



Select Board

Town of Hinesburg
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Meeting Minutes – September 9, 2020

- Draft -

Attending the Meeting: Phil Pouech, Merrily Lovell, Jeff French, Mike Loner, Jeff Tobrocke, Renae Marshall, Joy Dubin Grossman, Andrea Morgante, Erik Bailey, Ed Waite, Wayne Elliott, Liam B., Katie Charbonneau, Al Barber, David Blanck Eric S., Harrison Mead, Kevin Gibbons, Dawn Francis, Kendall B., John Lyman, VJ Estey, David Estey, Frank Koss, Matt Rivers, Donna Lewis, Anthony Cambridge, Lyn Porter, David and Sarah Toscano, Luke Charbonneau

Meeting called to order at 7:02 p.m. via Zoom remote meeting platform.

There were no agenda changes or public comment.

Town Administrator Report

- Continued work with the solar contractors. The Town lagoon site will not work as it is a class 2 wetland.
- Advertised the community police officer position and developed a timeline for the search committee.
- Continued discussions with the Fire Department regarding the ambulance and job description for the full-time position.
- Had a meeting with the Racial/Ethnic Equity work group on what the next steps will be.
- Met with the State and Wayne Elliott on criteria related to the affordability program in the ww upgrade funding package.

Select Board Forum / Correspondence

Phil noted the Board received emails concerning the question of ambulance service which have been shared in the meeting packet.

Worked on the job description for the full-time EMT Fire Department employee.

Public Information Session on Wastewater Upgrade November 2020 Bond Vote

Renae said the meeting with the State was regarding using an allocation fee increase, increased user rate or inclusion in the tax rate. She is looking for confirmation that this will not make the Town ineligible for the funding package.

Wayne Elliott created a spreadsheet showing projected sewer rates using different scenarios of funding.

Phil suggested to have a column that shows the costs without the funding package.

Phil suggested use of some income from property taxes could be taken out of the bond. When working on the budget the Board could put in a \$ 0.01 tax increase to use toward bond payment. This would be a warned item. He feels this makes a cleaner picture for the bond vote and increases the chance for a positive vote. He is happy to make a strong argument that adding \$0.01, or whatever amount the Board decides, to the tax rate has general benefit. The other thing Phil wanted to point out is the impact of this does not start till 2025. We should start raising the rates now to avoid a large increase.

Jeff T said there may be opportunities for more funding and thinks we should not include any funding from property taxes at this time as it may turn out it is not necessary.

Jeff F said the challenge is to educate voters. They will be seeing the 11-million-dollar amount on the bond vote. They need to know to get the funding the bond needs to pass.

Renaë said there will be a Town wide mailing along with more informational meetings.

Renaë said at the next meeting the Board will review drafts of both the wastewater bond and the ambulance bond vote flyers.

Andrea Morgante said she appreciates all the work done to reduce the cost. It is important people understand how much of a rate increase this is. Yes, this is an improvement that is needed, but is this the right way to address the water quality problems we are being forced to address to clean up Lake Champlain because this is the only stick the State has to meet the EPA requirements. The sewer systems in the State of Vermont are contributing less than 3% of the phosphorus into the Lake.

Hinesburg is between a rock and a hard place. She thanked the State for funding to reduce the bond but added the State is not doing anything to address this problem. She said in the pamphlet, give the history of why we are in this position. She has not decided if she will support the bond as it is a huge burden on the users. She also feels it is not right to ask tax payers to pay for this after the fact.

Erik said the State agrees but the EPA is forcing this.

Phil agrees with the points Andrea made but is not ready for Hinesburg to be the test of a Town that does not meet their permit. Andrea said the only way to get change is to force the State to come to the table and find another solution.

Phil asked Wayne if we were to advise everyone to vote no, what would the cost be to the Town. Wayne cited an example he knows of. The State told the town if the vote did not pass the amount of the fines will be equal to what the users fees would be and at that point the bond passed.

