

**TOWN OF CHARLOTTE
SELECTBOARD
MINUTES OF MEETING
JANUARY 17, 2012**

APPROVED

MEMBERS PRESENT: Charles Russell, Chairperson; Winslow Ladue, John Owen, Ed Stone, Dennis Delaney.

ADMINISTRATION: Dean Bloch, Selectboard Assistant.

OTHERS PRESENT: Nancy Sabin, Ellie Russell, Stephen Brooks, Jenny Cole, Patrice Machavern, John Rosenthal, David Miskell, Chris Davis, Robin reed, Robert Mack, Jim Donovan, Sheri Duff, Charlotte Citizen; Nancy Wood, Charlotte News; and others.

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Russell, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. Mr. Russell noted that the meeting was warned to start at 7:30 p.m.

ADJUSTMENTS TO AGENDA

Add: Roscoe Road Update - discussion.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Brooks asked if the Town would be willing to consider a plan to lease the Valley Salvage property, aka J&A Auto, for a CSWD drop off center for the towns of Shelburne, Hinesburg and Charlotte.

Mr. Ladue said that there were issues regarding a similar plan proposed on the Charlotte/Hinesburg Road in the past. Mr. Brooks clarified that it would be a drop off center, not a transfer station. He would present details to Shelburne and Hinesburg for discussion, said Mr. Brooks.

The Selectboard members were in favor of hearing more details.

Mr. Stone said that the Charlotte Republican Committee would host a panel discussion at the Town Hall on Thursday, 01/26/2012.

MINUTES: January 3, January 9

MOTION by Mr. Owen, seconded by Mr. Ladue, to approve the Selectboard minutes of 01/03/2012 as written.

VOTE: 5 ayes; motion carried.

MOTION by Mr. Owen, seconded by Mr. Stone, to approve the Selectboard minutes of 01/09/2012 as written, with edits.

VOTE: 5 ayes; motion carried.

WARNING FOR TOWN MEETING – action under consideration: approve in form

There was lengthy discussion regarding how to present West Charlotte Waste Water Committee recommendations to potentially sell Town waste water capacity; and a suggestion to revise Article 7 to include language to "...and act upon the same", or to fold Article 7 into Article 1.

Mr. Ladue explained that the committee report included a pricing concept of the existing system and cost of hookup to the system. Hook up would be voluntary. Prior to granting a hook up the Town would first evaluate if a property owner could find a solution on their own property. The Town would retain capacity for future Town use, said Mr. Ladue.

Mr. Miskell asked if an article was to hear the Waste Water Committee report. If so, then would the Town vote to move forward, or is it a Selectboard decision, asked Mr. Miskell. Mr. Russell said that the Selectboard wanted to hear feedback from the Town, not necessarily a vote.

Ms. Reed suggested an advisory article to hear the report. It seems like the Town is taking steps without seeking a Town vote. There has been an epidemic where the Selectboard makes decisions that should come before a Town vote, such as with the solar project, sidewalks, etc, stated Ms. Reed.

Mr. Ladue noted that the committee held many public hearings regarding the West Village Waste Water system. It is appropriate to plan next steps after getting feedback, said Mr. Ladue.

Mr. Owen suggested using previously proposed article wording. Mr. Ladue recalled that wording proposed at the December 19, 2011 meeting was "...should the Town allow for expansion of the existing waste water facility to serve...." Mr. Owen said that there were two approaches. Mr. Russell said it goes to a question of what was the Selectboard authorized to do, and what to take to the Town. At the last meeting the Board revisited the question and felt that report findings should go before the voters. What to do next would come from voter feedback, said Mr. Russell.

Mr. Brooks suggested wording an article as "...shall the Town discuss..."

Ms. Wood suggested placing the West Charlotte Waste Water Committee report in the Town Report to reach the entire Town. Mr. Ladue pointed out that the report was 80+ pages long. Ms. Wood said that if it was in the Town Report then it would come under Article 1, or for further discussion under Article 7. Then the Selectboard could get a sense of the Town, suggested Ms. Wood.

Mr. Delaney suggested printing a report summary in the Charlotte News that residents could read. The report is excellent and covers the topic very well. Then people could get their questions and concerns answered, said Mr. Delaney.

Mr. Russell asked for feedback from Board members.

Mr. Owen said that the voters should decide. Mr. Ladue said that the committee also recommended a February public meeting. He was in favor of an article as written by the committee. Mr. Delaney agreed with Mr. Ladue. Mr. Russell spoke in support of a separate article. Should excess capacity be added, asked Mr. Russell.

