

**Stowe Selectboard, Liquor Commission & Water/Sewer Commission Meeting
Monday April 10, 2023**

Present:

Selectboard Members: William Adams, Jo Sabel Courtney, Nick Donza, Lisa Hagerty, Paco Aumand
In Person attendees: Lisa Birmingham, Leo Clark, Catherine Crawley, Larry Lackey, Walter Frame, Paul Sakash,
There were 18 participants on Zoom.

Call to Order

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

Approve the Agenda

On a motion by Ms. Jo Sabel Courtney, seconded by Mr. Billy Adams, the Board approved the agenda as presented.

Consent Agenda

1. Selectboard Minutes 3/27/23
2. AT&T Conduit Lease
3. Paving Bid Award
4. FEMA BRIC Scoping Study Contract Award
5. Water/Sewer Allocation: 5392 Mountain Road
6. Water/Sewer Allocation: 109 Main Street
7. VTrans Annual Financial Plan
8. Special Event Applications
9. Liquor Consent Items

On a motion by Mr. Adams, seconded by Ms. Courtney, the Board approved the Consent Agenda as presented.

FY'22 Financial Audit

Mr. Fred Duplessis of Sullivan, Powers & Co attended the meeting to review the FY'22 audit with the Board. It was noted that there were two recommendations, one being to ensure the Capital Asset Activity is reconciled with the general ledger and reviewed to ensure it accurately reflects the current year's transactions. It was noted that in the past the Town of Stowe has always complied with this, however in FY'22 there was an -employee out on medical leave and this did not get completed. The Town will assure it gets completed in future years. The second recommendation was to revise the Town of Stowe Procurement Policy to comply with Federal Uniform Guidance. It was noted that adding this requirement to all procurements would add time to procurement process, limit eligible bidders, and potentially add costs. Rather, the Town has agreed to add a line in the current Purchasing Policy to state "The Town will adhere to the procurement requirements of the granting agency. If there is a conflict between this policy and the grant agreement, the grant agreement shall rule." The auditors agreed this is acceptable. Mr. Duplessis explained that this year the audit included a "single audit" required because the Town received over \$750,000 in Federal Funding from the Highway Construction Grant program (Stagecoach Road Bridge) as well as ARPA funds. Both audits found the Town of Stowe was compliant with general accounting standards, Government Accounting standards and - complies with all laws and regulations. He noted that in the Management Letter they outlined a new general accounting standard regarding leases but found this audit to be clean and unmodified. He also noted the Management Analysis contains good summary information on the year's financials.

The Board discussed the current Unallocated Fund Balance, which has approximately \$1.36M, which is less than the recommended 2 months of cash flow of \$1.79M. This is more than the Town has historically held in reserves, because it included expensed ARPA funding, minus what was transferred to the Equipment Fund and FY'24 General Fund as part of the budgeting process. It was noted that having - unallocated fund balance for cash flow purposes allows the Town to pay its bills without having to borrow tax-anticipation loans. In the past, the Town has been able to borrow from utility enterprise funds, however those are anticipated to decrease as Water/Sewer connection loans come to an end and utility capital projects are anticipated.

The Selectboard thanked the Stowe Finance Department for their good work and a clean audit.

On a motion by Mr. Adams, seconded by Ms. Courtney, the Board approved the amendments to the Stowe Purchasing Policy as recommended.

On a motion by Mr. Paco Aumand, seconded by Mr. Nick Donza, the Board accepted the FY'22 Financial Audit as presented.

Lamoille FiberNet CUD Update

Mr. Stephen Friedman, Stowe's Lamoille FiberNet Representative, gave a presentation to update the Board on the work of the CUD. Ms. Lisa Birmingham, Lamoille FiberNet Executive Director, was also in attendance to help answer questions. Mr. Friedman reminded the Board that the mission of Lamoille FiberNet is to provide 100mbps up and download speed fiber internet to every address in Lamoille County. They have been working to identify unserved and underserved addresses and to provide those locations with affordable high speed internet. He noted that while overall Stowe has a significant amount of fiber and cable investments already, about 1/3 of Stowe homes are considered underserved or unserved, which is one of the higher numbers in the county. He reported that Lamoille FiberNet has been working on a high level design for how to reach those addresses, as well as developing a financial model and business plan. They are currently in negotiations for an internet service provider to work with.

Mr. Friedman and Ms. Birmingham both spoke to the high cost of having to include underground conduit to many Stowe addresses, as 29% of addresses identified are underground, which is the highest in the county. Installing underground conduit can increase costs by as much as 4 times. They noted the business plan includes the cost of the conduit work, but that "drops" from the road to the home can typically cost a homeowner around \$2,000-\$3,000, which can be cost prohibitive.

Mr. Friedman then asked the Board to consider helping Lamoille FiberNet by providing a letter of support for a \$15M construction grant they are applying for, providing funding for matching fund grants, such as one for ARPA funding that would include a 1:1 match from the State up to \$100,000, and to look at policy initiatives such as requiring conduit plans for all new developments and any time roads are reconstructed, as well as requiring fiber installation in all MDUs and commercial buildings.

