

**SHARON SELECTBOARD
BUDGET MEETING
MINUTES
Saturday, December 10, 2016**

Board Members Present: Mary Gavin, Luke Pettengill, Kevin Blakeman

Staff Attending: Deb Jones, Finance Manager; Selectmen's Assistant, Margy Becker;

The Chair convened the meeting at 8:30AM.

1. FY18 Budget Preparation:

Selectmen identified priorities for the next fiscal year to include a focus on IT support, review of policies, and completing capital improvement plans for paved roads and for town buildings. The Selectboard then reviewed projected income and expenses for FY18 general fund budget. Deb Jones reported on various line item projections including the following:

Revenues: Project slight increase in PILOT (payments in lieu of taxes) and increased civil fines as a result of law enforcement. CV Railroad fees are projected to increase; Deb Jones to confirm. Overall revenue projections are up slightly over last year.

Expenses: No increase in Selectboard stipend to be requested. The Selectmen's budget includes funds for re-design of the Town website. Legal expenses are budgeted to increase due to bylaw/ordinance review, the case underway regarding solar facility siting, and potential NewVista-related expense. The Planning Commission legal budget has also been increased.

Health Officer expense has been budgeted (\$800). The Selectboard Assistant is to inquire whether Dave Palmer (Health Officer for Royaltown) would be interested in performing these duties for Sharon.

The cost of property, casualty, liability, and worker's compensation insurance through the VLCT PACIF has increased. The Town has filed several insurance claims this past year. These costs are pro-rated between the general and highway funds.

The Town owns and maintains 5 buildings, including the old Town Hall, Masonic Hall, Old School House, Library, and Garage. A Capital improvement plan for these buildings will be developed to include foundation work for the old Town Hall will include foundation work and replacement of the existing floor drain in the Garage. It was agreed the voters will be asked to establish a 'garage reserve fund'.

Mary Gavin expressed the hope that someday the Town could benefit from solar street lights. The idea of transitioning Garage lighting to motion sensor lights was discussed.

Computer replacements: Deb Jones is scheduled to replace her laptop. The possibility of one future work station for the part-time Treasurer, Bookkeeper, and Delinquent Tax Collector was discussed. Board members favored this idea.

Expenses for the Town Report will be level-funded. Audit services will be re-bid in FY18. The E911 budget includes the expense of purchase of replacement E911 numbers for all residents. These could be distributed next fall (2017) at tax time.

Selectboard members expressed support for the expense of converting out-dated parcel maps to digital maps. Mary Gavin expressed hope that the Board of Lister look into grants through the VT Center for GIS to help off-set the cost of this undertaking.

Motion made by Mary Gavin, seconded by Luke Pettengill, to authorize the Selectboard Assistant to track hours spent on Town Report production and Planning Commission Clerk duties. The SB Assistant will be compensated for the additional hours at the existing wage rate. The motion carried 3-0-0.

The law enforcement budget was reviewed. The Board is awaiting confirmation of the projected increase in rates for police services from the Town of Royalton. There is no compensation for the Animal Control Officer budgeted. However, a budget continues to exist for pound-related expenses.

It was noted the Fire Department's request has decreased this year. Deb Jones was asked to follow-up with Hartford Emergency Services related to their charges for unreimbursed expenses related to I89 response.

Selectmen commented on the increased budget for community appropriations. The line item for Windsor County Partners was reduced from \$500 to \$250; the line item for the Clara Martin Center was reduced from their annual request of \$2119 to \$750 – which is in line with the Selectboard's past funding. The Selectboard agreed to include \$100 budget for a community appropriation to VT Rural Fire Protection Tax Force, which is the source of dry hydrant grants.

Both the Central VT Council on Aging and Royalton Senior Center have increased their requests. Martha Fisk will address the Board about the Senior Center budget. Cathy Hazlett is scheduled to meet with the Selectboard to discuss Upper Valley Health Connections' increased request.

Selectmen noted the expense of heating the Library, and wondered if there is a more efficient way to heat the building. The cost of electric heat will be researched.

Deb Jones explained the County Tax & Bond payment reflects payment of the bond for the Windsor County Court House.

Transfers to reserve funds include a reduction from \$5,000 to \$3,000 to the capital reserve fund for town buildings. The balance in this fund is \$20,500.

The transfer to the Emergency Operations Center reserve fund was reduced from \$2,000 to \$1,000. The objective is to be able to purchase an emergency generator.

The appropriation to the Library is projected to remain level at \$16,800, though the Trustees are still finalizing their budget according to Deb Jones. Selectmen are in agreement the Town's appropriation to the Library's operating budget should not be linked to wage for the Librarian.

The highway budget was reviewed in brief and few adjustments made. The budget will be reviewed in more detail.

The meeting concluded with discussions on the larger and more philosophical issue of whether to further reduce expenses in line with revenues (the difference currently is - \$33,000±), raise taxes next year, or use a portion of the available fund balance to offset a projected FY18 operating budget deficit. Selectmen agreed to continue to look at the expense budget while further considering a 1.5 cent increase in the tax rate in addition to drawing down on the fund balance. This approach could minimize future jumps in the tax rate.

Discussions turned to implementation of the January 2017 wage increase that is included in the FY17 budget. Kevin Blakeman spoke against authorizing the increase. Mary Gavin spoke in favor of the 2% increase. Luke Pettengill stated support for the 2% increase, given that it was already budgeted.

Motion by Mary Gavin to increase wages 2% for full-time town employees in Finance and Administration and the Highway Department commencing January 1st, 2017. The motion was seconded and carried 2-1-0, with Kevin Blakeman voting against the motion.

The Board agreed however, that the FY18 budgeted wage increase will decrease from 2% to 1%. The December 12th budget meeting will begin at 6:00PM.

2. Adjournment: Motion by Mary Gavin to adjourn at 12:30pm. Luke Pettengill seconded. The motion carried.

Submitted by,
Margy Becker, Selectboard Assistant