

CHARLESTOWN SELECTBOARD
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 5, 2022 AT 5:30P.M.
CHARLESTOWN PUBLIC LIBRARY COMMUNITY ROOM AND VIA
ZOOM CONFERENCING

Selectboard Present: Shelly Blouin-Andrus, Jeff Lessels (Chair), Jeremy Wood (Vice Chair), William Rescsanski, and Nancy Houghton

Staff Present: Jessica Dennis, Town Administrator Pro-Tem (via Zoom)

Jordan Cannon, Recording Secretary
Patricia Chaffee, Town Clerk/Tax Collector
Jennifer Haynes, Library (via Zoom)
Keith Weed, Highway & Transfer Station Supervisor
Chief Connors, Police Department
Kelly Vigneau, Rec Department
Mark LaFlam, Fire Department
Stacy Hassett, Cemetery Sexton (via Zoom)

Others Present: Tom Cobb, Joe Cobb, Greg Bascom

2022 BUDGET REVIEW

Mr. Lessels commenced the meeting at 5:30 p.m. to review the proposed budget. Ms. Blouin-Andrus began a discussion of salary increases for various departments. Ms. Blouin-Andrus questioned the merits of the Fire Chief and the Assistant Fire Chief having a 10%-11% increase from the previous year. She noted the difference in percentage of increase for the Fire Department compared to other departments in Town. Ms. Blouin-Andrus disclosed that she was bringing the Fire Department officers' salary increases forward for discussion out of fairness for the other departments in Town. Ms. Houghton asked what difference alteration of the Fire Department stipends would have on the budget. Mr. Wood stated that approximately \$12,000-\$15,000 would be saved on the budget with this alteration. Ms. Blouin-Andrus commented that stipends were more in connection with the administrative duties of the Fire Department positions in question. A discussion was held over the proportion of salary increases requested by departments. Mr. Rescsanski made a motion to adjust the Fire Chief's stipend to \$10,000, \$4,800 for Assistant Chief, \$2,400 for Captain, and \$1,100 for the three Lieutenants. Ms. Houghton seconded the motion. For the motion made by Mr. Rescsanski regarding the adjustment to the Fire Department budget, Ms. Rescsanski voted no, Mr. Wood voted yes, Mr. Lessels voted no, Ms. Houghton voted yes, Ms. Blouin-Andrus voted yes. The motion carried 3-2 by an affirmative roll call vote.

Ms. Blouin-Andrus commented that unless reductions were made in salaries then the budget could be only minimally reduced, as salaries comprise a significant portion of the proposed budget. Mr. Lessels commented on various line items within the budget, and an open discussion was held over possible cuts from the budget. Ms. Houghton questioned if the Police Chief would accept changes in the budget related to ammunition that were being discussed by the Selectboard. Mr. Lessels commented that these alterations had already been submitted by the Chief. Mr. Lessels stated that a laborer

hired by the town would be beneficial with the construction planned this summer. Ms. Chaffee interjected with a request to amend a portion of the budget to her originally requested amount of \$50,810, instead of the altered sum of \$80,692. It was clarified by Mr. Lessels that public comment would have to hold during the present discussion, as opportunities were offered for public discussion in previous meetings. Ms. Blouin-Andrus made a motion to amend the budget of the highway department to remove line item 4312.20-632, a Crack/Chip Sealing with allocated funds of \$75,000, and on-line item 4312.20-110 to cut back to only one vacant position instead of two. The motion was seconded by Mr. Wood. Ms. Blouin-Andrus voted yes, Mr. Wood voted yes, Mr. Lessels voted yes, Ms. Houghton voted yes, Mr. Rescsanski voted yes. The motion carried 5-0 by an affirmative roll call vote.

Mr. Lessels made motion to set the funds associated with Sullivan County Nutrition to \$4,000, and to set the funds at \$5,750 for SCS Transportation. Mr. Rescsanski seconded the motion. Ms. Blouin-Andrus voted yes, Mr. Wood voted yes, Mr. Lessels voted yes, Ms. Houghton voted yes, Mr. Rescsanski voted yes. The motion carried 5-0 by an affirmative roll call vote.

