. Coupal said a priorities plan is needed. Ms. Stanley commented that the

Board seems to underestimate the voters. She agreed with Mr. Coupal that more explaining, public relations, is needed; that doing small, visible projects would give voters confidence in Town management as Mr. Greenough suggested; and that a good Rec program is something that impacts more Town residents, families.

Parking Lot: It is the consensus of the Board to table all Parking Lot items.

Board Round Table: Mr. Greenough noted the need to do ditching and maintain our highways.

Mr. Traverse commented on where will snow piles be located after the coming downtown projects are completed. Suggestions include the green spaces on West Park Place, the old Outlet space; will have to find creative ideas to not have snow piles in the downtown area.

Review of Financial Reports: The **checkbook status is \$227,367.08** .

Mr. Traverse **moved to pay the Payroll Warrant, \$33,748.88**; seconded by Mr. Greenough and passed unanimously.

Mr. Traverse **moved to pay the General Fund Warrant, \$909,777.22**; seconded by Mr. Viger. This includes a school payment, appropriations payment, water bond payment and water main break expenses. The motion carried unanimously.

Executive Session: Mr. Traverse **moved the Board into executive session** at 9:09 pm to discuss Personnel, 1 VSA 313 (a)(3); seconded by Mr. Coupal and passed.

The Recording Secretary was excused at this time.

The Board left executive session at 10:22 pm. Motion to **adjourn** by Mr. Traverse; seconded by Mr. Greenough.

Respectfully submitted: Claire Stanley

Glen Traverse, Board Clerk

