

Minutes of June 22, 2015 Select Board Meeting

Present: Board members Bill Hall, Carl Russell, and Lisa Hill. Others present: Town Manager Keith Arlund, Assistant Town Manager Abbie Sherman, Geneva Gaiko, Betty Ann Scammell, and Jack Cowdrey.

Chairman Hall called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Public Comment or Inquiry:

Betty Ann Scammell discussed with the Board her concerns regarding stormwater runoff on Christian Hill Road and the affect it has at the Cherry Hill cemetery, particularly the stone markers. She wondered if anything could be done to remedy the wetness and prevent further damage to the stones. Arlund had reviewed the situation last fall and will further investigate a remedy with the Road Foreman and Cemetery Commissioner.

Jack Cowdrey was present to discuss the perpetual care of the monument and spring on Camp Brook Road. The Board and Cowdrey discussed the purpose and use of the Fay Cowdrey Fund that had been established. Cowdrey would like the area to be kept cleaned by the Town. Hall advised that the Fund had no reached the appropriate level in recent years to disburse funds to care for the area. Hall requested for the Town attorney to review the matter.

Appointments: None Scheduled.

Reports, Motions, and Ordinances:

1. Business as the Board of Water Commissioners: A Request from Janet Burnham for a Retroactive Reduction in Water Rate to the Vacant Rate. Prior to the meeting, Hall had requested additional information from Abbie Sherman regarding prior precedence on retroactive adjustments on accounts. Sherman was not aware of occurrences of this type, other than for adjustments on interest. The Board did not approve a retroactive adjustment, but allowed that a vacant rate for the empty apartment could be used for future billings.
2. Resolution for Establishment of Bethel Energy Committee. Arlund had provided the Board with a draft resolution. Once approved, Arlund would advertise for membership to the committee. Motion to accept the resolution (as follows) was made by Lisa Hill, seconded by Carl Russell, and unanimously carried.

“The Bethel Energy Committee is hereby established to serve and report to the Bethel Select Board to be composed of five individuals as voting members no more than one of which may be a member of the Select Board. The Bethel Energy Committee may nominate advisory, non-voting members for the committee to be approved by the Select Board. All members of the committee shall be appointed by the Select Board for terms as the board shall determine in such a manner as to cause the terms to be staggered in their expirations with no terms in excess of three years.

The purpose of the committee shall be to advise and assist the Select Board with respect to energy conservation and renewable and sustainable energy production related matters in accordance the Mission Statement and Goals set forth below.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Bethel Energy Committee is to review, facilitate and promote projects and/or programs intended to increase the energy efficiency of Bethel’s operations, town owned building and residents’ homes and to promote the production of local energy from sustainable and renewable resources such as solar, wind, bio-mass, hydro-electric, geo-thermal and from other local sustainable and renewable resources.

GOALS

-Revisit and conduct assessments of town owned buildings

-Review status of streetlight conversion project and the reduction of energy costs since the conversion. (The conversion was completed in the summer of 2014.)

-Organize public presentations by guest speakers on different facets of energy efficiency and related cost savings

-Create an inventory of local buildings with unobstructed south facing roofs for solar installations

-Review and identify local sites for potential wind power facilities

-Search for available grants for energy conservation projects and programs, energy production projects and facilities and other relevant opportunities.”

