

Town of Danville  
Selectboard Minutes  
January 19, 2023  
Danville Town Hall (5:00 pm)

**Board Members Using Microsoft Teams:** Peter Griffin and Kellie Merrell

**Board Members Present:** Ken Linsley, Eric Bach and Janice Ouellette

**Others Present:** Audrey DeProspero, Keith Gadapee, Wendy Somers, Jonathan Austin-Shortt, Marc Burnell, Geoff Martin, Martha Staskus, Glenn Herrin, Clayton Cargill, Walter McNeil and Greg Prior

**Others Present Using Microsoft Teams:** Bill Bailey

**Meeting called to order** by Chair Eric Bach at 5:00 pm.

1. **Additions to the agenda:**

- Grant agreement from the Department of Historic Preservation for \$20,000

2. *Motion by Ken Linsley, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Janice Ouellette to approve **minutes of Regular meeting of January 5, 2023** as written. Vote 5-0-0. All in favor.*

3. **Visitors**

- **Jonathan Austin-Shortt, Fire Chief – FD Budget**

Eric Bach and Jonathan Austin-Shortt met to discuss budget. Cuts in the Fire Department budget were discussed. New items such as categories for outside companies that are now needed were discussed. The current insurance rating for the Fire Department is 7 out of 10. Best is 1. Jonathan Austin-Shortt is looking at ways to help reduce the ISO number.

Jonathan Austin-Shortt discussed hose and ladder testing now being required. By completing these, it will help lower the ISO rating. Truck maintenance and stipend amount has been reduced. Water filtration and overhead door maintenance has been removed to help reduce the budget.

Eric Bach noted Wendy Somers to discuss cut in capitol equipment fund. We will still be up to date with truck purchase, we will not have any monies left over and will have to look for grants.

Eric Bach gave Jonathan Austin-Shortt resources to start looking for grants.

Jonathan Austin-Shortt noted someone on the Fire Department is able to work on grants. The first one they will look for is to replace all 16 SCBAs. There is a grant out there for this that has a 5% match.

Ken Linsley noted the new truck is due in 2027 and inquired where it would be put.

Jonathan Austin-Shortt noted North Danville however they were looking at a smaller 1<sup>st</sup> Attack truck so it would fit in the building.

Ken Linsley was concerned for getting a truck to fit in the building and didn't want to wait until 2027 to find out that they cannot get a truck to fit in the building.

Jonathan Austin-Shortt hoped to move in the direction of finding one through a grant.

**Fire Department Check Book -**

Eric Bach was working with VLCT and found that the Fire Department having their own check book is not the way it should be done. He noted they needed to come up with a few different plans. They could add the Town Clerk's name to the check book and then the department could come to

Wendy Somers to get a check or the Fire Department Volunteer Association 501c3 can be connected to the Fire Department and then be able to hold their own funds.

Jonathan Austin-Shortt noted the department was talking about becoming a 501c3, however they thought they were already a 501c3 but they recently could not accept some donations due to not having completed the 501c3 status. They applied for a 501c3 in 2012 and were given an employer ID number and everything was signed off and mailed however in 2013, Form 990s were supposed to be filed by Fire Department and never were done. This continued until 2015 and were never completed.

Ken Linsley inquired if donations to the Town were tax deductible.

Wendy Somers believed them to be.

Kellie Merrell inquired what the benefit was for them becoming a 5013c as she thought it would better serve them to work on grants and not the 501c3 status.

Jonathan Austin-Shortt noted it seemed easier to him if they were because they could write their own checks for small incidental purchases and they have a debit card which they could continue to use seamlessly without asking for permission.

Eric Bach discussed expenditures and noted they could be done independently depending on the amount as they may fall under the Purchase Policy.

Wendy Somers suggested Jonathan Austin-Shortt come in to look at previous 501c3 file that was not followed through.

Jonathan Austin-Shortt noted he would bring this information to the Officers and have them vote on the decision.

Eric Bach inquired if the dollars came into the Fire Department could they go into their line item.

Wendy Somers noted yes.

Eric Bach suggested for Jonathan Austin-Shortt to work with Wendy to reinstate the 501c3.

Ken Linsley discussed donations versus tax dollars.

