

**Stowe Selectboard, Liquor Commission & Water/Sewer Commission Meeting
Tuesday February 22, 2022**

Present:

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

In Person attendees: Leighton Detora, Paco Aumand, Scott Reeves, Tyler Mumley, Harry Shepard, Cindy Fuller

There were 24 participants on Zoom.

Call to Order

Chair Adams called the meeting to order at 5:00pm.

Approve the Agenda

Chair Adams Noted that there had been a request to move Consent Agenda Item A-3, Park Street Parking – Change in Side of the Street for On-Street Parking out of the Consent Agenda and make it an item of business, B-4.

On a motion by Ms. Jo Sabel Courtney, seconded by Ms. Lisa Hagerty, the Board approved the agenda with the change indicated above.

Executive Session

On a motion by Ms. Hagerty, seconded by Ms. Courtney, the Board went into Executive Session at 5:01pm to discuss legal matters. They invited Kerin Stackpole and Pam Blouin to attend the Executive Session via Zoom.

The Board came out of Executive Session at 5:18pm.

Chair Adams resumed the meeting at 5:30pm

Consent Agenda

1. Certificate of No Appeal or Suit Pending
2. 2/8/22 Selectboard Minutes
3. PULLED
4. Equipment Fund Amendment
5. Liquor Consent Items
6. Bunny Libby Scholarship Fund Investment Policy Amendment

On a motion by Ms. Lisa Hagerty, seconded by Mr. Nick Donza, the Board approved the Consent Agenda as presented, with item A-3 pulled for discussion in Business.

Conservationist of the Year Award

Christine McGowan, Chair of the Conservation Commission, was present via Zoom to present the Conservationist of the Year award to retired Town Planner, Tom Jackman. Ms. McGowan spoke to Mr. Jackman's dedication to the conservation of land in Stowe, which went above and beyond "just doing the job." She noted this included his vision, partnership efforts, dedication to the future of Stowe and willingness to get down to business, sometimes with a chainsaw or blowtorch in hand. She thanked Tom for not only doing his job, but also genuinely caring about the Town of Stowe and preserving its character through land conservation, on behalf of the Conservation Commission both past and present. Tom thanked the Conservation Commission for the award, noting "it was a pleasure working with you all."

Chair Adams also asked for a moment of silence for Gar Anderson, a former Conservation Commission member who had a lot of passion and dedication particularly to preserving the Sterling Forest.

Annual Meeting Informational Meeting

Chair Adams began the informational meeting by noting that the Board would address Article 7 first, followed by Article 6 and then begin at Article 1 through 5.

Sarah Juzek, Financial Controller for Stowe Electric Department, provided a Powerpoint presentation on Article 7, which requests voter approval for \$4M in general obligation bonds for SED to upgrade the Wilkins Substation. Ms. Juzek explained that currently the Wilkins Substation provides power for 2,280 customers, including Stowe Village, the Stowe Public Safety Facility, Stowe Town Hall and Stowe High School. Currently this substation has 2 transformers that are near capacity. This project will add a third transformer to support future growth. SED plans to receive the loan from the Vermont Bond Bank to be paid over 20 years and provided a detailed debt service schedule. It was explained that SED will pay back this loan using ratepayer funds, not tax money, but that to obtain a better interest rate the load will be backed by the Stowe taxpayers. It was noted that SED intends to move forward with this project as soon as they receive approval and funds, likely ordering the equipment in fall of 2022.

Town Manager Charles Safford and Interim Fire Chief Scott Reeves presented on Article 6, requesting voter approval to redirect \$1.25M in bond proceeds remaining from the Overhead Utility Relocation Project to be used to purchase an aerial ladder truck. Mr. Safford emphasized that this money will not - require raising any new taxes -because it is proposed to be funded from previously approved bond proceeds that are left over from the Main Street Overhead Utility/Sidewalk project. He also noted that the aerial ladder truck to be purchased will replace the 30-year-old current aerial ladder truck which has exceeded its anticipated lifecycle, and will also replace Engine 2, as it will be a combined ladder truck and pumper. Chief Reeves stated that this is phase two of reducing the overall fleet of vehicles in the Fire Department, with Phase One being to combine Engine 1 with a Rescue Truck, and that new vehicle should arrive in October 2022. He explained that the fleet reduction is in large part due to the decline in the number of volunteer firefighters available to respond to calls. Having a combined ladder truck and pumper means that one crew can operate the vehicle rather than needing two crews to bring two separate apparatuses. He also noted that having an aerial ladder truck not only helps with larger building fires but is a safer alternative to using ground ladders which may require 2-3 people. He also noted that the reallocation of bond proceeds is approved by the Voters, the Fire Department intends to purchase the ladder truck through a governmental consortium through the same manufacturer as the new Engine 1/Rescue Truck, which will allow for easier training for volunteers, as they will have similar panels and operations. Reducing the fleet from 8 vehicles to 6 also reduces maintenance costs, and future vehicle replacement. Mr. Safford also noted that it is important for Stowe to have its own equipment rather than depending on neighboring towns for surety of service, better response times, and sometimes more than one ladder truck is used through mutual aid. With the recent Percy Farm barn fire, 9 different towns were called in for mutual aid. It was asked how these larger vehicles navigate on remote dirt roads. Chief Reeves explained that the current ladder truck is 47' long, and the planned replacement is only 33' long, so it will be smaller and easier to maneuver. He said he was confident the vehicle would make it to 98% of the locations in Town, and that the Fire Department does have a small engine for very remote locations.

