

**Stowe Selectboard, Liquor Commission & Water/Sewer Commission Meeting  
Monday January 24, 2022**

Present:

Selectboard Members: William Adams, Nick Donza, Jo Sabel Courtney, Willie Noyes, Lisa Hagerty

In Person attendees: Paul Sakash, Carrie Simmons, Bobby Murphy, Leo Clark, Cindy Fuller, Harry Shepard

There were 14 participants on Zoom.

**Call to Order**

Chair Adams called the meeting to order at 5:30pm.

**Approve the Agenda**

On a motion by Mr. Willie Noyes, seconded by Ms. Jo Sabel Courtney, the Board approved the agenda with the addition of one consent item, School Ballot Mailing. Mr. Nick Donza requested this item be pulled from the consent agenda, and was made item B1.a to be discussed.

**Consent Agenda**

1. 1/10/22 Minutes
2. Sewer Allocation – 2399 Mountain Road
3. Public Transit Street Banner Application
4. Liquor Consent Items
5. PULLED

On a motion by Ms. Courtney, seconded by Mr. Noyes, the Board approved the Consent Agenda as presented with item A-5, School Ballot Mailing pulled.

**School Ballot Mailing**

The Lamoille South Unified Union School Board has requested that the Town of Stowe include their school ballot vote in the mailing of Town ballots. Bill 17 VSA 2680 now requires that all school district ballots be mailed to voters, with the approval of the municipal Board. The ballots will be printed on the back of the Town ballot, so there is no additional cost anticipated in the mailing.

On a motion by Mr. Donza, seconded by Ms. Lisa Hagerty, the Board approved the LSUU School Board request to include their school ballots with the mailing of the Town ballots.

**Economic and Community Services New and Increased Requests**

At their January 10, 2022 meeting, the Selectboard heard from eight community organizations who have requested new or increased funding from the Town of Stowe Community Appropriation process, out of the Economic and Community Services budget. Town Manager Mr. Charles Safford stated that the Selectboard does have a policy for Economic and Community Service Requests, noting that the policy sets a guideline of keeping funding to less than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of 1% of the Towns General Operating Budget. The new/increased requests totals \$21,250 and the amount available for new/increased requests is \$9,781. He also noted that the guidelines are to cap any request at 20% over the previous year's appropriation, and a number of the requests are for more than this amount. It was also noted that Stowe Jazz Festival had not requested funding in the FY23 budget due to unforeseen circumstances, leaving an extra \$1,200 in this budget.

The Selectboard acknowledged the increased needs for many community organizations, but also noted that the FY23 budget has been particularly challenging with many unknowns ahead. – Ms. Hagerty suggested that the Selectboard fund the two new organization requests – Friends of Green River Reservoir and Stowe Storylabs at an amount of \$500 each. The remaining organizations that requested

additional funding – The Current, Lamoille County Conservation District, Stowe Area Association, Stowe Vibrancy, Stowe Performing Arts and Stowe Youth Baseball – would be level funded at their FY22 amounts.

Mr. Bruce Nourjian, Stowe Area Association Board Member, asked about the deadline for a petition to include their request as an article on the ballot, but Mr. Safford noted that deadline had passed. It was noted that the Selectboard included additional assistance for Stowe Area Association in other areas of the FY23 budget, including picking up \$16,000 for the Mountain Road Shuttle, -agreeing to assume responsibility for the Welcome to Stowe signs, and increasing the amount paid for the use of public restrooms in the SAA Visitors Center. Ms. Carrie Simmons, Executive Director of SAA, stated that she hoped there would be ongoing discussions between the SAA and Town of Stowe regarding funding. Chair Adams stated that Board was open to working with SAA on the partnership with the Town, and transparency in funding requests and spending. It was also noted that while the FY23 Capital Plan is larger than in past years, the Town has a large amount of infrastructure to maintain, which is the main purpose of the Capital Fund, and that those needs will not be going away.

On a motion by Ms. Courtney, seconded by Mr. Noyes, the Board approved funding Friends of Green River Reservoir and Stowe Storylabs at the amount of \$500 each, and all other requests will remain level funding.

### **FY'23 General Fund Operating Budget & Capital Plan**

Mr. Safford presented the FY23 General Fund Operating Budget & Capital Plan for Public Hearing. He noted that the largest drivers in the budget were Cost of Living Adjustments, and the addition of a full time Human Resources position, and two Full Time Equivalent positions in the Fire Department. Additionally, the contingency fund has been increased to \$135,000 to account for labor negotiations, and to give the Town the extra fiscal capacity to remain nimble and responsive to the needs to the Town with many unknowns for FY23.

Mr. Safford also explained for context that the rate of inflation has increased nationally by 5.4% using the October CPI-U, and the tax rate is projected to grow by 5.67%, which is a larger than usual increase, but follows closely with the rate of inflation.

Mr. Donza asked about the number of planning projects on the Capital Plan, concerned about the Town capacity to follow through on the number of projects. Mr. Safford noted that the Town has recently completed a major construction phase with the village sidewalks and underground utility project, and that we are now in the planning stages for the next phase of work the Town needs. He explained that Capital projects are a multi-year process with planning and phasing, and that these first steps can help determine what projects are doable, most important and when they can be completed. He also noted that Public Works has hired a third person to help meet growing demands and that the Town would engage consultants whenever possible.

