

**Stowe Selectboard, Liquor Commission & Water/Sewer Commission Meeting  
Wednesday January 18, 2023**

Present:

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

In Person attendees: Harry Shepard, Cindy Fuller

There were 3 participants on Zoom

**Call to Order**

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

**Approve the Agenda**

On a motion by Ms. Jo Sabel Courtney, seconded by Ms. Lisa Hagerty, the Board approved the agenda, pulling Consent Item A-2 and making it Business Item B-1A.

**Consent Agenda**

1. 1/9/23 Selectboard Minutes
2. PULLED
3. Union Bank Cooperative Parking Agreement
4. Annual Meeting Warning
5. Liquor Consent Items

On a motion by Ms. Hagerty, seconded by Mr. Nick Donza, the Board approved the Consent Agenda with item A-2 being pulled.

**Ballfield Groomer Bid Award**

The Parks Department has a 1974 Sand Star ballfield groomer machine that was not previously in the Equipment Fund because it was under \$10,000 when it was purchased. Due to the increased cost, it is included in the proposed equipment fund to be purchased in FY'24. The existing ballfield groomer is non-operational and not repairable. Staff is asking the Selectboard to award the contract at this time with a non-appropriation clause to ensure availability in the spring due to limited supply. The Town has received quotes from three manufacturers, one of which provided a quote for an electric machine. The Stowe Energy Committee has recommended the purchase of an electric machine, and Town Manager Charles Safford has worked with Stowe Electric Department, who will offer a \$1,250 incentive rebate, and has offered to sponsor the remaining difference in cost between gas and electric machines, which amounts to \$1,750. In exchange for the sponsorship, Stowe Electric will receive the naming rights to the machine, and will place a logo on the machine. Ms. Courtney commended the creative thinking and partnership between the Town and Stowe Electric.

On a motion by Ms. Courtney, seconded by Ms. Hagerty, the Board approved awarding the contract for the electric model to MTE Equipment Solutions for a Stand Stat ballfield groomer in the amount of \$27,756.80 with the understanding that SED will sponsor the piece of equipment for \$1,750 and provide a \$1,250 rebate.

**FY'24 General Fund Budget Deliberations**

Town Manager Charles Safford presented the Selectboard with two budget scenarios, the first being to reflect changes made in previous budget discussions, this budget would be a net increase of 13.32% with a projected tax rate increase of 11.09%. If the voters approve the local option sales tax and to reduce the amount to be raised in property taxes by \$700,000, this would result in a net increase of 6.85% and a tax rate increase of 4.76%.

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The second scenario Mr. Safford presented proposed to increase the surplus carry forward from \$167,100 to \$1,165,000, of which \$350,000 would be used to reduce the amount to be raised in property taxes, and \$815,000 would be used as one-time funding to be put towards the Equipment Fund. This would fully fund the Equipment Fund, which otherwise is projected to go negative in FY'27 due to inflationary costs and loss of the municipal discount. It was noted that this would leave approximately \$1.3M in the undesignated surplus, which is needed for cash flow purposes. Scenario 2 would result in a net budget increase of 11.63% and a tax rate increase of 9.439%. If the voters approve the local option sales tax and vote to reduce the amount to be raised in taxes by \$700,000, then the net budget increase would be 5.16% and the tax rate increase 3.1%.

The Selectboard was in agreement with moving forward with Scenario 2 as a starting point, noting that depending on the approval of the Local Option Sales Tax, this would meet the goal of bringing the tax rate increase down below 4%.

The Board discussed key areas of the budget, including the two requested Firefighter Full Time Employees was previously decided to be reduced to starting on January 1, 2024 rather than July 1, 2023, thus reducing that cost in half for the year. This will allow the hiring to be done after the Fire/EMS departmental organization study is complete. Mr. Safford indicated that he anticipates that study being done in the fall of 2023.

The Board discussed the requested additional Full Time Employee in the police department. The board discussed concerns about work/life balance for officers, and the challenges of finding and retaining part time "Level 2" officers who can staff special events. The Board also discussed creative ideas such as auxiliary officers, traffic controllers that are not officers, and mental health support officers. It was noted that Level 2 officers can cover patrol but are limited in what they can investigate and cannot fully replace the needs for Level 3, or fully academy trained officers. Mr. Safford explained that the request is not intended to add services, but more to continue to maintain the current level of services due to increased demands. The Town of Stowe has seen growth in both residents and tourists, which results in additional demand on services, including patrol, calls and traffic management. Mr. Safford explained that the department has added a second detective due to demands on Lieutenant Detective Whitcomb, as well as to provide succession planning. It was noted that Morrisville has also recently added a second detective due to demand, including much more involved investigations. While Sergeants and Detectives do cover patrol, it was noted that adding a second detective likely resulted in the holes in the patrol need, which this additional officer would cover. The Board reached the consensus that they should include the full time officer in the FY'24 budget, but also noted that they would like to continue discussions on how to creatively staff the department, such as an ambassador or auxiliary officer role to help augment their efforts.

