

**Selectboard Memo**  
**December 6, 2021 SB Meeting**

**Conversation with ORCA Media**

**Rob Chapman, ORCA Media Executive Director**

- Rob will be here to discuss potential upgrades to the remote component of our hybrid meeting methodology as well as the opportunity for either live streaming meetings or simply have meeting recordings available online

**Consideration of Application to 2022 Communities Caring for Canopy Grant Program by EM Resilient Roads Committee**

- The RRC is developing an application for 2022 funding to continue the town's proactive effort to remove the doomed, due the Emerald Ash Borer, ash trees from road rights-of-way; this grant program is the latest iteration of the VT Urban & Community Forestry Program/VT Dept. of Forests, Parks & Recreation funding opportunities for the proposed use; the town has received awards for the purpose each of the past two years (\$15,000 for the U-32 project; \$5,000 for the County Road project); the maximum award is \$5,000 with a equivalent town match; the RRC is targeting the North Street area this year; the anticipated cost of the project is well in excess of the \$10,000 level required for a maximum grant
- The application is due January 7, 2022; as has been done with the previous applications, the RRC is requesting authorization to submit the application (TA Johnson will do the actual submission) when complete

**Town Treasurer Report**

- Budget Status Report
  - Treasurer Welch will be here to provide the standard monthly update

**Presentation of FY2023 Capital Improvement Committee Plan**

- Capital Improvement Committee is presenting an updated, for FY2023, plan for anticipated capital expenditures over the foreseeable future; the committee is recommending an increase to the Capital Reserve Fund budget line of \$13,056 (2.9% above last year's \$446,634) to a total of \$459,690 for FY2023
- Treasurer Welch may recommend that the budget line remain level at \$446,634 to provide more flexibility for absorbing the costs of the anticipated town office positions structural change
- If comfortable, board should adopt the plan and set the FY2023 budget line at the desired level

**Presentation of Funding Request Study Committee Report**

- Changes from the FY2022 appropriations:
  - Good Samaritan Haven received an \$1,100 increase (to \$2,000), the VT Center for Independent Living received a \$100 increase (to \$400) and the Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District received a \$200 increase (to \$800);
  - The Onion River Food Shelf (\$1,000, down from \$1,200) and People's Health and Wellness Clinic (\$1,250, down from \$1,750) both received decreased appropriations as requested by the organizations; and,

- The Vermont Bar Foundation received a first time appropriation at the requested level of \$1,500
- Total \$23,666, up 10.2% from last year's \$21,466
- If comfortable, board should accept report and set a funding request article for 2023 Town Meeting at the stated appropriation level

### **Discussion on 2022 Town Meeting**

- **Consideration of Approval for WCUUSD School Board to Authorize Ballot Mailing to All Registered Voters**
  - 17 V.S.A. §2680 (g)(2):
    - A school board may, after receiving the approval of the legislative body of each member town in the district, vote to mail its annual meeting ballot to all active registered voters in the district. In such case, the town clerk and election officials in the member towns shall be responsible for the mailing of the ballots but all costs associated with the mailing of ballots shall be borne by the school district.
  - The WCUUSD board has formally requested that the EM (and the other 4 relevant boards) Selectboard approve the mailing of the school district's annual meeting ballot to all active registered voters in EM
- **Consideration of Ballot Mailing to All Registered Voters**
  - 17 V.S.A. §2680 (g)(1):
    - The legislative body of a town, city, or village may vote to mail a ballot to all active registered voters in the town, city, or village
  - Town Clerk Laquerre would like to see the board approve the mailing of ballots to all active registered voters
- **Discussion on 2022 Town Meeting Warning**
  - This is the same draft as presented on November 15<sup>th</sup>; it includes a number of potential articles based on previous discussions of the board; these draft articles do not reflect any current determination by the board, but rather show the likely formatting should the board decide to move forward with any of the topics; some of the normal funding articles include requested amounts; none of those amounts have been approved by the board
  - The warning, based on the current options for holding town meeting, is set up for town meeting at EMES and town forum, the evening before, also at EMES; it is anticipated that the options may expand by mid-January once the legislature has had an opportunity to act in the face of the enduring pandemic

### **Discussion on FY2023 Budget Development**

- This version of the budget is updated to reflect FY2022 expenses through the December 6<sup>th</sup> warrant; most of the important changes to the FY2023 budget reflect the tentative acceptance by the board of the altered town office position structure plus the inclusion of the EMFD figures; the revenue section includes a boost to the fund balance utilization by \$50,000 to partially offset the employee cost increases, essentially spreading the effort over a two-year (at minimum) period for tax rate purposes
- The bulk of the major voted article levels will be set at the December 20<sup>th</sup> board meeting; Road Foreman Perry will bring his desired highway budget to the board at its January 10<sup>th</sup> meeting

