

CHARLESTOWN SELECTBOARD
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2021 AT 5:00 P.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 (via Zoom)

Staff Present: Jessica Dennis, Administrator
Jordan Cannon, Recording Secretary
Keith Weed, Highway Department
Chief Connors, Police Department
Joey Carter, Fire Department
Mark LaFlam, Fire Department

Others Present: Linda Chesley, Judy Forsaith, David Forsaith, Dana Mc Dermott, Charles Baraly

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance: Mr. Wood called the meeting to order at 5:03 pm., led the pledge of allegiance and welcomed in-person attendees and those by Zoom.

2022 Budgets (5:00-6:00):

Mr. LaFlam presented the proposed 2022 budget for the Charlestown Fire Department and Emergency Services. He informed the board of a quote from Allen Brothers to replace two flow valves for \$375.00. He disclosed that a new pump's expense would be \$7,062. Mr. LaFlam and Mr. Carter discussed how the federal government has made funds available for training, and disclosed that EMR classes would be both online and at three different locations. These trainings would include online classroom discussions and physically meeting intermittently at either Walpole Fire Academy or North Country Training in Vermont. Mr. LaFlam voiced that signing up soon would ensure the necessary spots are held. The fire department representatives informed the Board that Wells River is a local fire school they go to for weekend classes. Mr. LaFlam went on to discuss necessary repairs needed for the toolbox, but discussed the purchasing of a toolbox truck cap, which would be weather-tight, as a least costly option. Mr. LaFlam and Mr. Carter then at length discussed the proposed fire department and emergency services budget for 2022. Mr. LaFlam said this proposed budget included both emergency rescue and fire, and compared the proposal with that of 2021. Mr. Wood questioned the need for costs associated with an inspector and increased training costs. Mr. Wood suggested the possibility of delaying the training costs associated with EMS for another year since the Town has not been able to get their non-transport license. Mr. LaFlam disclosed that every two years recertification is needed for EMS to maintain their licenses. He and Mr. Carter then said the training for EMR would be useful as they are still getting associated calls for these services. Ms. Blouin-Andrus questioned why the cost of training is three times that of the previous year, and discussed the potential response of tax payers. Ms. Dennis stated she believed the department had been holding two trainings a month, but only paying employees for one. Mr. Wood suggested the possibility of one training per month and then one

additional every quarter. Mr. Carter responded that the cost would not change significantly if this was adjusted from twice a month training. Mr. LaFlam disclosed that the class for Firefighter I was \$1,400.00, but that this did not include expenses. Ms. Blouin-Andrus stated that it was not the responsibility of the voters to pay for the previous year's budgets that Mr. Carter said were "lacking." Mr. Rescsanski suggested the possibility of a "training rate" to reduce the costs of proposed training costs. Ms. Dennis stated that she would explore this option. Discussion of the proposed salaries found in the budget included the present salaries. Mr. LaFlam stated that the Fire Chief position is a stipend position. Ms. Blouin-Andrus said there may be a "domino effect" with repercussions if the increase of Chief salary is accepted as proposed. Discussions then commenced which primarily focused on reducing certain elements, such as stipends, of the proposed budget because of the increase from the previous year. Mr. Lessels asked for added specifications for the proposed budget, so that the general public would be more informed of the justifications for the increases in cost. The Board invited the fire department to come back on the meeting on December 31st at 10:00 am, and that Ms. Dennis would explore if training salaries could differ from standard pay.

Officers were said to be paid at a higher average rate for trainings than regular pay in the proposal, but Mr. LaFlam stated that if firefighters took a decrease then the officers should as well.

Mr. Wood made a motion for the fire department to purchase a new tanker pump with labor included up to \$8,000.00, Ms. Blouin-Andrus seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5-0 by individual verbal roll call vote. Ms. Houghton asked if she could be provided the handout for the proposed budget for next year's expenditures.

Taylor Hill Road drainage:

Ms. Dennis opened the discussion by stating that she mailed the maps connected with this drainage project. Ms. Dennis stated that the language of easements is currently being finalized, and stated that a possible conclusion would be easements drafted into individual deeds. Mr. Rescsanski said that it was a possibility that this issue would not be resolved until Spring 2022 because of the onset of winter.

Discussions of the drainage issue and its effect on individual residences was discussed. Mr. Wood asked if there is a way to pump the water out. Mr. Lessels asked if everyone would be willing to sign the easements if they were presented. Mrs. Forsaith questioned if there would be an access to property agreement but stated that she is not presently interested in signing an easement to go into her deed. Mr. Lessels said that for the legal record, documentation clarifying ownership of the property may be necessary. Mr. Rescsanski said this issue may not be one of the Town's. Ms. Houghton said that an easement protects future owners of the property. Mrs. Forsaith stated that an easement may make the Town dominant over the owner of the property. Mr. Rescsanski suggested that possibly the easement could be clarified as to when the Town could access the property for Town usage. Mr. Lessels clarified that if the future owner does not have an easement on the property, the Town would not be able to respond to emergency maintenance on the property and the situation would remain as is. Ms. Blouin-Andrus clarified that an easement protects both the property owner and the Town. Mr. Lessels

