



Select Board

Town of Hinesburg
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Meeting Minutes – October 28, 2020

- Draft -

Attending the Meeting: Phil Pouech, Merrily Lovell, Jeff French, Mike Loner, Maggie Gordon, Joy Dubin Grossman, Wayne Elliott, Amy Polacyk, Thomas Brown, Lynnette Claudon, Carl Bohlen, Eric Spivak, Andrea Morgante, Erik Bailey, Lenore Budd, Al Barber, Katie Charbonneau

Meeting called to order at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom

There were no changes to the agenda or public comment.

Phil welcomed Maggie Gordon as the new Board member to serve till March 2, 2021.

Phil welcomed Joy as our interim Town Administrator.

Public Hearing for Wastewater Upgrade November 2020 Bond Vote

Phil advised this is a required meeting by State Statute to be held within 10 days of a bond vote.

Phil moved to open the Public Hearing on the Wastewater Bond vote, second by Merrily and approved with 5 yes votes.

Phil introduced Wayne Elliott, of Aldrich & Elliott which is the engineering firm that was awarded the bid for the wastewater upgrade.

Wayne noted three State staff employees are also logged into the meeting. Tom Brown, clean water SRF project developer and has been working with the Town on funding for the project. Tom advised the SRF is in the clean water division of DEC. Lynnette Claudon works for the clean water state revolving fund in the design / engineering section. Amy Polacyk is the wastewater program manager. She manages the regulatory program that wrote the permit for Hinesburg. Amy said Hinesburg was one of the first new permits with reduced phosphorus.

Wayne shared a presentation which covered the history of the system. In 2018 the Town started the steps for a new system. In March of 2018 the State issued the new discharge permit. Compliance with

the lower limits are mandated by EPA and the State.

Amy noted if the bond vote does not pass it puts the Town at risk for litigation, while the State can exercise enforcement discretion it can't control what any partners like the EPA would do.

The Town explored increased capacity and compared options and costs with and without increased capacity. With increased capacity, new development would help pay upgrade costs. Wayne explained the alternative options considered.

Tom Brown addressed the funding package the Town is eligible for. He talked about the State Pollution Control Grant monies possibly not being available when needed. If that is the case, we would use the Clean Water SRF funding for the loan if the grant is not available. When the grant becomes available it would be put back into the funding and re-amortize the loan.

Jeff asked about the statement from Tom that some of the funding sources might be challenging given the economic climate. Tom explained the Clean Water SRF comes from the State capital budget. Wayne said the Town does not need that for a period of time not that the funds will not go to the Town.

Phil reminded us that Hinesburg's search for additional funding will continue.

Wayne was clear on the fact that if the bond vote does not pass the State has made it clear several of the funding sources may not be available for the project after June 30, 2021.

Tom said Clean Water is meant to co-fund with other sources and any other funds would easily be incorporated into that system.

Jeff said he appreciates all the help for the funding sources and getting the cost down but he is not thrilled that we are forced to do this by the State. He feels with the 5 million dollars that will be spent a lot more could be done to address the problem than to build an 11 million dollar wastewater treatment plant.

Any said it is not just the phosphorus, the plant itself is overloaded with organics. Phil said the lagoons are 50 years old and we will be getting a system to last and allow development.

Eric S said as a user he feels there should have been plans to save to do this knowing the age of the plant. He also asked about additional maintenance costs in addition to the bond. Wayne said those projected costs are included.

Merrily asked Amy about her comment about the bond not passing and the State being in danger of litigation, or is it the Town that is in danger. Amy said it could go a lot of different ways. If the State fails on enforcing the permit levels that have been put into place, they could be in danger of being taken to task by the EPA and others like the Conservation Law Foundation. Not being a lawyer Amy said it is hard for her to understand what the full legal situation could be. The project in place is already looking at exceeding the deadline that was put in place in the original permit. She feels that can be worked through if there is construction.

Carl Bohlen thanked all for their hard work. He agrees with Jeff this is not the best way to spend money to improve Lake Champlain. He asked if there is a disadvantage of approving this before we seek other additional funding.

Wayne said the Town is in a better position to apply next Spring with a positive bond vote.

Erik Bailey there can be an advantage to being shovel ready for some funding.

Erick S wanted to poll the Board members on their thoughts.

Phil said he is on the sewer system. He said with the funding package he feels it is worthwhile to move forward. Without this it would be hard to bring development particularly industrial to Town. It is a significant cost and the Town will continue to look for further funding. It will be a number of years before those costs hit the users.