## **Discussion on VTrans Grant Topics**

- **Consideration of Reimbursement Request for Mallory Brook/Center Road Culvert Replacement/Relocation Study Grant**
  - The reimbursement request for VTrans Grant BC1853, the design engineering study grant, is due by the end of the month; we now have the finalized Army Corps of Engineers wetlands, VT wetlands and VT stream alteration permit applications (application fee checks are on this warrant), so all expected expenses are accounted for; total cost is \$35,345.15 with a 10% town match component, resulting in a reimbursement request of \$31,810.63
  - If comfortable, board members should sign the TA65 form
  - The overall project continues to move forward toward 2023 construction (under VTrans Grant BC2063); the town is in the process of procuring the necessary private landowner easements (a non-reimbursable expense under VTrans state funds grant program rules)
- **Consideration of County Road Paving Grant Time Extension**
  - When the town canceled the major County Road infrastructure project in August due to a failure of the necessary prefabricated replacement culverts to be delivered in a timely manner, we requested and were approved for a one-year time extension of VTrans Grant PO1885, the paving grant for the southern 1.83 miles of County Road; the state agreement has not yet come through for the amendment; with a grant expiration of December 31, 2021, time is tight and TA Johnson is requesting the board approve a proactive acceptance of the extension and authorization for TA Johnson to complete the necessary agreement paperwork
- **Consideration of Morse Farm Culvert Replacement Grant Time Extension**
  - Same story as above: the town requested and was approved for a one-year time extension of VTrans Grant BC2024, the structures grant for the replacement of the County Road culvert located just south of the lower Morse Farm Maple Sugarworks driveway; the state agreement has not yet come through for the amendment; with a grant expiration of December 31, 2021, time is tight and TA Johnson is requesting the board approve a proactive acceptance of the extension and authorization for TA Johnson to complete the necessary agreement paperwork

## **Consideration of Land Records Digitization Agreement**

- Town Clerk Laquerre is requesting that the board approve the contract with Avenu (provider of our land records system) for digitizing the town's land records dating from 1988 back to 1848, essentially the remainder of the records not already part of our digitized land records
- The estimated cost is \$28,180.95; this is expected to be an allowable use of ARPA funding; if it turns out that it isn't, the town can tap the Land Records Restoration Fund, which currently has \$17,362 and is growing at an annualized rate of approximately \$850/month, plus the \$3,000 in the FY2022 budget for records restoration and any excess in the Public Records Management line, so the board should have no difficulty finding the necessary funds when the bill comes due, which isn't likely until mid-2022 at earliest
- The main reason for moving ahead now is to secure our place in line; just like last year (our January 2020 contract went live/was paid for in September/October 2020), towns are trying to take advantage of the available funding to get these digitization projects accomplished and the providers get behind schedule

## **Discussion on Town Management in Light of COVID-19**

- **General Issue:**
  - The municipal offices continue to operate under the August 12<sup>th</sup> update of the board order; mask use is mandatory when around others; there continues to be no major pushback from employees or the public
- **Consideration of Town Mask Mandate under 2021 Special Session Act 1**
  - 2021 Special Session Act 1 allows municipalities to enact a temporary rule requiring the use of face coverings in public, indoor settings
  - If enacted, any such rule:
    - Takes effect on adoption;
    - Is in effect for no more than 45 days unless extended; extensions are for 30-day increments;
    - Expires on April 30, 2022
  - Brattleboro, Rutland Town, Warren and Burlington have enacted rules under Act 1 with several other communities considering the topic this week; Hartford and Barre City decided not to enact any such rule at this time

## **Consideration of Treasurer Selection Committee Candidates**

- The EM Charter states:
  - §114E-8 Selection Committee
    - (b)(1) The Committee shall be composed of seven persons:
      - (A) one Selectboard member;
      - (B) three other Town officers whose positions work closely with the position being filled; and
      - (C) three other persons.
    - (b)(2) For the position of Town Treasurer, a certified public accountant shall be on the Committee. All except the certified public accountant and any nonresident officers shall be residents of the Town.
- Interested committee candidates:
  - Town resident volunteers: Norman Hill, Kim Watson, Rachael Grossman
  - Town employees: Rosie Laquerre
  - Selectboard: ?
  - CPA: ?

## **Appointments [Potential Executive Session]:**

- If executive session is desired:
  - Move to go into executive session under 1 V.S.A. §313(a)(3) – the appointment or employment or evaluation of a public officer or employee, provided that the public body shall make a final decision to hire or appoint a public officer or employee in an open meeting and shall explain the reasons for its final decision during the open meeting
- **Lister Vacancy**
  - Current candidates: Deb Fillion and Virginia Farley
  - Any appointment would be for the remainder of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Rob Chickering's 3-year term; the final year will be up for election at 2022 Town Meeting
- **Treasurer Selection Committee**

## **Warrants:**

### **➤ December 6, 2021 Regular Expense Warrant**

- Since we're back to in-person meetings, this warrant should be signed by all board members present; if an "in-person" quorum is lacking, the warrant should be approved with Chair Gardner authorized to sign warrant on behalf of the board

## **Town Administrator Report**

- VTrans Better Roads Grant Application:
  - The town is moving forward with a Category D (up to \$60,000) grant application to replace the Minister Brook/Cherry Tree Hill Road culvert; survey & wetland delineation work was recently completed and Doug Newton, the town's contracted design engineer, is working on plans and a project estimate; application deadline is December 17<sup>th</sup>
- Washington County FY2023 Budget Development:
  - The standard "preliminary budget planning meeting" will be held Monday, December 27, 2021, 2:30 p.m. at the County Clerk's office (10 Elm Street, behind the Sheriff's building); this is an in-person meeting
- Meeting Schedule:
  - December 9, 2021 7:00 pm EMFD budget meeting at ESF
    - Note new date (originally expected to be on December 2<sup>nd</sup>); this later timing may result in a joint meeting with Calais (at Calais) on December 13<sup>th</sup> if the normal pattern holds
  - December 20, 2021 6:30 pm Selectboard regular meeting
  - January 10, 2021 6:30 pm Selectboard "special" regular meeting

## **Zoning Administrator Report**

- 1 new application since the November 15<sup>th</sup> SB meeting; 63 total so far in 2021
- The next DRB meeting is scheduled for December 7, 2021; the biennial permit compliance review of the Casella transfer station is on the docket along with hearings for a building expansion at the Demers Auto property on US Rte. 2 and a boundary adjustment between Rubin Bennett's home lot on Carleton Blvd and his Hanger Building/rbTech parcel on VT Rte. 14 S.