Mr. Safford then spoke to Article 3, which asks for voter approval for \$14,110,616 in expenditures out of the General Fund Budget in FY'23, with \$10,821,063 of that to be raised through property taxes. He referred to the Fast Facts located in the Annual Report, stating that a large portion of the increase is related to pay, with a 5.4% cost of living increase for all employees who fall under the Personnel Regulations, Police Association Agreement and IBEW Agreement. A new Police Association Agreement was also ratified with a 5.5% increase to base wages. This is to keep pay competitive to attract and retain quality police officers. Mr. Safford also noted that this budget includes a new FTE Human Resources Director and two FTE equivalents for the Fire Department, giving them fiscal capacity for different

models including paid on-call hours, increasing volunteer pay or hiring employees if necessary. Mr. Safford noted that while Stowe has a small-town feel, it has the infrastructure of a small city, with one of the largest Grand Lists in the State and has seen a 21% increase between 2010 and 2020, with more -of a population influx since the pandemic. He noted that this budget reflects inflationary pressures, as well as getting the community in the position to step up to confront the growing demands of a growing - community.

Mr. Safford then spoke to Article 4, asking the voters to approve \$1,054,448 in Capital Fund expenditures for 9 capital projects. Mr. Safford went through each project, noting \$432,000 as the local match for two bridge replacements on Nebraska Valley Road, \$200,000 to support the Stowe Land Trusts conservation of the Ricketson Farm, replacement of the Highway Garage Roof on the East Side, assessing and scoping of the Luce Hill Road Bridge, Phase 1 of the Moscow Road village reconstruction, updates to the Memorial Park Master Plan, security cameras for Town Buildings, and an updated IT Access Control System for the Public Safety Facility. Mr. Safford explained that money for the Capital Fund comes from Local Option Taxes, after debt service is paid on the Stowe Arena and the Overhead Utility Relocation projects. The projects planned for FY'23 include using funds out of the reserve and projected local option taxes revenues, leaving an estimated unallocated Capital Fund Reserve of \$240,000. It was asked what the Town planned to do with ARPA money it may receive, and Mr. Safford indicated that the Town would discuss that further this summer when guidelines on spending are clearer, but for now was advancing these projects with known money. Some voters expressed concern that the nine projects were lumped together in one article, meaning that if someone opposed one item, they would have to vote all of them down. Chair Adams noted that it was a difficult decision to not hold Town Meeting where these items could be adjusted in debate, but that with Omicron cases rising at the time of warning the meeting it was felt to be the safest option for this year and the Board hopes to return to in-person annual meetings in the future.

Chair Adams thanked those in the audience and on Zoom for their participation and reminded everyone to vote on the Australian Ballot on or before March 1, 2022.

West Hill / Route 100 Traffic Light Update & Traffic Management Plan

VTrans has completed the project design and -right-of-way acquisition in anticipation of issuing Requests For Bids for the Traffic Light at West Hill Road and Route 100 in early March. Overhead utility relocation has commenced and is it anticipated that most of the road construction will occur from August to October in 2022, with installation of the light scheduled for early 2023. The project completion date is end of June 2023. Temporary traffic barriers will be used to keep the through lane closed through the 2022-2023 winter season until the signal is installed.

VTrans proposed traffic management plan for this project includes keeping two-way traffic on Route 100 and normal stop-controlled intersection traffic on West Hill Road during most of the construction. Public Works Director Harry Shepard has been working closely with VTrans on the development of this plan and indicated that there is one culvert replacement that will require closure of the road and implementation of a detour, which will be completed at night and is likely to take less than one week to complete. Additionally, work is prohibited on Friday afternoons after 2pm, weekends and holidays. Officers and flaggers will be utilized during any work that requires a lane closure.