Renae said she could invite a State Representative to our next meeting if they are able to attend. Jeff F said we did that and had 6 representatives attend who all agreed and said they would try to do something and now here we are with this huge bond.

Review Minutes from September 2, 2020

Phil moved to approve the minutes from September 2, 2020 as amended. Second by Mike and approved with 5 yes votes.

Consider Approving Warrants

Phil moved to approve the warrants, including payroll, as submitted by the Town Treasurer. Second by Jeff T and approved with 5 yes votes.

Public Informational Session on November 2020 Bond Question: “Shall the Town of Hinesburg Establish and Manage an Ambulance Transport Service?”

The Board reviewed the revised budget submitted by the Fire Department.

Phil asked Board members what questions they have and what clarity they are looking for.

Jeff F asked in response to Al’s comment that EMS goes out on all fire calls if St. Mike’s does that also. Al said dispatch will ask if the ambulance is wanted. Jeff F noted with the new info from St. Mike’s the revenue now lines up and makes sense. Jeff F said the feedback he is hearing is the question of what is the service I am getting for what I will be paying.

Merrily asked Al if he anticipates that call volume will go up each year. Al said that is the expectation. Merrily was confused on the intercept fee, and on call stipend that was remaining level if call volume is increasing. Al explained the stipend is to pay a replacement person. Regarding the intercept fee, they do not call for paramedics very often so the number is a place holder. Merrily also asked about Al’s comment that in the future we will need a new building, and a building for the ladder truck. That expense is not included in the budget. Al said they are not included as they can house the ambulance in the current building. They will not need a building for 5 years and he hopes impact fees will help with that.

Phil added that he feels the Town will want to push for a new building in 10 years and it would be good to have somewhere in the information sheet the expectations for the needs of a new building. John Lyman, member of the Fire Department for 16 years, added the Department has a strategic plan that shows growth of the Town, projected new apparatus and building size growth and have been providing that information to the Select Board.

Renae said it would be helpful to address the type of ambulance service, for example is it 24/7 and the living quarters piece. Al said they have been looking at transition to this as the problem time to get volunteers is daytime.

We need to acknowledge an ambulance will cost more, but there are advantages and reasons we would be willing to pay more. As we develop the pamphlet along with the budget and costs note the advantages.

Mike asked about the revenue given the information just received from St. Mike's, are there other transports missing in those total charges. Al said there is some mutual aid that take the patients. Mike is asking how the revenue jump to next year can be so large. This is new information that needs to be reviewed.

Mike asked how the ambulance will operate, he knows there will be a full-time EMT during the day to do the calls. He asked who will be driving the ambulance and who will be providing support. Al said to be a legal crew you have to have two certified EMS people in the back. They will have the full-time fire person who is an EMT and the dedicated ambulance person who is an EMT. Frank has started an attendant program which requires certification in CPR to drive the ambulance. A lot of times when the ambulance comes there is only the driver and one person in the back. They will still need to rely on the volunteers to fill in as extra crew members. Al said they have 19 members; 5 EMR's, 10 EMT's, 3 AEMT's and 1 paramedic.

Renae asked what available coverage we have now. Al said there are 2 AEMT's and 1 EMT available for day-time coverage.

Jeff F said he just got a first look at the new transport numbers and said they do not match with the previous information. He asked about staffing. If Fire and EMS will be running the ambulance does it make sense to have them as separate entities even if that means we have to hire more people to run the ambulance. Al explained if you split it you need new management and you are splitting up your volunteers too much. John Lyman added that if you split it up you lose the continuity of care of Fire and EMS working together.

Luke Charbenneau wanted to clarify the volunteer aspect. Whether you go with Hinesburg or Richmond you are still paying for 2 people. He noted Richmond says they have 3 full time paid people; a couple of part-time people and the rest are volunteers.

Al will continue working with Patrice on the new numbers just received. Phil noted the Board and Renae will try to add some structure to the discussion.

Mike moved to adjourn at 9:30 p.m., second by Jeff T and approved with 5 yes votes.

Respectfully submitted,
Valerie Spadaccini, Clerk of the Board