

Approved Minutes
Town of Brookline Selectboard Meeting
Wednesday, January 6, 2021, 6:30 PM
(videoconference)

Present

Selectboard:
David Jones (Chair)
Gwen Tanza
Joseph Dutton
Shelby Brimmer
Bruce Mello

Town Officers:
Guy Tanza (Town Clerk, videographer)
Mark Bills (Road Supervisor)

Members of the Public:
Peter Barus (Recorder)
FACTV (Videoconference recording)

Call the meeting to order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM.

It was noted that Mr. Jones was in the Town Offices, all others online

Review changes to agenda if any

Scheduled members of the public (None)

Unscheduled members of the public (None)

Approve Minutes from December 16, 2020 Regular Meeting

Mr. Jones moved to approve the minutes for December 15, 2020, as corrected. Second by Ms. Tanza. **Passed** with one abstaining.

New Business

Town Meeting Ballot Structure & Process

Mr. Jones discussed a webinar from the Secretary of State's office, attended by Mr. Tanza. Mr. Tanza reported no new information from the webinar. Mr. Jones explained that the board must vote the Warning at the January 20 meeting, and the nominations must be known by then; the Warning must be approved and posted between 30 and 40 days before Town Meeting. It was noted that nominees must sign a consent form by January 18 to be on the ballot, and that the form will be posted online. There was discussion of the need to inform the public of the changes to Town Meeting under the pandemic emergency; that candidates may not be aware that they must nominate themselves this time.

Mr. Jones explained that Town Meeting, conducted by Australian ballot by state mandate, will not include open nominations, so self-nomination will be necessary and current officeholders should make sure they are on the ballot, especially the key roles of Town Clerk, Treasurer, Selectboard.

Ms. Brimmer suggested consolidating the list of offices and terms with the procedures for self-nomination; and will produce and circulate the necessary information. Mr. Tanza will upload the election consent form.

There was discussion; that the date of Town Meeting could not be changed except by the legislature; that delaying Town Meeting would reduce response time in the event of a rejected budget, etc.; of various suggestions for publicizing the meetings and procedures; of time constraints.

Mr. Dutton suggested holding a special meeting for nominations and creation of the Australian ballot, before January 20. Mr. Jones noted that the budget could require another meeting as well, and asked if there were other examples of ballots in surrounding towns. Mr. Tanza had spoken with officials from Townshend and Newfane, and will scan copies for the board.

Mr. Jones polled the members regarding a special meeting January 13, 2021. There was consensus.

Mr. Jones polled the members on other questions. Ms. Tanza suggested that positions up for election would include the Listers, who might not be there. It was noted that officeholders would have to resign if their term was not up. Open positions included:

- Town Clerk
- Town Treasurer
- Delinquent Tax Collector
- Three seat on the selectboard (Tanza, Dutton, Brimmer)
- One Lister
- One Auditor
- One Cemetery Commissioner (five years)
- Trustee of Public Funds
- Town Agent
- Town Grand Juror

There was discussion; that the position of Constable had been discontinued; Mr. Tanza will consult with VLCT.

It was noted that all officeholders were to be appointed by the selectboard if no candidate came forward. Mr. Jones noted that the school board could ask for additional appointments. There was discussion of the content of the list to be circulated, that it should just be the open positions and term lengths, and not the complete list.

The Chair polled members for other considerations. Ms. Brimmer suggested a note in the communiqué about the special meeting. There was consensus in favor.

Old Business

Building Update

Mr. Mello reported heating issues at SLP; a large bill (\$2,200) from Mr. Bovat; water and heating stabilized; a lease requirement to keep potable water on the site. Mr. Mello checked the building Saturday, found a panel closed that should be open to prevent frozen pipes, opened it; that Mr. Bovat had advised obtaining maintenance services; that Sandri offered an annual service policy for the boiler at \$195.00; that the gas furnace had been recently serviced, no issues; and that section 15 of the building lease specifies the town has no liability due to loss of use. Mr. Tanza noted that the Sandri contract will be in effect for one year from date signed.

Summary / Update / Reports

Guy Tanza – Town Clerk Report

Mr. Tanza reported dog license sales had begun by appointment, that checks may be dropped at the back door for a rabies certificate, that fees were not changed from last year, and the tag and license will be mailed; until April 1, 2021; record books scanning project proceeding as planned.

Highways & Roads

Mark Bills – Road Supervisor

Mr. Bills reported connection issues the previous meeting; that the big snow and rain Christmas had caused some erosion, being repaired working with Mr. Clark; that had taken time to line up trucks and equipment and gravel; that some calls and emails had been addressed, and the plan is to meet Thursday morning (January 7) and take gravel to problem locations; that since consultation with Mr. Clark there would be no changes necessary to the road budget.

Mr. Bills' connection ended unexpectedly.