The Board also discussed the requested additional Full Time Employee in the Planning & Zoning office, noting that historically there had been a third person between the two departments, which are now combined. The Board came to the consensus that demand in that department is only growing and that they approved the additional FTE in the FY'24 budget.

The Board then discussed the requested new and approved Social Services and Community & Economic Development Appropriation requests. Ms. Hagerty noted that while all of the organizations that came before the Board do good work and have worthy requests, that ultimately this was another challenging budget year and that it was difficult to increase some of the requests. She spoke about how having economic and community development organizations being funded by the Town should be more of a vetting process to show that the Town supports the organization, rather than being dependent on the

actual dollar amount, and encouraged organizations to look at alternative grants and fundraising. Rachel Moore, Director of The Current and chair of the Stowe Arts & Culture Council, stated that many towns designate a certain amount of funding to the arts in recognition of the creative economy and that those funds can be very significant to the organizations bottom line.

Ms. Hagerty proposed, and the Board concurred, that the two Social Services Organizations should be funded at their full requests (Lamoille Restorative Center \$3,000; Lamoille Home Health \$15,669). The Economic and Community Development Organizations that previously received funding from the Town of Stowe should be funded at their FY'23 amounts (Friends of Waterbury Reservoir \$500; Lamoille County Conservation District \$500; Lamoille Housing Partnership \$6,000; Stowe Area Association \$20,000; Stowe Jazz Festival \$1,200; Stowe Performing Arts \$2,400). The Board then discussed the new requests for funding. They approved \$250 as requested by Big Heavy World. They reduced the amount to Stowe Community Fund from the requested \$2,000 to \$500. Additionally, the Board decided not to fund the \$5,000 requested by Protect Our Wildlife but added \$500 to the Conservation Commission budget within the Planning & Zoning budget for education, particularly regarding bears. The Board also requested that prior to the next budget season, they look at the policy and procedure for Community Appropriations, and perhaps include some sort of review by committees prior to coming to the Selectboard.

### **FY'24 Capital Fund Budget Deliberations**

Town Manager Mr. Safford presented the Board with seven proposed capital projects for FY'24, for a total of \$635,000. The Board discussed what other capital projects may be coming in future years, which Mr. Safford noted included HVAC system replacements in Town Buildings, Moscow Village improvements, Memorial Park improvements, and 3-Acre Stormwater Permit Requirements. Many of those projects are projected to cost over \$1M each. It was also noted that in future budgets, Staff may consider adding paving projects to the Capital Fund rather than being in the General Fund when paving is related to road improvements rather than paving maintenance or regulatory compliance. The Board agreed to advance the seven projects at \$635,000.

### **Manager's Report**

Mr. Safford reported that the State Inspection of Stowe's Wastewater Treatment Facility occurred and they received an excellent score. He thanked Harry Shepard, Director of Public Works and the entire Wastewater team for their work.

Mr. Safford noted that Town Appraiser Tim Morrissey has reviewed the 2022 Equalization Study and does not recommend appealing. Chair Adams noted that a recent VT Digger article stated that 137 towns in Vermont were below 85% CLA, requiring reappraisal, and that the statewide CLA is 83.19%.

Mr. Safford also noted that the School has indicated that they plan to hold their Annual Meeting on the same day and time as the Town Meeting, however they will have two separate warnings. Both meetings will be warned with an 8am start time, with the Town Meeting warning noting that the Town Meeting will start at the conclusion of the School meeting.

It was also noted that the School District will be holding their informational meeting on March 1<sup>st</sup> at 6pm. The Selectboard is scheduled to have a regular meeting on Monday February 27<sup>th</sup> and this would meet the 10-day requirement for Informational Meeting. The Board discussed the need to bring attention to the Local Option Sales Tax article on the Town Meeting Warning, and would explore a piece in the Stowe Reporter and on Front Porch Forum.

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Mr. Paul Sakash asked about the parking situation at Barnes Camp. It was noted that Vail owns that land, and leases it to the State of Vermont. Any restrictions on parking at the discretion of the State and Vail. The Municipality is not involved in regulating or ticketing that parking lot. However, Mr. Safford noted that they will encourage GMT to add Barnes Camp as an official bus stop for the 108 bus and encourage people to park elsewhere and utilize the bus.

On a motion by Ms. Courtney, seconded by Ms. Hagerty, the Board went into Executive Session at 8:15pm to discuss personnel issues.

The Board came out of Executive Session at 8:30pm.

On a motion by Ms. Courtney, seconded by Ms. Hagerty, the Board appointed Carrie Simmons to fill a vacant term on the Stowe Arts & Culture Council that is designated for Stowe Area Association.

There being no further business, Chair Adams adjourned the meeting at 8:35pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Abigail Bourgeois.