- **Martha Staskus and Geoff Martin of Norwich Solar – Pumpkin Hill Road solar array (owner Marc Burnell)**

Martha Staskus and Geoff Martin were present to ask for preferred solar siting as it is a requirement of the PUC.

Marc Burnell, owner of the land noted he reached out to his neighbors and has found no objections.

Martha Staskus discussed solar array being a 500-kilowatt array and going through the PUC for net metering. The land the solar array will sit on has been disturbed by previous landowner and is not on wetlands and is shielded from the road. The PUC rules for net metering a project is up to 500 kilowatt and it needs to be designated as preferred. Once done, the Selectboard will receive a full packet detailing environmental work, historic preservation, and description of project. The permit process can take up to one year. The other solar array that Norwich has done in town is across from the school. Pumpkin Hill's solar array will be about the same size.

*Motion by Janice Ouellette, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Ken Linsley to designate site preferred at 257 Pumpkin Hill and for Eric Bach to sign the preferred siting letter. Vote 5-0-0. All in favor.*

- **Walter McNeil, Jr. – NEKWMD**

District had their meeting a week ago Tuesday. Their budget will have a surplus. There are no changes in prices for materials selling for 2023. The District Board of Supervisors approved a budget of \$885,280 for all of the district. No formal vote was taken on the foam density unit because they are looking into a USDA grant which will cover 70% of the cost. They also are looking to sell their first ton of polystyrene for \$900. The Organics Grant will be extended to the end of 2023.

4. **Town Clerk** (Wendy Somers)

- Train Station grant agreement from the Department of Historic Preservation for \$20,000 requires signature.

*Consensus is for Eric Bach to sign the document.*

- 2023 Appropriation request is \$47,802. It is \$400 up on RCT. There has been no response from Upper Valley for Habitat in NEK.

Ken Linsley noted the Town's policy is that they have to reaffirm or do a petition to increase.

*Motion by Ken Linsley, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Kellie Merrell to approve the warning of \$47,802 of appropriations on Town Report. Vote 5-0-0. All in favor.*

5. **Highway Foreman** (Keith Gadapee)

- PACIF grant requires signature. Grant request includes gate lock for tailgate of dump truck to prevent slamming shut on body part, rear mount camera on new plow truck, and two desk converters for town offices. Grant opens on January 1<sup>st</sup> and is on a first come first serve basis. The total grant request is \$1,628. The grant application requires a senior municipal official signature.

*Motion by Ken Linsley, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Kellie Merrell to apply for the 2023 PACIF grant and to have Eric Bach sign. Vote 5-0-0. All in favor.*

- Curb Cut for Gregory Berner on Thaddeus Stevens for a new drive as a new house will be built.

*Motion by Ken Linsley, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Janice Ouellette to accept the curb cut for Gregory Berner on Thaddeus Stevens. Vote 5-0-0. All in favor.*

- Ryegate moving forward with purchasing St. J's portion of the mower. An agreement has been emailed. Agreed month is March. Ryegate has Purchase and Sales agreement and once they pay St. J, they will become 50% owner of the machine. Machine is valued at \$26,000 and Ryegate gave St. J \$13,000. Ryegate will share machine with Danville and will have 50% interest in the machine. Ryegate negotiated directly with St. J.

6. **Issues and Information** (All)

(a) **Fire Department Check Book** – see Jonathan Austin-Shortt, Fire Chief – FD Budget section.

(b) **Recycling Center Heat & Budget**

Janice Ouellette noted after reading Clayton Cargill's recycling report there were concerns that she thought the Selectboard should discuss.

Keith Gadapee noted the plan is for a Modine system to be installed and hooked to the existing heat in the garage, however Keith Gadapee is on his third contractor. The money portion planned for this is coming out of the building fund as it is part of the Town building (garage). The Modine heater will be tied into the current wood boiler system.

Janice Ouellette inquired if Clayton Cargill could keep the doors closed and get a space heater.

Keith Gadapee noted this could be done but Clayton Cargill needs to keep the doors shut.

Clayton Cargill requested to purchase a small heater and noted the side doors could stay shut however the front doors needed to stay open so people knew the building was open and to also help those people who struggle to carry in arm loads of recyclables at one time. Those people have their hands so full that they are not able to open the door.