3. Matters Associated with the Close Out of Fiscal Year 2015.
 - a. Small Fund Balances: The auditors have requested that small fund accounts be dealt with. Sherman advised the Board that the “Depot I CDBG Savings Account,” which had been established with the rehabilitation of the Depot I housing, has a balance of \$44.05. This will be closed out by June 30, 2015. The “Irene Disaster Relief Fund,” which was created via private donations for the purpose of assisting individuals affected by tropical storm Irene, has a balance of \$512.50. This amount was received after the initial funds had been distributed. Motion to transfer these funds to the “Emergency Shelter Fund” was made by Carl Russell, seconded by Lisa Hill, and unanimously carried.
 - b. Pay Down on Irene Loan: The “Solid Waste Capital Account” was set up utilizing funds from the insurance embezzlement claim, however, the funds do not belong to the solid waste program since the General Fund carried the program during the time of the embezzlement. Additionally, the Solid Waste program is shown to owe in excess of \$200,000 to the General Fund as of the close of fiscal year 2014. The Board authorized closeout of this account to apply those funds towards pay down on the Irene loan. This would also reduce the amount the Solid Waste program owes to the General Fund. A total payment of \$500,000.00 on the principal amount due on the Irene loan was approved by the Board.
 - c. Tax & Utilities Overpayments Policy: Presently there is no written policy in place for overpayments of taxes and utilities. The auditors have requested that a formal written policy be provided. The Board advised Sherman to draft such policy for review. Sherman also advised that the Town’s Procurement Policy will need to be updated due to federal grant requirements.
4. Establish Municipal Tax Rate for Fiscal Year 2016. Hall updated the Board on new occurrences regarding prior confusion on the tax rate. Hall advised that he received a call from the State Auditor’s Office regarding a “whistleblower” complaint they had received. After reviewing the calculations with that office, the Auditor’s office agreed the Town’s calculations were correct and the matter has been resolved. Hall has also drafted a revised presentation of the tax calculations which he will provide to Sherman for the Town Report. The Board then reviewed a revised Budget Comparison worksheet. Russell made a motion to approve the tax rate of .831 for fiscal year 2016, seconded by Hill, and unanimously carried.
5. Annual Evaluation of the Town’s Compensation Schedule for Municipal Employees. The Board reviewed the CPI for clerical workers which showed a range of 1.33 to 1.67. There is no requirement in Town policies that pay increases be directly connected to CPI. During budget preparation, a 3% increase had been contemplated. Hill informed the Board that she would like to have cost of living and employee performance be factored into pay increases and that she cannot support a full 3% increase at this time. Arlund advised the Board that he has not yet be able to develop the incentive program. Russell wants to show employees the alternative before incentivizing exceptional performance. Hall reminded the Board that employee benefits will begin reducing in January. Hall wants to move forward with the incentive program, but by limiting pay increases now the Board would be penalizing employees for a program that administration hasn’t developed yet. Russell made the motion for a 3% annual increase and to create an incentive program moving forward for the end of fiscal year 2016. Russell then withdrew his motion. Russell made the motion to provide a 2% cost of living increase and to institute an incentive program, seconded by Hill. Hall called the vote: Russell and Hill approved the motion, Hall did not support it. The motion carried.

6. Town Manager's Report:
 - a. Update on Alternate Projects. A meeting with Vermont Integrated Architecture on the improvements at the Recreation Center was held on June 19. The Board was supplied with updated plans and a render of the proposed bath house. For the other project on Old Route 12, DuBois & King continue to work on the plans.
 - b. Status Update of Action Items.
 - i. Arlund advised the Board that \$111,000 in taxes for fiscal years 2010-2015 has been collected since the initiation of the tax sale process. Arlund also has about 50 payment agreements with property owners in place.
 - ii. Russell requested that we move forward with the logging access road at the Recreation Center. Arlund had sent in the full request earlier that day.

Minutes and Communications:

1. Selectboard Minutes of June 8, 2015. Russell apologized for being late to the June 8 meeting as he would have liked to explain that the letter from the State outlined the exceptional operations of the wastewater biosolids field which is a direct reflection on Tim Mills' performance. Motion to accept the minutes as written was made by Russell, seconded by Hill, and unanimously carried.
2. Committee Minutes. The Board acknowledged the Community Forward Festival minutes of May 18, 2015.
3. Communications. The Board acknowledged receipt of White River water quality results from the White River Partnership for June 18, 2015.

Any Other Business Necessary to Come Before the Board:

1. Arlund advised the Board that ownership of the cell tower at the Town Garage has transfer from Vermont Telecommunications Authority to Vermont Public Service. There have been no other changes to the agreement.

At 7:05 PM, Russell made the motion to enter Executive Session to discuss personnel issues, seconded by Hill, and unanimously carried. No minutes were kept. The Board reconvened at 7:45 p.m.

At 7:46 PM, Hill made the motion to adjourn, seconded by Russell, and unanimously carried.

Bill Hall

Carl Russell

Lisa Hill