said that with future selling of the property if the drainage issue is not disclosed then it may interfere with the finalization of the transaction. Mr. Forsaith questioned the need for an easement and suggested that if there was an emergency regarding water that situation could be treated similarly as a fire emergency. Mr. Wood clarified that Town is not able to come on to the property unless it was an emergency situation. Mrs. Forsaith clarified her thoughts that the pipe is an issue to be handled by the Town. Mrs. Forsaith and her husband said that the railroad should be liable to respond to the drainage issue, as the issue was their responsibility. Mr. Lessels clarified that citizens of Charlestown seek the Town to respond to the issue of the drainage. Mr. Wood clarified that if an easement is not agreed upon that they would have to explore other options. Mrs. Forsaith stated that an alternative they would have to explore other legal options if an easement is not agreed upon. Ms. Houghton clarified again that the easement was to protect the property owner. Mr. Baraly stated that he is not sure when pipe was put in nor who put it in, but that he heard that the railroad put the pipe in many years ago. Discussions commenced regarding previous actions of the Town to fix and respond to issues with the pipe. Mr. Lessels compared past decisions and actions of the Town to the capacities of present Town leadership. Mr. Rescsanski stated that the easement would assure the owner and future owners that the Town would respond to the water issue. Mrs. Forsaith reflected on the lack of progress of this issue in the eight months since it has existed. Ms. Blouin-Andrus clarified that the time spent waiting on the surveyors has stalled the resolution of this particular issue. Mr. Wood suggested the tabling of this issue and clarified that the reasons for the property owners being invited was to give an update on the situation. Mr. Wood stated that the issue would need to be tabled until progression was made regarding potential easements of the individuals' properties.

The meeting recessed at 6:44 p.m. and reconvened at 6:51 p.m.

Borough Road Bridge:

Mr. Weed discussed the two years scheduled for this project to be finalized, and the amendment to the contract for additional funds because of increased costs associated with yard ledge removal and pumping costs. Mr. Weed disclosed the \$13,500.00 associated with concrete costs, and stated that the removal of each cubic yard of ledge is \$350.00.

2022 Sand Bids

Mr. Weed disclosed to the board that the bid for sand was made by United Construction at \$1,138.00 per square ton. Ms. Blouin-Andrus made a motion to accept the bid, Mr. Rescsanski seconded the motion, and the motion carried 5-0 by affirmative roll call vote.

Elves Work Shop

Ms. Chesley requested a location of approximately eight by eight feet for storage for toy elves workshop material. Ms. Blouin-Andrus asked if Ms. Chesley could wait for a week until the Town could explore open available spaces for her to use for storage, but suggested the Cemetery building as a possibility. Ms. Dennis stated she would ask Mr. Hassett and see if there is room in the attack of the Cemetery building. Ms. Houghton stated that she does not think the Town had any available spaces to allow for storage asked for by Ms. Chesley.

2022 Budgets (7:00-8:00):

Chief Connors presented his proposed 2022 budgets for police and communication services.

The Chief discussed the increase in police training costs as related to his hopes that the police department hire two additional new officers next year. Chief Connors proposed adding pay-level increases to the employees to better ensure retention of staff. Chief Connors discussed his request of a 3% increase in pay this year on the anniversary of the employee's hire, and that step increases are being requested if the employee qualifies. Chief Connors stated he wants these increases so that the department can reward people for staying with the department to decrease turnover. Chief Connors stated that personnel is the largest portion of the proposed budget. Ms. Dennis discussed the cost increase with "cyber security" as involving both software and hardware components.

Chief Connors discussed the funding of drug task forces, and that the Town provides a portion of their salary, with the Attorney General's office granting funds for the remaining portion.

Chief Connors discussed the attention the police department is spending on drug problems in the community, but that this was not part of the State's drug task force. Ms. Blouin-Andrus stated that the Sheriff could come to the Selectboard meeting and that the Finance Committee would be invited to observe in regard to the \$15,000 costs associated with the drug task force that presently, primarily being administered by the Sheriff's Department. Chief Connors discussed the momentum the department had with cases associated with the heroin epidemic, but lost with the increase in cases involving Bath Salts. He discussed the changes in chemistry the makers would make in order to avoid scheduling and disclosed that the department is encountering losses of life due to fentanyl. Mr. Wood clarified that total budget costs included both police and communications. Ms. Dennis asked if there is any possibility to cut overtime on the proposed police budget; which Chief Connors responded that this was most likely "no" because of the planning for new personnel. However, he clarified that this was a possibility if he is hiring a qualified police officer that is ready to take on full job duties.

The meeting recessed at 7:42 p.m. and reconvened at 7:49 p.m.

