



SELECTBOARD MEETING MINUTES OF JUNE 1, 2023

Members: Judy Bickford, Don McDowell, Christopher Palermo, Travis Sabatso, Laura Streets

Absent:

ADMINISTRATION and STAFF: Eric Dodge, Town Administrator; Judi Alberi, Administrator's Assistant; Kevin Barrows, Highway Superintendent; Dennis DiGregorio, Fire Chief; Jason Luneau, Police Chief; Tina Sweet, Finance Director; Paula Beattie, Human Resources Director; Sara Haskins, Town Clerk/Treasurer; Bill Mapes, EMS Chief

PARTICIPANTS/GUESTS: Tom Cloutier, Laura Green, Christy Snipp, Ed Loewenton, Martin Green, Kathy Chaffee*

**participating via Zoom*

CALL SELECTBOARD INFORMATIONAL HEARING TO ORDER

Shapleigh Smith called the informational hearing to order 5:44 Tegu Building.

REVIEW AND DISCUSS ARTICLES

1. Article 1: Shall the voters authorize total fund expenditures for operating expenses of \$9,419,728, of which \$7,681,041 shall be raised by taxes and \$1,738,687 by non-tax revenues?

Citizens in attendance continue to discuss the salaries and cost of living increases that are part of the Longevity pay policy that has been in effect since 2008. The Selectboard made it clear to the citizens that this policy has been in existence for many years and there have been several years that the town staff received 0% of the cost of living increase and for many years it has been less than 2%. Cost of living adjustments may help employees manage rising prices for basic staples such as housing, energy, and food. A cost of living adjustment for employees is not based on job performance or a promotion. Rather, the pay increases are given to counteract inflation and help employees maintain their earning power. These are unprecedented times due to the pandemic. The Selectboard agrees that they will look at the longevity policy for future years, but this is what it is and it is not changing right now. The union staff have contracts in place, so what we have is what we have. Chris Palermo reminded the citizens that Paula Beattie, HR Director, had done a deep dive regarding pay for all the staff in the town and it was determined that most of the staff are under paid when looking from town to town for similar jobs within government. Chris considers the town fortunate to have the staff we have.

Eric Dodge answered a question regarding "What happens if the budget fails again?" Eric had received information from the State of Vermont that if the budget fails the town will continue to operate and pay bills as we have always done. We can borrow money in anticipation of taxes, as the town always does. As mentioned by a citizen, the town needs to come up with other ways to earn revenue. Maybe 1% Airbnb tax, food tax, something to help with revenue. Eric agrees, we need more revenue generated.

Laura Streets feels the town has cut where it could cut. We have non-negotiables that cannot be cut due to

contractual agreements. Travis Sabatase is familiar with salary and benefits as he is the HR Director for Essex VT. Health insurance benefits are set in Nov/Dec for the following year, so there is nothing that can be done right now, but he feels that this is an area that can be looked at in the coming year for the future budgets.

Sara Haskins has made several phone calls in an attempt to get an estimate on what the education tax will look like for 23/24 year. This is a very complex formula and Sara had not received any information that would shed light on this question.

ADJOURN

Motion made by Don McDowell to adjourn. Motion seconded by Travis Sabatase. Motion carried. (5/0)

Meeting adjourned at 6:51pm

Submitted and filed this June 6, 2023 .

Judi Alberi, Scribe

Please note all minutes are in Draft form and are subject to approval at the next Selectboard meeting.