Kellie Merrell noted she was okay with the expenditure for a heater.

*Consensus if for Clayton Cargill to purchase a small space heater.*

**(c) Budgets**

Highway

Keith Gadapee noted the percent increase was tweaked at 9.2 above last year.

Eric Bach noted the Highway budget is below the range the Selectboard requested. Eric Bach noted this was a difficult budget because of the dramatic increases such as diesel.

Diesel line discussed.

Ken Linsley inquired if the labor line has projections from the plan being created.

Keith Gadapee noted yes it does.

Ken Linsley inquired if the Town was in VMERS.

Wendy Somers noted no, pension is VSERS at 6.65.

Keith Gadapee noted that information was reflected in the number.

Ken Linsley noted the information was showing five members for insurance and others were not and wondered if the stipend was in the salary line.

Wendy Somers noted yes.

Wendy Somers inquired if the line included COLA.

Keith Gadapee noted no, just pay scale which they have been waiting on for three months.

Ken Linsley inquired if a COLA was included in the pay scale.

Keith Gadapee noted not in the first year as it was absorbed/included in the first-year spots.

Keith Gadapee discussed line item 141 Peacham Road loan for \$94,500. The payment is still in the budget which was voted on by the voters to put in this budget. This is the second payment of the three installments.

Ken Linsley inquired if the roller was in the equipment line.

Keith Gadapee noted yes, the attachment for the grader was included but everything else was cut out however there is a grant available which is about \$6,000 and Keith Gadapee anticipated getting it. This information shows in line item 30. He also noted a moveable radar speed sign was included in his budget.

*Motion by Janice Ouellette, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Peter Griffin to accept the 2023 Highway Budget as presented \$1,575,705. Vote 5-0-0. All in favor.*

Municipal

Wendy Somers listed descriptions for revenue offsets to expenses. Wendy Somers noted there was an additional \$400 added to the Selectboard line for cost of a new projector. Wendy Somers

noted the Capital Building fund does not have an amount and draft of county taxes received, as it usually passes in February but she went with draft. The matching funds for the train station is \$1,220 and the final payroll was not put in because COLA was not known.

Revenue and expense numbers discussed.

Ken Linsley discussed 5 million included all taxes and school.

Wendy Somers noted she has not received school yet so it does not show, it only shows municipal.

Wendy Somers noted the difference between last year's budget and this year budget is \$27,000 not including the building fund.

Ken Linsley noted revenue, property taxes, budget and actuals include what was voted on and approved but does not include this year.

Ken Linsley inquired about delinquent taxes and what was current overdue.

Wendy Somers noted approximately \$62-67,000.

Ken Linsley inquired about \$215,000 delinquent.

Wendy Somers noted that number was just people that paid late. She also noted that they did not know what revenue they were getting from the school so she put a zero in that line.

Ken Linsley noted the transfer from the building fund was to cover the recycle building so the Town would not be receiving that revenue.

Wendy Somers noted he was correct.

Eric Bach noted they needed to look at COLA options.

Ken Linsley noted length of service was included into Highway and inquired if there was any consideration for office people. He discussed comparison to state and wondered what was to be done for office people.

Eric Bach noted he was not sure.

Ken Linsley discussed having a salary compression between the highway and foreman.

Eric Bach agreed and noted that could change the highway budget.

Peter Griffin spoke of NE Region CPI and state using it for figuring their COLAs. State reflecting 7.6% inflation.

Kellie Merrell noted state unions have 2.5 increase in COLA.

Keith Gadapee discussed the statewide COLA for highway people found in VT local roads.

Kellie Merrell inquired if there was any idea when a pay scale would be done for the office.

Eric Bach noted he planned office with COLA and moving highway into pay scale.

Janice Ouellette noted there would not be as many levels on the horizontal axis as there is on the highway.

Kellie Merrell noted there was a \$7,000 difference between 3% and 7% COLA for the office.

Selectboard discussed variations of COLA.

Selectboard reviewed COLA expense for Town Hall employees and reviewed associated

expenses for those that had benefits.

Highway Supervisor's raise not disclosed nor COLA but funds were noted to be covered through monies in budget.

Individual stipend discussed but not approved as monies would come when pay scale created for office persons.