Mike is also a user on the system. He agreed with Jeff's statement that there are better ways to use similar monies. The Town is in a position where we have to move forward with this and the benefits of this system is it will take us out to the next 30 to 50 years.

Jeff is on the system and agrees rates are costly. He said Amy is correct that we would have to upgrade our system anyway. This is the best of a bad situation with the funding package we will be getting.

Maggie said she is not a user on the system but her place of work and where she shops is. She said not investing can BE more expensive than investing.

Merrily agrees with what others said. She feels there must be a better solution but we don't have that right now. While it feels painful this is something we have to do. Merrily asked Eric S what his thoughts are.

Eric said he is on the system and he has been quite vocal to Renae about the costs. We hope for development but do not know if it will happen.

Phil moved to close the Public Hearing, second by Merrily and approved with 5 yes votes.

Public Hearing for Ambulance Question on November Ballot "Shall the Town of Hinesburg Establish and Manage an Ambulance Transport Service?"

Phil gave an overview of the history of this (attached to the minutes).

Eric S pointed out there are funds for a second ambulance but they will not purchase this right away. They will get the first one operating and when ready, can purchase the second used ambulance. Med 100 will be a backup vehicle. The by-laws of the Association are for the 501C3. The Fire Department has operating guidelines for the department and personnel and members. Incorporated into the guidelines are the Town policies. Eric spoke about the how they got into EMS services. In July of 2000

the Fire Department took over EMS services for Hinesburg and St. George. In 2001 Association fees purchased the first MED 100. 2012 that vehicle was replaced with the current one. They were awarded First Response Squad of the year in 2003 and 2019, also been awarded the Vermont Star of Life award and All Lifesaving award.

Tom Ayer had a question on the cost of new station in the future. Eric said a new station is not dependent on having an ambulance. The new station will be driven by development in Town and replacement of current equipment.

Phil said the Town will need to address a new station at some point.

Al Barber thanked Eric and the Board for the support.

Mike said regardless of where individual Board members stand on the question, they agreed to allow the voters of Hinesburg make the decision. If the voters choose to go in this direction, he looks forward to working with the Fire Department.

Jeff agreed regardless of how the vote goes, as a Board, Town and Department we will move forward together.

Merrily also thanked Eric, Al and Katie and all the officers of the Department.

Maggie moved to adjourn at 9:03 p.m., second by Jeff and approved with 5 yes votes.

Respectfully Submitted,
Valerie Spadaccini, Clerk of the Board

Ambulance Introduction:

- ◆ The Fire Department/First Response has discussed providing ambulance transport services for several years
- ◆ Our Fire Department already has first response services and they have expanded those services over the years along with recognition by the state of Vermont.
- ◆ St. Michael's rescue informed Hinesburg they were overstretched and would drop Hinesburg from their service area (after 50 years of free service)
- ◆ St Michaels did extend their service one more year for a very small service charge to give Hinesburg more time to develop a replacement service
- ◆ Hinesburg's FD proposed to the SB that they would like to develop an ambulance service for Hinesburg. They noted they have a town citizen who would be willing to donate the cost of the new ambulance to help get the town started. (They are now proposing to provide enough money to buy a new ambulance and another used back up ambulance)
- ◆ Hinesburg SB set up a committee to investigate options, costs and provide recommendations to the SB. The committee of cross-functions worked hard developing information along with a number of critical questions. Due to the complexity of the issue and conflicting information and opinions, the committee provided the SB with the information without specific recommendations. At this point the TA & SB took over.
- ◆ The SB, guided by Renae (TA) gathered solicited information from many credible sources and held a number of public meetings.
- ◆ The SB decided to put this critical decision to the voters. A warned item at our annual meeting was required to make this a vote by Australian ballot. The warned item passed at town meeting which now allows an Australian ballot vote to decide if Hinesburg wants to create its own town ambulance service.
- ◆ The FD and SB continued to work diligently to develop an accurate budget required for a town owned and run ambulance transport service. It was challenging for many reasons including identifying existing budgeted items already used for our first response program but would be applied to the ambulance service. Our budget also includes the revenues expected from payments for ambulance transport (primarily from insurance and Medicare).
- ◆ The question was asked through this process if the FD was under the town umbrella. The answer is definitely yes. All the volunteers are town employees and fall under the town and have the same protections and requirements of all town employees.
- ◆ If the vote passes, (the town decides they want their own ambulance transport services), the SB would propose this in the 2022 budget for a March 2021 vote.
- ◆ If the vote fails, the town would need to contract our ambulance transport services. After some time and experience with contract services and town growth, Hinesburg could review this question in the future.
- ◆ Either way the vote falls, Hinesburg will continue first response capability and support this critical service.