

TOWN OF BRIDGEWATER
SELECTBOARD / SEWER COMMISSIONERS MEETING AGENDA

January 23, 2024

Present: William O. Young-Chair, George Spear-Vice Chair, Stephen S. Tarleton – Road Commissioner, Melissa Spear-Treasurer, Nancy Robinson-Clerk, Victoria Young-Administrative Assistant/Lister, Randy Kennedy-Road Foreman

Visitors: Charlie Shackleton, Brian Bontrager & Michael Caduto – BACF, Bruce Maxham, Debra Ogden, Greg Robinson, Gloria Martin, Cindy Ansardy, Tammy Wardwell

Zoom: Diane Martin, Dennis & Joan Wideman, Lynne Bertram

Executive Session – Personnel - Per 1 V.S.A. 313 (a)(3)

William called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. - William made a motion to enter executive session with Randy and Vicky staying. Seconded by George – motion passed.

Out of executive session at 4:30 p.m. William announced that there will be no wage increases across the board for the FY 2025 budget. The cost of benefits has increased and that amounts to about a \$1.00 per hour increase for employees.

Call to Order: William called the regular portion of the meeting to order.

- ** Additions/Changes to Agenda: Adding-Budget Discussion under “Other/Old business”

Nancy had 3 items to add: Harper Environmental Quote, Flood Hearing & Free Covid Tests

BACF – Lease & Request for Solar Estimate: The Town’s attorney and BACF’s attorney finalized the new 20-year Lease with some minor changes. Charlie read aloud item #3-the Town Use - which is the one place that had most changes. The Board read the Lease. William made a motion to approve the execution of the Lease, seconded by Steve - the motion passed unanimously. Steve made a motion for William to sign the lease for the Town – seconded by George – the motion passed. William then signed the lease and Brian signed for the BACF board. Vicky witnessed and Notarized the Lease. Copies were made for the BACF board, Vicky and the original to Nancy to record. The Board thanked Brian and Charlie for all their hard work on this project. Michael Caduto, also a BACF board member, came to ask the Town for permission to get estimates for a solar array for the Community Center building –putting the solar on the roof of the new fire station or in the field between the Community Center and the Fire Station. They are looking into getting a generator and battery backup systems that will give a couple of days of energy storage for heat and internet for emergency situations then using solar energy. There is a lot of Federal and State funding out there right now for solar. Especially for a community center and an emergency shelter. Solar on site would allow for storing electricity as needed for emergencies. Green Mountain Power has some initiatives for helping communities to be more self-sufficient as possible in disaster situations. The solar would benefit all three town buildings on site. BACF is basically asking for the Town’s permission to explore the options for the Town. The Board was in favor of this, and William made a motion to allow Michael / BACF to get estimates for the site. Seconded by Steve- motion passed unanimously.

Minutes: January 09, 2024, January 16, 2024, Budget Workshop- The Board reviewed the Minutes and William made a motion to approve both – seconded by George- motion passed.

Highway Report: Updates: Steve reported that the Holiday Farm Bridge is done –with just a few things left to do on it. Jenne Bridge has footings poured; the road crew will be starting on the River Road-burning the debris soon. Cindy stated that she is very happy with the new highway employee - Martin. He is doing a great job on Goldcoast Road. Deb Ogden has concerns about the area by Jenne Bridge - she feels that there needs to be signs or cones notifying drivers of the construction site there. The Board agreed and will see that signage is put there when they are working close to the road. Lynne had a concern about the ditches on North Bridgewater Road near her property. The Board explained that nothing can be done at this time of year. In the spring these things will be taken care of.

Treasurer's File:

- AP Warrant #24-12 Man. Cks #2804 - # 809 & A/P Cks #21062- #21081 Board reviewed and signed.
- FEMA CDL (Community Disaster Loan) Melissa is applying for this loan- it is a 5-year Loan for operating cost only. Lower interest rate – can borrow up to \$5 million. It is a 3–4-month process to apply.
- Mascoma Expense Loan: We are applying for an additional \$2 million draw-down expense note at 6.1% -one-year term. Total cost for flood expenses to date is a little over 4 million. William made a motion to secure a \$2 million loan through Mascoma Bank-seconded by George – motion passed unanimously. The Board signed the loan papers. Melissa also met with Eric from Ottauquechee Plumbing on Friday to look at the sewer pipes in the basement. Was hoping to have a price from them to do the job- but it has not been received yet- hoping to have it for the next meeting. The plan is to have all cast iron pipes replaced with pvc pipes to the exterior of the building. Exterior work to the street will take place later this spring.