Mr. Owen asked if Article 6, to exempt the Friendship Lodge from education and municipal property taxes for 5 years, was premature. At the 2011 Town Meeting the Town was opposed in supporting the Friendship Lodge tax exemption until further information was provided, said Mr. Owen. Mr. Rosenthal said he had made a motion at the 2011 Town Meeting because the lodge was not prepared to make a presentation. The lodge members might make a presentation at the 2012 Town Meeting, said Mr. Rosenthal. Ms. Wood noted that there was state statute language that the Mason's could be exempt from property taxes.

Ms. Machavern asked for clarification regarding exemption from taxes for 5 years as requested in Articles 5 and 6. Mr. Davis spoke in support of Article 6. Mr. Russell suggested having staff check into whether an exemption term should be 5 years, or 10 years. Ms. Machavern spoke in support of coming before the Town every 5 years versus 10 regarding Article 5.

There was lengthy discussion regarding a creation of a Capital Fund process related to how the Town could legally set up a fund, which should be researched; and how to present the need for a Capital Improvement Fund at the Town Meeting. Mr. Bloch suggested that the Town could use the existing Repair/Maintenance Fund line item.

Mr. Brooks suggested drafting an advisory motion. If the Board created a projects list, then it could be funded over time, said Mr. Brooks. Mr. Russell said a question was if there was a reason to create a fund, but not fund it this year. If we waited another year, then we could explain the need, create and fund it, suggested Mr. Russell.

Mr. Delaney expressed concern that if the matter was dropped now, then the chances of taking it up next year were slim.

Mr. Owen suggested drafting an advisory motion for a Capital budget.

Mr. Stone was not in favor.

Mr. Ladue said if the Board made a commitment to create a Capital fund and a plan/policy, then each Town facility could plan for each cost of equipment/project. For example; the Town has two bridges that need repair, the costs of which could be planned out on a Capital Improvements schedule. Currently, there is no process to develop a fund and plan for these types of projects, pointed out Mr. Ladue.

Ms. Reed asked how big a town needed to be in order to have a Capital budget. Mr. Ladue replied that the Charlotte Fire and Rescue departments utilize a Capital budget

currently. Every town that receives state clean or drinking water loans were required to have a fund to track the costs. It is a bond, said Mr. Ladue.

Mr. Bloch explained that at some point the Town Hall roof needs to be replaced. A Capital fund is a planning tool for large items so that you don't need \$100,000 at once.

Mr. Russell suggested drafting an advisory motion for consideration at the next Board meeting.

Mr. Miskell reviewed he had sent a letter to three of the Selectboard members, dated 01/16/2012, regarding the proposed sidewalk funding process. He had discussed the matter with Mr. Russell, but still had concerns related to where sidewalks would be, where funding would appear in the Town budget, and if there would be a discussion at Town Meeting. The issue could be put before the voters as a separate article, or by Australian ballot. Sidewalks would be a major change in Town. Funding shouldn't be included in the Highway, or Selectboard budgets, said Mr. Miskell. Ms. Reed agreed, and said that sidewalks should be a separate item for the Town voters to consider.

Mr. Russell explained that all the line items in the budget could be discussed and voted on at Town Meeting. Any changes to the budget would affect the tax rate. The sidewalk funding is in the Highway budget currently, although Mr. Lewis was not in favor of that. Article 3 could be changed to include sidewalks for X dollars. The tax rate is determined by one vote versus many votes. The Fire and Rescue budget was included in the Town budget, as an example, said Mr. Russell.

Ms. Sabin agreed with Mr. Miskell that the sidewalk should be a separate article.

Ms. Cole explained that the Sidewalk Committee was anticipating a Town Meeting discussion. She was concerned regarding misconceptions, said Ms. Cole.

Mr. Ladue said that the Town Moderator would point out that there was a budget line item for sidewalks. If the Town voters didn't want sidewalks then they could vote zero funding for it, said Mr. Ladue.

Mr. Owen said that sidewalks belonged in the budget, but he understands the public's concerns. Just put it in the article, said Mr. Owen. Mr. Ladue said that would necessitate changing the article language and budget.

Mr. Delaney said he would support a compromise to add language to Article 3.

Mr. Stone said he was in favor of staying with it as a line item in the budget.

In response to questions, Mr. Russell reiterated that voters could amend budget line items with a motion, which could be voted up or down. Sidewalks could be discussed at length for everyone in Town, not just those who show up at Selectboard or committee meetings, said Mr. Russell.

Ms. Machavern explained that the Sidewalk Committee was formed in August and held numerous public meetings. The 2008 Town Plan, which spoke to sidewalks, was voted on by the Town on an Australian ballot. The committee is prepared to discuss the pros/cons of sidewalks at Town Meeting, said Ms. Machavern. Ms. Cole said that the 2008 Town Plan says that pedestrian paths should be constructed from the Library to Greenbush Road.