Mr. Rescsanski made a motion to remove the \$5,000 associated with special article for Fort #4. Mr. Lessels seconded the motion. Ms. Blouin-Andrus voted yes, Mr. Wood voted no, Mr. Lessels voted yes, Ms. Houghton voted yes, Mr. Rescsanski voted yes. The motion carried 4-1 by an affirmative roll call vote.

Ms. Chaffee discussed the SRF/ARPA funds that will be utilized, and described the reimbursement structure of utilizing these funds. She stated that the new line item under capital for water interconnect is associated with the funding. She stated these funds will not be associated with the regular water fund, but they must be within the budget because of the reimbursement's requirements.

Mr. Wood made a motion to place \$182 back into the Town Clerk's salary within the budget. Ms. Blouin-Andrus seconded the motion. Ms. Blouin-Andrus voted yes, Mr. Wood voted yes, Mr. Lessels voted yes, Ms. Houghton voted yes, Mr. Rescsanski voted yes. The motion carried 5-0 by an affirmative roll call vote.

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance: Mr. Lessels called the workshop meeting to order at 6:30 p.m., led the pledge of allegiance and welcomed in-person attendees and those by Zoom.

PUBLIC HEARING FOR TRANSFER STATION FEES

Mr. Lessels welcomed discussion regarding the proposed fees. Mr. Tom Cobb questioned the reasoning of increasing the demo fees, and commented that possibly with such an increase the Town would see an increase in litter. Mr. Weed discussed the reasoning behind the increased rates, and stated that the Selectboard voted to accept these increases at a previous meeting. Discussion commenced concerning possible rates for waste disposal. Mr. Wood made a motion to set the construction demo rate at \$140 a ton, Ms. Blouin-Andrus seconded the motion, Ms. Blouin-Andrus voted yes, Mr. Wood voted yes, Ms. Houghton voted yes, Mr. Rescsanski voted yes, and Mr. Lessels voted yes. Mr. Lessels

closed public comment for the public hearing. Ms. Blouin-Andrus made a motion to adopt the new transfer disposal fees as discussed and amended in the public hearing, Ms. Houghton seconded the motion, Ms. Blouin-Andrus voted yes, Mr. Wood voted yes, Mr. Lessels voted yes, Ms. Houghton voted yes, Mr. Rescsanski voted yes. The motion carried 5-0 by an affirmative roll call vote. Mr. Lessels declared the public hearing closed.

BID OPENING: 2022 MOWING BIDS

Mr. Lessels opened the discussion regarding the 2022 bid for mowing. Mr. Lessels reviewed how an ad was ran in the Eagle Times with incorrect information at the fault of the paper. The received bid was opened by Mr. Wood. Mr. Tom Cobb discussed the areas in Town that have been not maintained in recent years, and the rationale behind the proposed bid amount. Mr. Tom Cobb identified “T Cobb Services” as the bidder. It was disclosed that the total bid amount was \$4,030 per mow with a total price for mowing this year to be \$96,720. This amount was said to be approximately \$50 an hour per Mr. Tom Cobb. Ms. Dennis commented that she increased the budgeted amount for mowing by 25% from the 2021 budget year, but commented that this bid is 50% more than last year. Mr. Tom Cobb stated if the Town agreed to a 3-year commitment he would take 10% off the total price of the bid. Ms. Houghton commented that she would like to give this consideration. Mr. Lessels took consensus of the Board and it was agreed the Selectboard would consider this bid and get back in contact with Mr. Tom Cobb at a later date.

RECOGNITION OF VISITOR/PUBLIC INPUT:

Mr. Bascom discussed an issue concerning a “No Thru Trucks” sign located on Fling Road. He asked if it would be possible to remove this sign, as it did not seem to reflect the current status of the road. Mr. Lessels reviewed the history of the Fling Road, and stated that presently the long-term plan is the rebuild the bridge towards Acworth Rd. Mr. Wood questioned the weight limit of the bridge. Mr. Bascom disclosed the two other options he felt were possible: one, allowing these trucks to come into town, second, to reroute to a more dangerous route. Mr. Bascom stated that with the recent floods most of the tractor trailer traffic comes through Charlestown. Ms. Houghton moved to allow tractor trailers to go through on Flint Road. Mr. Lessels stated that a vote was unnecessary for the topic in question. Mr. Lessels asked Mr. Weed to take the “No Thru Trucks” sign down on Fling Road.