Clerk's File: Excess weight permit applications for:

Barrett Trucking Co, & Carroll & Concrete Co/Newport Sand & Gravel-William signed both Permits.

The Annual Certificate of Highway Mileage- The Board signed the Certificate.

Notice of Public Hearing the Draft Plymouth Zoning Ordinance Feb 6, 2024, at 7:00 pm. Board reviewed.

Harper Environmental Services-Nancy had a quote for a mold & mildew study for the Clerk's Office. Cost of \$1,100.00. Discussion of having the carpet steamed cleaned. William made a motion to approve the quote of \$1,100.00 for the study - seconded by Steve- motion passed.

Flood Hearing on January 31, 2024 –at 4:00 p.m. Property on the River Road.

Nancy has free covid tests available at her office.

Lister Updates: No updates- just waiting for the process to begin.

New Business: None

Old / Other Business: FY 2025 Budget discussion- Melissa and Vicky did a review of the draft budget. We are still waiting for the audit completion which may change some of the numbers. Most of the lines have been level-funded, with a few exceptions. General Fund Expenses are down 4.28%. Deficits were discussed for FY 2023, and the deficit raised in July 2023 for previous years accumulated deficit of \$423, 283.73. The deficit for FY 2023 – currently shows as \$162,100.00 -Melissa explained that this deficit was the result of the budgeting for FY 2023. Sheriff revenue was overstated, and the surplus was overstated. Overages in the

wages for that year were caused by the change of elected and hired employees after Town meeting in March of 2022. Office expenses for that year also experienced a \$20,000.00 increase. We also went to a cash basis of accounting in the beginning of FY 23 – which contributed to some of the previous year's expenses being included.

The Highway taxes to be raised are looking at an 18.12% increase. Wages show an increase to last year- but the amount of wages budgeted is based on their current rates of pay- increases that occurred in the past year. No new wage increases are in the budget. Most of the lines are level funded except Fuel, Equipment Repairs, Equipment Maintenance, and Building Improvement Reserves, which includes \$20,000.00 to be set aside for the new Salt Shed building. Total Highway Expenses up 15.46%

At this point in time - we are looking at taxes to be raised (includes both General & Highway) for FY 2025 are down 13.41% - but this is pending the final audit completion.

The Sewer budget is looking at an increase in the Unit Charges based on the increase in the budget. Plant labor has an increase of 9.23% - most lines were level funded. There is a deficit from FY 2023 of \$15,646.00 (pending audit results) that needs to be made up. The cause of the deficit was lower revenues received and changing to the cash basis included some expenses from the previous year being included in the expenses. As was discussed at the last meeting, the sewer fund had the previous two years' deficit on the books of \$33,000.00 which the Board voted to cover with money that was in a Restricted Fund Balance for future repairs. They voted to cover the past deficit with this money but still leaves the deficit of the FY 2023 year. The total FY 2025 budget is \$115,596.00 as compared to \$93,500.00 for FY 2024 – a 23% increase. The Quarterly Fees needed to cover the budget is a 27.23% increase. To cover the budget – the Unit cost will increase to \$667.00 per unit – a \$117.00 increase per unit and a \$29.25 increase per quarter per unit.

Also, the Recreation fund revenue is not sufficient to pay for the field maintenance. Revenue of over \$6,000.00 is needed to maintain the field. Current investments fall short of covering the cost and donations are down. Next week we will hopefully have the final Audit results and will finalize and adopt the budgets.

Lawrence & Lober – coming January 26, 2024

Next Meeting: January 30, 2024 – Finalize Budget

Visitors: Deb Ogden discussed the new school meetings that she has attended in neighboring towns. They have many attendees. She thinks the informational meeting tentatively planned as a part of our February 27th meeting may be too much for our current Board meeting room to hold. All agreed that the Grange would be a better place to have the meeting. Vicky will contact the School Board members and let them know that there needs to be a change of plans. And check with Alice about using the Grange.

Adjourn: Being no further business –William made a motion to adjourn at 6:08 p.m. - seconded by Steve - motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Victoria Young, Administrative Assistant