The Board discussed if there were any other paving projects in the area that may impact traffic, which Mr. Shepard indicated that there were none he was aware of any and discussed that the light would be a smart light which would detect traffic in each direction. It was also noted that there will be 3 lights in each direction of Route 100 and 2 facing West Hill as part of federal codes.

Park Street Parking - Change to On-Street Parking

Mr. Shepard presented that the Union Bank has requested a curb cut onto Park Street as part of overall plans to redevelop their property and reconfigure their drive-through access. Their application before the DRB has not yet been completed. If granted the new design and curb cut, the Town would lose 3 parking

spaces on Park Street. To address this, Mr. Shepard has requested that the parallel parking on Park Street be moved to the left side of the street. Mr. Shepard indicated that this change would actually make sense as the current configuration requires drivers to shift lanes when crossing Pond Street and potentially eliminate confusion on lanes at the Main Street intersection. Police Chief Hull has reviewed the plan and indicated that there should be no issues with relocating the parking to the left side of Park Street. Mr. Shepard also indicate that this move would result in the gain of one parking space.

Chair Adams cautioned that any and all discussion on this topic would be specific to the location of on-street parking, not the proposed Union Bank site plan which is subject to review by the Development Review Board. and that there would not be discussion on the merit of the DRB application as that is a separate board and process. Mr. Safford indicated that the Union Bank is not requesting the on-street parking be shifted to the other side of the street. He further indicated that Public Works had been considering recommending it in its own right prior to the proposed curb cut but felt compelled to bring it forward at this time due to the potential loss of on-street parking.

Mr. Donza asked if village traffic congestion would be eased if Park Street were to return to a two-way road, which Mr. Shepard said would not be an easy answer even with a traffic study, as the current configuration with cross walks and bulbouts on Main Street would need to be reconfigured as they were designed with traffic exiting off Park Street only.

Residents on Park Street voiced concerns about the plan to change the on-street parking to the left side of the road through letters and were present at the meeting to discuss their concerns. They noted that the right side of Park Street is mainly commercial while the left side is more residential, and that moving the parking to the residential side of the street would make it difficult for residents to enter and exit, particularly when having to back out, of their parking areas. There were concerns about sight lines when backing out if vehicles are parked on the same side of the street. There were also concerns about tour busses that would have to exit directly into the roadway rather than onto the sidewalk. It was also noted that drivers will have difficulty parallel parking on the left side of the street. Resident Cassie Annello indicated it would be detrimental to her business, Acorn Italian Ice, to have parking directly in front of her green space.

Chair Adams indicated that with the property owner's safety concerns, the Selectboard would not recommend moving forward with a plan to move the parallel parking to the left side of the street regardless of the potential loss of parking if a curb cut is permitted. He indicated that the Selectboard would allow the DRB and Public Works to go through their processes.

Manager's Report

Mr. Safford provided an email from Oliver Olsen, Chair of the State Board of Education, responding to the Selectboards letter requesting they take up the issue of Stowe's withdrawal from the Lamoille South Unified Union. He indicated that the Board of Education would be waiting to hear a legal opinion from the Attorney General's Office.

Mr. Safford also noted that it was Chief Hull's ten-year anniversary as Police Chief in Stowe and forty years in law enforcement.

Mr. Safford update the Board on the current Local Option Taxes for the second quarter, noting that they have increased projects from \$1M to \$1.2M for the year.

It was noted that there is one job opening in the library for a circulation librarian, and many openings for summer camp staff for Stowe Recreation. He indicated that he had an exit interview the circulation librarian and she was happy but another opportunity came about for her elsewhere that was more in alignment with her future career goals.

Selectboard Meeting 2/22/22

On a motion by Mr. Adams, seconded by Ms. Courtney, the Board went into Executive Session at 8:19pm to discuss Personnel and Legal matters. They invited Paco Aumand to join them.

The Board came out of Executive Session at 9:21pm.

On a motion by Mr. Adams, seconded by Mr. Donza, the Board appointed Francis “Paco” Aumand to fill a vacant seat on the Selectboard with a term to expire March 7, 2023.

On a motion by Ms. Hagerty, seconded by Ms. Courtney, the Board approved the Settlement Agreement and General Release between the Town of Stowe and Kyle Walker, as presented by the Town Manager.

There being no further business, Chair Adams adjourned the meeting at 9:29pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Abigail Sweetser.