

## Selectboard Meeting Minutes

December 29, 2014

Approved

Present: Selectboard members Scott Bassage, Rose Pelchuck, Denise Wheeler, Toby Talbot. Donna Fitch, Clerk.

The meeting, a continuation of the selectboard meeting of December 22, was called to order by Denise Wheeler, Chair, at 7:00pm at the Town Office. The purpose of the meeting was to review the fiscal year 2016 budget and town meeting warning.

**The budget:** The FY2016 budget was discussed. The selectboard is asking for money to hire a professional auditor to audit the town's books. It was decided to put the approximately \$9,000 expense in the warning, rather than in the selectboard's budget. If the audit is approved by the voters and after it is conducted, the selectboard will discuss with the auditing firm how often a professional audit should be done in the future. Best practice is that audits should be done when there is a change in the town treasurer and delinquent tax collector positions.

**The warning:** The first draft of the town meeting warning was reviewed. Article 7 addresses completing the North Calais retaining wall project. Voters approved money for its completion last year, but the bids came in higher than expected, more than the money allocated by voters. An engineer will provide an up-to-date cost estimate which will be included in the warning article.

Article 5 asks for money for a natural resources inventory. Conservation Commission members will provide the town clerk with the amount and explanation of the inventory for inclusion in the warning.

Article 10 (1), addressing general fund surpluses, will be rewritten by Toby Talbot to ensure its intent is clear. A cap on the General Fund Contingency Reserve Fund has not been established, and Scott Bassage said the intent of the article (first passed at town meeting 2013) is to cap the fund at 3% of the town budget.

Article 11 asks for \$20,000 for the Town Hall and Town Office Reserve Fund. Toby asked that the plan for renovation of the town hall be included in the town report and Scott, as a member of the Historic Preservation Commission, agreed.

In Article 12, the Cemetery Commissioners are asking for \$5,000 to trim the hedge at Fairview Cemetery and \$9,000 for repair and cleaning of monuments. The Board rephrased the article so the money would not be restricted to only the hedge and monument repairs. The article now reads: "To see if the town will appropriate the sum of \$14,000 for cemetery special projects, to include trimming the hedge at Fairview Cemetery and the cleaning and repair of monuments."

An article asking for \$5,000 for the "Calais /East Montpelier Fire Department Capital Reserve Fund for Equipment" will be added to the warning in order to continue building the fund. The purpose of the fund is to have money on hand to pay Calais' portion of future fire department equipment purchases.

Painting the town office was added to the budget. Donna will get a quote for paint. This expense was initially included in the budget last year, but the selectboard removed it in order to reduce the overall amount of the town budget. Maintenance of the town office should not be neglected and, therefore, the expense will be put in FY16 budget.

Donna will draft an article asking that the delinquent tax collector be an appointed position rather than voted from the floor annually at town meeting. It is important that someone in the position be capable and qualified to carry out the duties of the position, have computer experience and be accessible to work with the town treasurer. Donna stated that the current situation is working out well with the delinquent tax collector working in the office, which enhances communication between the treasurer and delinquent tax collector. The Board discussed how the delinquent tax payer, who is currently paid by the 7% delinquent tax penalty, should be paid in the future with options including hourly and salary. Donna will provide the selectboard with the delinquent tax collector pay over the past three years.

Article 19 "to elect all other necessary officials..." Donna will call the VT League of Cities and Towns to ask if it is still necessary to fill some of these obscure positions.

The Lakes and Streams Committee has asked that a warning article be included for \$3,000 for their quarterly newsletter.

The meeting adjourned peacefully at 8:30 pm with no drama other than a fire call which necessitated Toby's quick departure.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Fitch, Clerk