

TOWN OF FAIR HAVEN, VERMONT

Special Meeting

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

SPECIAL Meeting -- Thursday, January 4, 2023 -- 7:00 PM

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

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

APPROVED MINUTES

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

Others Present: Town Manager Joe Gunter, Recording Secretary Claire Stanley, Police Chief William Humphries

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.

Review of FY2025 Budget, Revenues, and Proposed Articles: Mr. Coupal remarked, it is his understanding that only the changes made at earlier meetings will be reviewed and not the entire budget line by line.

Manager Gunter noted highlights of changes including, Listers salary at \$22,000; Clerk salary, \$44,000; Benefits reduced by \$50,000; \$10,000 added to Streets and Sidewalks. Also reviewed changes re: Parks and Recreation including a Rec Director position, \$46,000. It was unclear how the Asst. Treasurer position was left. Both Mr. Traverse and Mr. Coupal researched the statute for responsibilities. Mr. Coupal noted that without a reasonable salary, no one will take the position. Mr. Traverse noted that for the few months he substituted after the former Treasurer retired, he worked approximately 2 hours twice a month to sign payroll checks and spot check for accuracy. Mr. Viger **made a motion** to adjust the Assistant Treasurer salary to \$400; seconded by Mr. Greenough and passed unanimously.

The Board included the Rec Director salary in the budget. Manager Gunter respectfully asks that the Board re-consider this decision; his experience is that folks want to be asked. Mr. Viger stated that an overwhelming number of the people he talked with are in favor and will vote. Mr. Coupal noted that the Select Board is expected to make these hard decisions, not always deferring to the vote. Mr. Traverse supports hiring a Rec Director and noted that as an appropriation, the salary does not risk passing the budget. Without the salary the budget increase is 4.2% including appropriations; leaving it in the budget is 6.32% increase including appropriations. Mr. Coupal noted that the reduction in gas prices is more than the increase to his taxes. Mr. Greenough stated there is no way to fund the Board's obligation to infrastructure and public safety without a budget increase, given the inflation costs. The total budget amount is \$2,686,787. Mr. Viger said it is mind-boggling that a Town can function successfully with such a low budget amount.

Mr. Coupal feels the discussion re: the Town Clerk salary has become personal. She has petitioned voters for \$46,000 salary (plus benefits) and the Board can assume that it will pass. The budget salary reduction to \$44,000 seems petty. He reported receiving a memo from the Clerk where, if true, some remarks she reports from a conversation with Mr. Traverse are inappropriate. We have a Town that needs to work cooperatively to succeed, and this kind of rhetoric needs to stop. Manager Gunter stated he would love to have a good working relationship with the Clerk. Mr. Viger said we should take every opportunity to “be the adult in the room”. He would encourage everyone to acknowledge the bias, treating every employee (receiving 3% salary increase) objectively.

It is expected that the Parks and Rec will end up earning enough to fund their programs with very little cost to the Town. Detailed fund reconciliation done by the Rec Director. Mr. Greenough noted that the Transfer Station is losing money with punch tickets. Mr. Greenough would rather increase Transfer Station revenue by accepting trash from surrounding Towns.

Mr. Viger **made a motion** to approve the FY 2025 budget for \$2,687,787; seconded by Mr. Traverse and passed 4 – 1 with Mr. Coupal dissenting.

Mr. Viger **made a motion** to approve the revenue budget for \$570,773; seconded by Mr. Traverse and passed unanimously.

First Look at the Warning: Manager Gunter noted adding articles 4 & 5. Re: the purchase of a new Fire Dept. pumper truck and brush truck, members agree with purchase of the pumper, but denied the brush truck as there has been no mention of this until this week. Manager Gunter said he will get wording/language input from the auditor.

The \$106,000 Article 5 request is for total camera coverage for the playground, the Town Green, and Town Hall. He feels if we don’t bite the bullet and do it this year, the cost will be much more expensive in the future, and it may never get done.

There was brief discussion re: lighting the playground, conditions of and work on Scotch Hill and that \$10,000 is a good start for sidewalks.

Mr. Traverse **moved to adjourn** at 8:58 pm; seconded by Mr. Viger and passed.

Respectfully submitted: Claire Stanley

Glen Traverse, Board Clerk