There was brief discussion regarding the proposed width of the roadway in front of the Old Brick Store if the sidewalk was constructed, which would actually widen the roadway by 4'.

Mr. Miskell asked if sidewalks were in the Town budget, would it be taken out of the Highway budget. Mr. Ladue pointed out that the Highway budget carried forward to the next year, which was an advantage.

Ms. Reed asked if the Town could petition to have a sidewalk vote by Australian ballot. Mr. Block pointed out that if the vote was by Australian ballot then there would be no discussion.

Following brief discussion the following language to Article 3 was suggested:
“...including a new line item – Sidewalks.”

(Note: a break was called from 8:50 p.m.-9:00 p.m.)

**TOWN BUDGET – action under consideration: approve for Town Meeting
Warning**

Mr. Bloch reviewed a revised draft Town Budget.

The following changes were proposed:

- Add \$5,000 for Town Party.
- Roll approved salary changes into budget.
- Listers – level funded.
- Fire/Rescue – items were identified for consolidation.
- Highway - Sidewalks: add \$85,000 into the Change column; add \$76,264 into the Selectman’s budget.
- Add \$10,000 to Town Lands – Berry Farm field for 4-5 parking spaces, grading of driveway and a gate. No funding for Port-a-lets.
- Ballpark (Lake Field) keep at zero as a placeholder.
- Library Assistants information still needed.
- Conservation – remove GIS mapping and UVM Interns.
- Transfers to Reserve Funds: \$10,000 for Library repairs was added to Repair/Maintenance Fund
- Fire and Rescue: should be \$185,000 over 10 years at \$0.025 on the tax rate.
- Grand List was flat.
- Add \$12,000 for Court fines income.

- Foot note that the tax calculation was an estimate.

SELECTBOARD UPDATES

Roscoe Road

Mr. Russell reviewed that Roscoe Road eroded below the upper bridge. The state declared an emergency and the Charlotte Road Commissioner was seeking quotes for stone to fix the road. The Town was reviewing the scenic road designation. A public hearing would be held at the Selectboard February 13, 2012 meeting regarding proposed road fixes. The road portion where the Jersey barriers were would get fixed as well. Mr. Stone, Emergency Manager, would meet with the FEMA representative to view the area before the February 17, 2012, said Mr. Russell.

Vermont Gas line to Addison County

Mr. Russell reported that he, Mr. Bloch, and Ms. Cole had met with a gas line representative. Mr. Bloch suggested that the line go along the VELCO line through Charlotte. There were 11 different routes proposed. Two of the proposed routes went through Charlotte, said Mr. Russell.

Ms. Cole said that three more meetings would be held. Final routes will be presented in March. A PSB application would be filed at the end of the year. Ms. Cole will find out if more than one Charlotte representative could attend the committee meetings. The next meeting was scheduled for 01/27/2012 in Middlebury. A summary of the initial meeting was sent to the Town staff. Any questions or ideas would be welcomed, said Ms. Cole.

Mr. Delaney said that an 80 percent renewable energy use was a state goal. Encouraging reliance on gas seemed contradictory, pointed out Mr. Delaney.

Mr. Russell said that the Board would make a decision on who would represent the Town at committee meetings the next Selectboard meeting.

Fire and Rescue billing

Mr. Russell reported that he and Mary Mead had met with the Fire and Rescue Board regarding billing logistics. Approval was needed for Ms. Mead to take over the billing, said Mr. Russell.

Charlotte Park and Wildlife Refuge/Overlook property

Mr. Ladue explained that he noticed heavy equipment at the Overlook property. He asked Ms. Cole what was happening. Ms. Cole explained that the Park Oversight Committee had spent \$1,500 on brush and tree cutting. She thought there should be a discussion of an easement with a neighbor regarding preservation of the view, said Mr. Ladue.

Town Donation list

Mr. Owen reported that he discussed the donation requests with members of the Donations Review Committee. The committee was comfortable with the list, said Mr. Owen.

Mt Philo Snow Plowing

Mr. Delaney explained that he walked at the Mt Philo State Park. Mr. Lewis snow plowed the entrance drive and parking lot on his own time. Mr. Delaney thanked Mr. Lewis for his public service.

APPROVAL OF BILLS AND WARRANTS

The Selectboard signed bills and warrants.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Mr. Owen, seconded by Mr. Stone, to adjourn the meeting.

VOTE: 5 ayes; motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Kathlyn Furr, Recording Secretary