Mr. Paul Sakash asked about the cost related to the three new Full-Time positions included in the FY23 Operating Budget. Mr. Safford noted that the HR position is budgeted at \$75,000 plus benefits, but that the Fire Department positions are not necessarily two full time employees, but rather giving funding to this department to try to maintain the department in a way that meets the growing needs of the Town. He noted this could be through on-call pay, part time positions or other ideas to try to maintain surety of service for the Fire Department as the Town has a fundamental responsibility to provide fire protection to the people of the Town.

There were no further comments from the public or the Board.

On a motion by Mr. Donza, seconded by Mr. Noyes, the Board approved the FY23 General Fund Operating and Capital Budgets as presented.

### **Adoption of Annual Meeting Warning**

Mr. Safford presented the Board with a final draft of the Annual Meeting Warning. The intention is to warn the voting as Australian Ballot Annual Meeting, with no in-person Annual Meeting due to ongoing COVID-19 safety concerns. Aside from the standard articles, the warning also includes articles pertaining to bond votes for Stowe Electric sub-station improvements and asking the voters to reallocate unused bond proceeds from the Main Street Overhead Utility/Sidewalk Project for the purchase of an aerial ladder truck for the Fire Department. Staff updated the warning to include the final budget numbers as approved earlier in the meeting, and corrected the signature lines on the warning to reflect the current Board structure.

It was also noted that an informational meeting will be held on Tuesday February 22, 2022 but will be warned only as an electronic meeting due to unknown COVID-19 safety concerns. It was also noted that the Town Clerks Office will plan to mail ballots to each registered voter, but will not include a stamped return envelope, instead encouraging people to return them to the drop boxes at the Akeley Memorial Building.

On a motion by Ms. Hagerty, seconded by Ms. Courtney, the Board approved the Annual Meeting Warning as amended with final budget numbers and signature lines.

### **Aerial Ladder Truck Bond Documents Approval to Expend Proceeds from Unexpended Infrastructure Bond Proceeds**

Mr. Safford presented a resolution and form of ballot asking the voters to use unexpended infrastructure bond proceeds authorized at the 11/6/18 Special Town Meeting for the Overhead Utility Relocation/Sidewalk Project in the aggregate amount not to exceed \$1,250,000 to purchase an aerial ladder truck. The Resolution was updated to clarify that the original bond was for \$6,600,000, not \$6,000,000.

On a motion by Ms. Courtney, seconded by Mr. Noyes, the Board approved the amended resolution and form of the ballot asking the voters to use the unexpended infrastructure bond proceeds authorized at the 11/6/18 Special Town meeting in the aggregate amount not to exceed \$1,250,000 to purchase an aerial ladder truck.

### **Electric Substation Bond Documents Approval**

Mr. Safford presented a Declaration of Official Intent to Reimburse Certain Expenditures from Proceeds of Indebtedness, a Necessity Resolution and a form of ballot for the voters to consider approving general obligation bonds in the amount of \$4 million dollars for the "Purpose of acquiring, replacing or construction of municipal electric plant improvements." It was noted that this bond, requested by Stowe Electric Department, will be supported by SED revenues, but backed by the Good Faith & Credit of the Town of Stowe Taxpayers.

On a motion by Ms. Hagerty, seconded by Mr. Noyes, the Board approved the Declaration of Official Intent to Reimburse Certain Expenditures From Proceeds of Indebtedness, Resolution and form of ballot for the voters to consider approving general obligation bonds in the amount of \$4 million dollars for the "purpose of acquiring, replacing or construction of municipal electric plant improvements."

### **Manager's Report**

Mr. Safford presented the Board with proposed Zoning Amendments from the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission will join the Selectboard at their February 7, 2022 meeting to present the proposed changes, and if necessary, again at the February 22, 2022 meeting.

## Selectboard Meeting 1/24/22

Mr. Safford also formalized the February meeting schedule, noting a change from February 14<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> to February 7<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>. The Annual Meeting Informational Meeting will be held on Tuesday February 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Mr. Safford also noted that the Department of Planning & Zoning has been awarded the Bylaws Modernization Grant to allow the Town to hire a consultant, organize a steering committee, public outreach and draft recommended zoning amendments with a focus on local housing needs and regulatory barriers which restrict the development of housing within Stowe's designated downtown and lower village center.

Mr. Safford also noted that Town Appraiser Mr. Tim Morrissey has reviewed the 2021 Equalization Study Results for the Town of Stowe and found them to be accurate under the State of Vermont's methodology and no appeal is necessary.

Finally, Mr. Safford noted that the Vermont Legislature has passed and Governor Scott signed into law S.222 which allows for public bodies to meet fully remotely from now until January 15, 2023. Staff will plan on warning combination in-person/Zoom meetings until otherwise instructed. The Board discussed their desire to continue with full in-person Board participation if possible, and encourage the public to attend remotely via Zoom, but the Town Manager and Chair will continue to monitor the ongoing situation.

Mr. Sakash noted that Maple Street from Cemetery Road to the former Village limits needs to have the snow pushed back to make it safe for pedestrians. Mr. Stafford noted that he would follow up with the Road Crew but that they can be challenged by cars parked along the road.

Mr. Sakash also asked about the hearing for former Fire Chief Kyle Walker, and why that would be held in Executive Session. Mr. Safford explained that the grievance process is still considered a personnel matter and would meet the standards for Executive Session. He declined to comment further on legal and personnel matters.

On a motion by Ms. Courtney, seconded by Mr. Noyes, the Board went into Executive Session at 6:48pm to discuss Personnel and Legal issues.

The Board came out of Executive Session at 7:32pm.

There being no further business, Chair Adams adjourned the meeting at 7:33pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Abigail Sweetser.