Minutes of Previous Meetings:

December 3, 2021 - Workshop

December 3, 2021 - Non-Public #1 Compensation

December 3, 2021 – Non-Public #2 Reputations

December 3, 2021 – Non-Public #3 SEALED Reputations

Mr. Lessels made a motion to accept the minutes of December 3, 2021, Ms. Blouin-Andrus seconded the motion, the motion carried 4-1 with affirmative roll call vote. Mr. Rescsanski abstained from the vote.

Consent Agenda: Ms. Blouin-Andrus made motion to accept the agenda, Mr. Lessels seconded the motion, the vote carried with 5-0 affirmative roll call vote.

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION-

Payroll:

Purchase Orders:

85730 ;Highway ;Cornerstone ;Pallets of sidewalk salt ;\$3,491.25

85731 ;Police ;Axon Enterprise, Inc; Electronic evidence storage & body cams; \$5,119.50

Manifests: Accounts payable(s) 12.08.2021

Contracts: Amendment to North Country Environmental Services, Inc/Casella

Warrants, Abatement, etc:

Other: 2022 Holiday schedule; Highway equipment rate; two tax deed waivers

APPOINTMENTS, PERMITS, LICENSES & RESOLUTIONS: two alcohol permits

Administrator's Report:

Ms. Dennis discussed how no one showed up for mandatory pre-bid meeting for the 2022 mowing and that it would have to be rebid. She stated that she received a phone call from someone who was asking if they could decorate the gazebo for the holiday season. Ms. Blouin-Andrus stated that this may be approved if there is no damage done to the gazebo. The Board stated that further information would be needed from the person who wants to decorate the gazebo. Ms. Dennis discussed right to know policy fees, right to know request forms, and proposed warrant articles. Ms. Dennis discussed the capital reserve of \$7,000 for ambulance equipment; questioned what could done with these funds as there is not presently an ambulance and discussed the repurposing of these funds and of the \$16,000 made from the selling of the ambulance. Mr. Rescsanski discussed the potential value of a capital reserve. Discussions of a capital improvement plan were had, and Ms. Blouin-Andrus discussed putting it on the article and see if the public responds. Ms. Dennis discussed the four pieces of property owned by the Town that are only useful to an abutter. Then suggested that this be discussed further at the December 29th meeting. Ms. Dennis informed the Board that the storm windows on the Town Hall blew off this past week, and that the extent of the decay of the window frames and sills is presently unknown and suggested the \$10,000 removed from that budget line be put back into the 2022 budget.

Ms. Blouin-Andrus made motion to go non-public 8:10 p.m. RSA 91-A:3 II (c) Reputations. Mr. Rescsanski seconded the motion, the motion carried with an affirmative 5-0 verbal roll call vote.

The meeting reconvened at 8:16 p.m.

Ms. Blouin-Andrus made motion to go non-public at 8:17 p.m. RSA 91-A:3 II (l) Legal, Ms. Houghton seconded the motion, the motion carried with an affirmative 5-0 verbal roll call vote.

The meeting reconvened at 8:21 p.m.

Ms. Blouin-Andrus made a motion to go non-public 8:22 p.m. RSA 91-A:3 II (d) Acquisition. Mr. Lessels seconded the motion, the motion carried with an affirmative 5-0 verbal roll call vote.

The meeting reconvened at 8:27 p.m.

Mr. Rescsanski made a motion to seal the non-public minutes for legal for a period of one year, Mr. Wood seconded the motion, the motion carried with an affirmative 5-0 verbal roll call vote.

Ms. Blouin-Andrus made a motion to go non-public 8:35 p.m. RSA 91-A:3 II (c) Reputations but then rescinded this motion as it was to discuss the reputation of Mr. Lessels.

Mr. Lessels disclosed how a New Hampshire State Trooper contacted him recently and informed him that charges may be brought against him. He stated that he anticipates being summoned to court regarding this issue, but stated that he does not anticipate that any costs will be borne by the Town.

Ms. Blouin-Andrus made a motion at 8:39 p.m. to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Rescsanski seconded the motion, the motion carried 5 to 0.

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 December 15, 2021)

**Charlestown Board of Selectmen
Non-Public Meeting Minutes #1
December 8, 2021 @ 5:00 pm
Community Room**

Selectboard present in community room: Jeff Lessels (chair), Jeremy Wood (vice-chair), William Rescsanski, Shelly Blouin-Andrus and Nancy Houghton

Staff Present: Jessica Dennis – Administrative Assistant
Jordan Cannon – Recording Secretary

The Selectboard Office received a complaint about a highway employee. The complaint states that the employee was rude to a taxpayer on Hastings Court. The Board discussed the complaint and how to address it. The Selectboard agreed to do nothing at this time, if the taxpayer has anything more to say they can attend a meeting address the Selectboard.

Ms. Blouin-Andrus made a motion to reconvene public session at 8:21 pm; Mr. Lessels seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: Rescsanski – aye; Andrus – aye, Houghton – aye, Wood – aye, and Lessels – aye; motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jordan Cannon, Recording Secretary

William Rescsanski

Shelly Blouin-Andrus

Nancy Houghton

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