Mr. Safford explained that the Town of Stowe's ARPA funding has been expensed, -, and any remaining funds would require voter approval to allocate, which would be difficult to achieve by the May deadline. The Selectboard expressed support for the CUD, but asked that they return with more information on their business plan, detailed design and construction proposals. They would also like to discuss how they would prioritize where work would be done first and where any potential investments would be used. They also discussed working with the schools to identify homes with children who might need broadband internet to complete schoolwork. The Board did ask for a draft Letter of Support for the construction grant, and that they would support that. They also indicated they were open to considering future zoning amendments that would support Lamoille FiberNet's work.

Voters approved a capital project for \$60,000 to purchase bear-proof trash and recycling containers in Town parks and along the Rec Path. By State law, everywhere a town has an outdoor trash container, they must also provide a recycling container, which the Town of Stowe complies with. However, often the recycling becomes contaminated by garbage and has to be disposed of as trash. Staff consulted with State and local agencies and they confirmed that the Town could potentially limit contamination by limiting recycling to bottles & cans only, and that this would meet State law requirements. Staff obtained quotes from two companies that provide combination trash & bottle/can recycling bear-proof containers, with the lower price of \$34,202 for 17 combination units. It was noted that the Town will also have to install concrete pads for the units to sit on, at an additional cost.

Mr. Safford explained this would be a general policy to move from general recycling to bottles & cans only in the hopes of reducing contamination. It was also discussed that while some of these units will be left outside through the winter, a number of the locations are not easily accessible in the winter season and will be removed and stored for the winter. This is current practice and will not change the availability of current trash receptacles in winter. It was also noted that the Board preferred the green color for the units.

On a motion by Aumand, seconded by Ms. Courtney, the Board approved the purchase of bear-proof containers for \$34,202 from Bearsavers for 120-gallon units with the recycling limited to bottles and cans.

Selectboard Priorities

Mr. Safford provided the Selectboard with a number of major topics/projects that the Board and/or community has requested come before the Selectboard, or still need resolution. This included: Housing Diversity/Affordability/Workforce Housing; Zoning Amendments: Housing By-law Modernization Grant; Short-term Rentals; Australian Ballot vs Floor Vote; Special Events Ordinance: number and type of events; Traffic: Highway Capacity & Congestion Evaluation; Social, Economic & Community Services Policy; Fire/EMS: Organization, staffing, cost; Capital Projects: Building Mechanical Systems, Moscow Village, Memorial Park, Water Supply Regulations; Cell Tower and Small Cell Locations; Alternatives to lessen demand on police services; labor negotiations & Budgets. The Board discussed the need to identify priorities for short, mid and long term projects, including “low hanging fruit” that can be addressed. Ms. Catherine Crawley, chair of the Energy Committee, asked that the Town consider energy/sustainability projects in it’s priorities. Mr. Safford noted that the building mechanical systems does include looking at energy efficiencies in Town owned buildings. Ms. Crawley asked the Selectboard to also consider switching its vehicles, equipment and tools to electric. Mr. Adams noted that it would be good to hear from each Town Board & Committee to see what their priorities are. Others in the audience spoke to the need to act on Short Term Rentals and how they relate to housing. Mr. Adams explained that the community needs to identify the problems related to housing before they can try to solve them. The Selectboard indicated that they would like to move forward with community conversations related to housing and STRs, as suggested by the Lamoille Working Communities Challenge. ~~They also indicated they would like to look into STR registry with a responsible person and to adopt an ordinances, which Mr. Safford indicated Staff would be working on to present this summer.~~ He also noted that the Planning Commission is currently working on zoning amendments to encourage growth in housing, which they should present in the fall.

The Selectboard Members then identified their own priorities as follows:

Paco Aumand – Affordable Housing; Traffic; presentation by IDEAL VT; Routine financial statements; updates on key capital projects on a regular basis

Jo Sab~~le~~el Courtney – Housing; Traffic & Special Events impacts on traffic; Public Safety (Fire/EMS & Police)

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Nick Donza – Budgeting Process (start earlier to allow more time for guidance and deliberations-); Short Term Rental Registration; Memorial Park or another location to support youth and families and increase recreational offerings.

Lisa Hagerty – Housing (creating a socioeconomic balance, community) Town Meeting vs. Australian Ballot; Allocation of Community Appropriations (large community fund to allocate funding rather than SB role)

Billy Adams – Infrastructure (Traffic, roads, public transportation, increasing water/sewer); Making the Town affordable for all residents (diversity of backgrounds); Short Term Rental discussions to identify concerns and problems; Engaging community and committee on where the Town is going in the future.

Manager's Report

Mr. Safford provided a wetlands delineation update for Memorial Park. The Class 2 wetlands are extensive and include additional areas not previously delineated, including the two lower baseball fields and the base of the sledding hill. Staff and consultants are in the process of understanding the impacts of the updated delineation for desired programs and what can be done to bring it into compliance.

Mr. Safford also provided a Waterbury Source Protection Area letter noting that their water supply source protection area is partially in Stowe. The Town of Stowe does not have any activities or proposed land use changes within the boundaries that might impact the water quality.

On a motion by Mr. Adams, seconded by Ms. Courtney, the Board went into Executive Session at 8:28pm to discuss personnel, Real Estate and legal matters.

The Board came out of Executive Session at 9:10pm.

On a motion by Mr. Aumand, seconded by Ms. Courtney, the Board accepted the mediated settlement with Firetech for \$75,000 and authorized the Town Manager to sign the Release.

There being no further business, Chair Hagerty adjourned the meeting at 9:12pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Abigail Bourgeois.