

TOWN OF FAIR HAVEN, VERMONT

Selectboard, Water & Sewer Commissioners, Liquor Commissioners, Cemetery Commissioners
SPECIAL MEETING -- Tuesday, December 21, 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, Josh Markie, Ryan Lawrence, Luke Vadnais, Eric Ramey,

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.

FY 2025 Budget Review: Members reviewed selected sections of the budget in detail beginning with making no change in **Accounting Dept.** Manager Gunter noted the salary line includes 40% of the Office Asst. salary and 65% of the Accountant salary. In **Debt Management**, Manager Gunter said the last payment for replacing the Municipal Building fuel tank will be made next year; the sewer bond payment is shared by the sewer/water dept. and the Town as it was determined that the sewer plant upgrade benefits everyone. There is a 20% increase in the **Benefits** section due to large increases in insurance cost including health, property, workers comp, SS tax/FICA, etc. The Health Reserve Acct (HRA) and fees line was reduced by \$30,000, based on past use. During COVID the Board stopped adding to **Reserve Allocations**; there are none in this proposed budget. Mr. Traverse said there is need to get back to funding these, and suggests starting with \$10,000 added to Streets and Sidewalks. Mr. Greenough noted that about 60' of sidewalk were replaced/repaired this year. Mr. Coupal said this is a good place to start; would like to see a long-term plan. Briefly discussed new DPW garage.

Manager Gunter invited the Rec committee to talk about the recreation budget; also that the **Baseball** and **Rec** budgets have been combined into **Parks and Recreation Dept.** Mr. Traverse stated a full-time Rec Director position is needed, and feels it should be an appropriation article. Mr. Vadnais said the position should be left in the budget; if the budget fails, then go to appropriations. Salary was discussed. Mr. Markie stated the committee has plans to make major improvements including a concession, pickleball court, a walking path and repairs to neglected fences, bleachers and dugouts. Mr. Ramey noted, the **playground maintenance salary** line (\$8200) could be eliminated from the budget as this becomes part of the Rec Director job. He said they know the requested budget is high, but most of it would "go away" with sponsorships, and fundraising. We just need to do a lot to get started. The space needs to be more attractive and appealing to attract people and to be inviting to visiting teams;

also need to work with the school(s). There followed lengthy discussion re: the purchase of a mower and how to fund it. The **Machinery and Equipment** line (\$12,000) could be removed if a mower was purchased with DPW reserve. Manager Gunter feels using the DPW reserve is not prudent use of the funds. There is a need to determine details of the Rec Director position. Mr. Vadnais said the Director can assign tasks such as mowing, field lining, etc. Mr. Vadnais noted that a Rec Director can be an asset to the community in many ways; would work closely with the Town Manager doing the fund management, overseeing the budget, keeping track of equipment and expenditures. Chairman Richards cautioned that the committee “will be swamped” the first year. This is a big ask and the committee will have to do the marketing.

Mr. Traverse questioned the need for an Asst. Treasurer; that the Listers salary increase be at 3%; and noted that the Town Clerk is receiving full-time pay for a 4-day job. The Clerk office is closed on Fridays; and that the Asst. Clerk salary increase be at 3% also.

With the changes made, the budget increase is just over 6 ½ %. There will be a special budget meeting on January 4, 2024; and the Regular meeting on January 9th.

Chairman Richards asked for ballot questions. Will not ask voters for additional **paving** funds. Manager Gunter reported that he was advised by the Auditor not to appropriate any **fund balances** as the budget was very tight. Have not received final fund balance numbers from the auditor. There will be an article re: rehabilitating the Fire Dept. pumper truck asking voters for Fire Equip. Reserve funds, and borrowing from the Town. Members discussed **security cameras** for the Park, Municipal Building and playground. Do not have access to playground camera footage from school cameras because of student privacy issues. It was decided that **option tax** should wait another year. Mr. Greenough noted most Towns have option tax to great advantage.

Chairman Richards asked members to submit ideas/items to him for inclusion in the Selectmen report for the Town Report.

Mr. Coupal **moved** not to have a meeting on December 26, 2023; seconded by Mr. Greenough and passed unanimously.

Mr. Traverse made a motion to **adjourn** at 9:25 p.m. seconded by Mr. Viger and passed.

Respectfully submitted: Claire Stanley

Glen Traverse, Board Clerk