Mr. Tanza noted a bill for storm damage and asked if WRC had been called about a FEMA grant. Mr. Jones will follow up.

Communications

Mr. Jones expressed thanks for a gift made by Gary Lavorgna for each selectboard member, to be picked up at the Town Office.

Email

- Act 250 application for splitting a property on Purple Mountain Road
- ANR

Regular Mail

- Emergency contacts list
- Solicitation request from Senior Solutions
- Brattleboro Development Credit Corp, appropriation request
- Southern Vt Therapeutic Riding Center appropriation request
- Weighting report (CLA 100.5)

Pay Orders

Payroll

There were two Payroll Warrants, one previously signed, for December 23, 2020 and January 4, 2021. Mr. Jones polled the members for questions about the Payroll Warrants.

Mr. Jones moved to approve Payroll Warrant 2020-79, dated December 23, 2020, in the amount of \$11,660.91. Second by Mr. Mello. All in favor.

Mr. Jones moved to approve Payroll Warrant 2021-01, dated January 4, 2021, in the amount of \$1,853.89. Second by Mr. Mello. All in favor.

Accounts Payable

Mr. Jones polled the members for questions about the Accounts Payable Warrant

Mr. Tanza explained overpayment of taxes because of homestead declaration and property tax statements, state was delayed; that the numbers did not arrive until the tax bills had been sent out; that the treasurer elected to refund four overpayments.

Mr. Dutton asked about cemetery tree and stump clearing. There was discussion. Mr. Jones will ask the treasurer to clarify which cemetery was involved, as ancient cemeteries are the purview of the town and not the cemetery commission.

Mr. Jones moved to approve Accounts Payable Warrant 2021-2021-02, dated January 6, 2021, in the amount of \$27,460.50. Second by Mr. Mello. All in favor.

Set agenda for the next meeting – Wednesday January 20, 2021

- Town Meeting Warning
- Town Report

FY 2021-2022 Budget Planning

Mr. Jones had circulated the updated budget worksheet dated January 5, 2021; and proposed to put forward three new appropriations Warned as separate Articles, as is usually done; and noted two open questions for which no new appropriation requests had been received, as follows:

- Vermont Therapeutic Riding Center appropriation request of \$500 dated December 21, 2020, for the upcoming fiscal year (the

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amount approved by the voters last year). There was consensus in support.

- L & G Educational Foundation appropriation request of \$250. There had not been a request last year but this had been supported in prior years. There was discussion, and consensus in support.

Mr. Jones reported that Ms. Zwick was close to finalizing funds 1 and 2 for FY2020; that the numbers still need review by the auditors; that there may be a surplus; that revenues and operating expenditures had been determined; and asked if selectboard stipends should change. Mr. Mello suggested research into stipends in similar towns. Mr. Jones had done research and compensation analysis showing the current selectboard stipend was about average for the state, but that the selectboard could return to this question. Ms. Brimmer had looked into budget percentages in towns of similar size, finding that the town is in the midrange by percentage, across a broad range by budget totals. Mr. Jones noted that without changes in six or seven years, Brookline was somewhat below the mid range.

There was consensus for a detailed discussion of compensation for each position, including budget implications of proposed changes, for Town Clerk, Treasurer, Assistant treasurer, Delinquent Tax Collector, Listers, Auditors, Assistant Town Clerk, Election officials, and the stipend for the Assistant Clerk's records restoration project.

Mr. Tanza served as clerk, Assistant Treasurer, Delinquent Tax collector, and Town Agent. Auditors and Listers were paid alike. There was discussion of increasing the Assistant Town Clerk's records restoration stipend. There was consensus on each item.

It was noted that budget discussion would be needed about town trash removal, recycling collection (will be separate article), and law enforcement. Mr. Jones suggested no change to town trash removal (\$500), in the recycling Warning; that if changes were made they should include maintenance costs for additional monitoring. There was consensus.

Mr. Jones explained a past budget for traffic, but state and sheriff had stopped offering services; and suggested a return to budgeting \$3,500 for law enforcement, with discussions in mind about installing radar signs, locating problems, etc.; that the funds could buy a radar sign, and eventually pay law enforcement after collecting sufficient data to make the case for services.

Mr. Jones noted that there would not be time for more detailed discussions on budget line items before the budget must be finalized for the Warning. After discussion Mr. Jones suggested leaving the amount at \$510.

Mr. Jones suggested budgeting \$26,000 for recycling collection, not including such additional costs as may be considered.

Mr. Jones will warn the special meeting for next Wednesday at 6:30pm for budget planning and Town Meeting balloting, and will circulate the latest numbers.

The discussion will continue at the January 13 special meeting.

Adjournment

Mr. Jones moved to Adjourn. Second by Ms. Tanza. All in favor.

The meeting was Adjourned at 9:06PM

Next meeting

Special meeting January 13, 2021

Respectfully submitted, Peter Barus, Recorder, January 9, 2021