*Motion by Kellie Merrell, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Peter Griffin to vote to adopt the General Budget and to post General Fund at \$687,674.99. Vote 5-0-0. All in favor.*

Highway Budget

Eric Bach noted there was a little built into the General Fund, 7% for Keith Gadapee who is not on the highway pay scale.

Ken Linsley inquired if the new pay scale should be put in effect and noted if it was then an appropriate difference between top salary and Keith Gadapee's salary should be made.

Peter Griffin inquired if a motion should be made based on Ken Linsley's comment.

*Motion by Ken Linsley, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Peter Griffin to make sure there is an appropriate difference between the top salary highway person and Keith Gadapee's salary if the pay scale is to be put into effect.*

Keith Gadapee was concerned for the delay of getting the pay scale running and noted his guys needed assurance that they would be getting something. They sought reassurance that this pay scale was going to happen.

Selectboard discussed good faith negotiations and being committed to seeing it through.

Feedback from highway personnel came back this week and the plan is being worked on.

Keith Gadapee spoke of having pays done retro active as in the past.

Selectboard discussed pays being retro but not the other items in the policy.

#### **(d) Personnel Policy**

Janice Ouellette noted she was working on Draft 5. Language, training attendance and workshops have been updated. The suggested edits from the highway have been entered. The policy is in a hold position and it takes time to make sure the items are correct. They are crunching numbers for overtime and addressing concerns of the highway crew.

Eric Bach noted they were working through the feedback they received.

Ken Linsley inquired when the Selectboard would have something to approve.

Janice Ouellette noted last meeting in February.

#### **(e) Town Meeting**

Eric Bach noted the bill is with the governor to extend Town Meeting like they have had in the past. He discussed going back to regular Town Meeting model.

Kellie Merrell discussed ballot voting required for change of meeting.

Eric Bach noted the Charter is set for in person meeting and needs to be changed by in person vote. To change format to Australian ballot, folks on floor would need to vote on it. Ballots would be used for budgets. Eric Bach noted they needed to decide whether to mail ballots to all or not.

Wendy Somers suggested to mail ballots to only those who request it and not to include return postage as they can bring ballots to Town Meeting or drop off in box out front of Town Hall.

Eric Bach inquired if they were going to alter their meeting format. At a regular Town Meeting they could warn the article to change the voting. The current bill allows for Town Meeting during COVID via Australian ballot even though it is not in Town Charter.

Peter Griffin noted the timing of the meeting seems logical to be an in-person meeting.

Options discussed and normal Town Meeting chosen to be held Tuesday, March 7<sup>th</sup> at 10am in person at the school.

Selectboard discussed putting the question of moving to Australian ballot on the warning to get more people involved so they are able to vote. Town Meeting is not just about the budget, it is about who is running for office and appropriations. It gives people an opportunity to vote on things and gives them a voice.

*Motion by Kellie Merrell, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Janice Ouellette to change format and approve wording below\* based on VLCT's recommendation. Vote 5-0-0. Motion carries.*

*\*Shall Town of Danville vote to change the format for Town Meeting to allow for Australian Ballot to include all warned articles and budgets during future Town Meetings? This action is not to take away from the importance of an in-person Town Meeting, but to allow an opportunity for voters who are not able to attend the in-person portion of Town Meeting to take part in the decision-making processes in the Town of Danville. Our intent is to continue hosting an in-person Town Meeting for informational presentations, questions and answers.*

**(f) Engineering Study Information/Discussion**

Kellie Merrell sent Tom Brown draft request of qualifications and Tom Brown replied with corrections not to be so specific for what RFQ is for. The wording change suggested has been made along with the date change. The persons who receive the RFQ would send their credentials to the Selectboard to review and approve at their meeting on February 16<sup>th</sup>. The RFQ will be sent to a couple of folks and be advertised on the Town's website.

*Consensus is to approve letter and contact Jim Brimblecombe for review timeframe.*

**(g) Grant Agreement form the Department of Historic Preservation for \$20,000 – see Town Clerk Report.**

**7. Financials: Orders to review and sign – Financials Signed.**

**8. Adjourn - Motion by Janice Ouellette, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Ken Linsley to adjourn at 9:00 pm. All in favor.**

Minutes taken by Audrey DeProspero submitted January 20, 2023 at 1:04 pm.