

## Minutes of the February 23, 2015 Select Board Meeting

Present: Board members Bill Hall, Carl Russell and Lisa Hill. Others present: Town Manager Keith Arlund, Ola O'Dell, Geneva Gaiko, Ele Griffin, Eric Benson, Lucien Hinkle, Davis Dimock, Victoria Weber, Dave Eddy, Julie Nelson, Chris Jarvis, Kristen LaFromboise, Brian LaFromboise, John Duddie, and Lisa Warhol of "The Herald."

Chairman Hall called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM.

Approval of the Agenda: Hall noted that budget discussion would begin at 6:30 PM after the appointment scheduled with Town Moderator Eric Benson. The Board will proceed with other items until the scheduled times.

Public Comment or Inquiry: There were no public comments for items not on the agenda.

Appointments: Eric Benson re. Moderator's Duty at Annual Town Meeting; Review of Warning.

Mr. Benson reviewed the Warning for 2015 Town Meeting with the Board. Mr. Hall will address Articles 10, 11, 12, and 13 with supplemental information and comments provided by other Board members and the Town Manager. Benson and Hall stated that individuals representing organizations with appropriations requests would be given the opportunity to speak on behalf of the organization.

Arlund stated that there would be an announcement under Article 19, Other Necessary Business, of a presentation by the State Police to the Select Board and the public at their meeting March 9, 2015 on the efforts to curb drug use in the community.

### Reports, Motions, and Ordinances:

#### 1. Discussion of FY'16 Budget as Proposed in the Annual Report:

Hall introduced the budget discussion with comments centered on the Budget Comparison Summary provided on Page 27 of the Town Report. He noted that efforts were made by the staff and the Board to present an accurate and meaningful budget. Hall continued by noting that while infrastructure repaired after tropical storm Irene had been completed there are ongoing needs for paving and culverts not impacted by the storm. North Main Street had been identified by many citizens as a roadway that needed to be repaired. Arlund reported that a survey of other roads needing repair included Royalton Hill, sections of Camp Brook, Gilead Brook Road, and Sand Hill. Hall stated that Article 12 is intended to allow the voters to decide if the Town will proceed with this and other repairs in the future.

Arlund and the staff are working on a capital plan to address future infrastructure needs including buildings, gravel and paved roads. The paving proposed in the budget is intended to be the beginning of a longer term effort to improve the highway network.

Hall stated that Article 13 is in response to citizen complaints about speeding traffic in the village core and the school zones. This is intended to be a trial with external agencies (like the Windsor County Sheriff's office) to determine need and effectiveness of this kind of police coverage. Arlund stated that contractual cost for this coverage is approximately \$50.00 per hour.

Hall further stated that there is a balance in the AOT Enhancement Fund account that was established for the recently completed sidewalk project. The voters are being asked to allow these funds to be used for other purposes in the General Fund.

In response to questions about the delinquent property taxes and utilities, Hall stated that the current policy is published in the Town Report. It is recognized that the delinquencies are high and this will be addressed with the commencement of the tax sale process. Delinquent taxes and utilities are included in the tax sale process.

The Board and Town Manager responded to various questions on the proposed budget:

- a. The salary line in the Wastewater Department is primarily for the Chief Operator who works at the plant every day. The operation of the system is governed and regulated by the state and the permit to operate requires testing on a daily basis. There is also a part-