DEPARTMENT HEAD & COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Mr. Lessels opened the discussion by stating that these reports have been delivered in writing. Ms. Blouin-Andrus suggested that each give a synopsis.

Town Clerk/Tax Collector:

Ms. Chaffee commented that she turned in her report. She stated that the end-of-year information regarding tax is completed. She disclosed that one million has yet to be collected from 2021, but amounts are still being recieved. Ms. Chaffee noted the water project hours, and Mr. Lessels noted the need for a future nonpublic meeting dealing with the present water project.

Police Department:

Chief Connors presented the highlights from the previous year. He commented that investigations dealing with deaths and assaults had attributed to much of the police department's workload this past year. He stated that two confirmed applicants for the office position have planned to come and test. Discussion was held over the communications budget for 2022, and consensus was reached by the Selectboard to put \$889 back into the communications budget. Chief Connors discussed the purchasing of ammunition, and the fluctuation of ammunition prizes. Mr. Lessels asked if Ms. Dennis could forward Department Head reports to the Finance Committee.

Highway and Transfer Station:

Mr. Weed commented that he had nothing to report with the Transfer Station. He indicated that repairing wings and plows on plow trucks have been recent allocations of time and labor.

Fire Department:

Mr. LaFlam presented to the Selectboard that the Fire Department received 273 calls in 2021. He stated that recently the rescue squad was placed in two distinct groups. He disclosed that a new pump has been ordered and medical licenses have been assigned. He indicated that two of his staff are attending EMR classes in Walpole.

Cemetery Trustees:

Nothing presented.

Recreation Committee

The Recreation Director disclosed that basketball games started this past week. She commented that snow shoeing was shown to be successful when there was snow to shoe upon. She stated that the ice rink has been ordered.

Library

Nothing presented.

Water/Wastewater Dept

Nothing presented.

Administrator's Report and Correspondence:

Ms. Dennis commented that time has been spent recently on budget updates and the Town Report. She commented that on this Monday she received an email from the surveyor with updated language for the easements on Taylor Hill. Ms. Dennis indicated she was uncertain when this will be complete. She voiced her desire to speak to the Selectboard concerning department head reviews. Mr. Lessels commented that department heads are reviewed by the Selectboard, and when these are conducted there is a self-evaluation and the Board does an evaluation. Mr. Rescsanski stated that these reviews should be done in March. Ms. Blouin-Andrus stated that she would like to be able to hold these reviews and present them to the department heads while the current Selectboard is in office. Ms. Houghton voiced her agreement. Consensus was met by the Selectboard to deliver department head reviews before the next Board is elected.

Ms. Dennis asked if they will want IT services at the deliberative in February. Ms. Blouin-Andrus said that it was already stated that tentatively they would not. Ms. Dennis stated she would mark IT as unneeded for this deliberative. Mr. Gabe St. Pierre asked as a moderator if the deliberative would take place at town hall. Mr. Lessels answered that this would occur at the school.

Minutes of Previous Meetings:

Ms. Blouin-Andrus motioned to accept the minutes of December 29, 2021 – Workshop, December 29, 2021 – Non-Public #1 Reputations, December 29, 2021 – Non-Public #2 Reputations, December 31, 2021 – Workshop, December 31, 2021 – Non-Public #1 Personnel, December 31, 2021 – Non-Public #2 Reputations, December 31, 2021 – Non-Public #3 Reputations. Ms. Houghton seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5 - 0 by an affirmative roll call vote.

Consent Agenda:

Mr. Rescsanski motioned to accept the Consent Agenda as listed. Ms. Houghton seconded the motion. The motion carried 5 - 0 by an affirmative roll call vote.

Ms. Houghton made a motion at 7:25 p.m. to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Rescsanski seconded the motion, the motion carried 5 to 0 by an affirmative roll call vote.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jordan Cannon, Recording Secretary

William Rescsanski

Shelly Blouin-Andrus

Nancy Houghton

Jeff Lessels

Jeremy Wood

(Note: these are unapproved meeting minutes. Any corrections will be made at the next Selectboard meeting on January 12, 2022)