- time operator who works under the guidance and in the absence of the Chief Operator. The Chief Operator responds to all alarms and any other needs in the system or at the pump stations.
- b. The line item for “Flags and Poles” is for poles at the five cemeteries and Fort Fortitude. Arlund reported that all are now unserviceable and need to be replaced. The poles there now were handcrafted and will be replaced by more durable aluminum poles.
  - c. Article 16 is asking voters for permission to establish a separate account for donations being received to support the emergency shelter. There is no new funding from the Town in the proposed budget.
  - d. The proposed budget is designed to adequately fund the services that voters require. Adjustments were made to reduce line items and increase revenues to the extent possible. Several budget sessions were warned as agenda items and changes made during those deliberations. It was suggested that draft budgets being developed in the process be published on the Town’s website as this work is being done. The Board will consider this next year.
  - e. Town Meeting Committee members stated that increased public engagement in the budget process is one of their goals and that changes in the format of the Town Report were good examples of this being accomplished.
  - f. The level of tax and utility delinquencies was noted again. It was suggested that improvements like the paving be deferred into the future when current debt obligations are fulfilled. Hall reiterated that was the purpose of the separate article votes on the paving and police services. He also stated that there are other infrastructure needs that will need to be addressed in future budgets. One example is the Highway Garage.
  - g. The “Cumulative Deficit” line item in Government Operations is funded to address general fund deficits in previous years.
  - h. In response to a question regarding the total cost work done after tropical storm Irene, Hall stated that the Town is working toward a correct amount. Reimbursement amounts from FEMA, Federal Highway, and the State all vary by percentage. The legislature did pass a bill that no town would be obligated for more than three cents (\$.03) on grand list for FEMA approved projects. It was noted that other work was done in Bethel that will not be reimbursed. Hall’s preliminary estimate now is that this amount could be approximately \$500,000. (The final alternate projects were just approved and work will proceed on this in the next construction season.)
2. Annual Review and Approval of NIMS Adoption Document. Motion by Russell, seconded by Hill, to approve the annual NIMS Adoption Certificate. Motion passed.
  3. Request for Reduced or Waiver of Town Hall Rental Fees for the Barn Arts program. Hall stated that he is familiar with this program that has used the Town Hall on previous occasions. It was suggested that the use fee be waived but that the cleaning deposit be in place to ensure that the hall is cleaned satisfactorily.
  4. Review of Committee Fundraising Requests:
    - a. Town Meeting Committee: Survey Return Incentives. Committee members stated that small donations had been requested of local businesses to support the incentives. It was the consensus of the Board that this was acceptable and could be handled internally by the committee.
    - b. Recreation Committee: Donation Jar at Town Meeting. It was the consensus of the Board that this would be acceptable and is consistent with donation request letter previously approved.
    - c. Community Forward Festival: 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Chili, Soup & Chowder Fest. It was the consensus of the Board that this event was a positive means of supporting the Bethel Forward Festival.
  5. Town Manager’s Report:
    - a. Status Update of Action Items.
      - i. Arlund reported that, working with Mary Russ of the White River Partnership, the Town is able to meet the match required for the construction proposed for the FEMA buy-out properties by in kind work of the Town and the WRP. An application has been submitted to the regional commission with primary emphasis on the Marsh Meadow (Mears) parcel to enhance protection of sewer pump station. Arlund has completed the first draft of the management plan for the property that will be

reviewed and approved by the Board for submission to the VT Housing Conservation Board, who holds the conservation easement.

- ii. Hall noted that the Ancient Roads Committee would be reactivated to address Class 4 Town Highways. He reported that his research of the VLCT and other towns had not yielded any results. The Board will develop criteria to consider for reclassification or discontinuance of these highways in the town in a consistent method town-wide.

Minutes and Communications:

1. Select Board Minutes of January 26, 2015 and February 9, 2015. Motion of Hill, second by Russell to approve the minutes of January 26, 2015. Motion passed. Motion made by Hill, Second by Russell to approve the minutes of February 9, 2015. Hall stated that a correction was needed in Paragraph 2 of other business. Hall did not participate in the approval of the liquor license for the Bethel Central Market. Motion passed 2-0.
2. Committee Minutes. The Board reviewed the committee minutes.

Any Other Business Necessary to Come Before the Board.

1. Motion by Russell, Second by Hill to approve the liquor license for Tozier's Restaurant. Motion passed 2-0. Hall did not participate in discussion or approval of this license.
2. Arlund stated that a bank foreclosure action had been commenced on the Harrington House. The matter was referred to the Town's attorney who will monitor the matter. The Town was joined due to two revolving loans owed to the Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund.

The meeting adjourned on motion of Russell, second by Hill at 8:10 PM. Motion passed unanimously.

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Bill Hall

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Carl Russell

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Lisa Hill