

Town of Brookline Selectboard Meeting

Wednesday, October 20, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.

Attending

Selectboard:

Dot Maggio (Chair)
Bruce Mello
Stan Noga
Gwen Tanza

Town Officers:

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

Members of the Public:

Samara Zwick
Peter Barus (Recorder)
FACTV (Videoconference recording)

Call the meeting to order

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 p.m.

Review changes to the agenda if any

Add Handicap sign placement.

Add AARP workshop, DV Fiber discussions under Reports.

Add Municipal Mitigation grant under Communications.

Review / Approve minutes from regular meeting October 6, 2021

Changes were made.

Ms. Maggio moved to approve the minutes for October 6, 2021, as amended. Second by Mr. Mello.
All in favor.

Scheduled members of the public

A. Frank Rucker - Auditor

(Not present)

B. Somara Zwick - Assistant Treasurer

There was discussion of when to have an audit. Ms. Zwick discussed the work involved in audits, and discussed the treasurer's office, the challenge of finding a qualified bookkeeper who could report directly to the Selectboard, the Treasurer, or work under contract; noted that an appointee could serve until Town Meeting; that the position could be offered to the public; that some of the audit reserve (about \$4,000) might be used to pay an accountant, not for an audit but for accounting assistance; that some towns have employed former New England Municipal Resource Center (NEMRC) employees for this purpose; that most municipalities were dealing with this same problem; that the issue would be to create sufficient internal control that the public could be confident in the functioning of the office; that VLCT publishes an internal control checklist to protect all parties; suggested simplifying the year end reports; noted that the draft year end reports had been late, and questions should be emailed; discussed the timing of bill payments for efficiency,

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a less frequent payroll schedule, reducing hours spent on payroll, and a clean cutoff at end-of-year, other efficiencies, a system in use in Wardsboro; suggested a close look at underused expense items that could be reallocated, such as zero-percent-used line items that could be retained, reduced, or redirected to an area needing more funding.

There was discussion.

Ms. Zwick noted, citing preliminary and unaudited reports, a small surplus in Fund 1, a large deficit in Fund 2, but neither in a deficit condition; and that paving over budget last year was a board decision.

Mr. Mello discussed turnover in the treasurer position. Ms. Zwick suggested combining the position with Town Clerk; that the position required 15 hours per week; that this seemed insufficient to attract qualified people; and the need for specific internal controls, which are assessed by auditors at the outset; and offered to help develop a list of critical tasks such as the banking records that must be done regardless. Ms. Maggio discussed the challenge of attracting and sustaining staff. There was discussion of next steps.

Ms. Zwick will send notes on procedures, and noted the flexibility of financial statement formats in Vermont.

Mr. Tanza discussed the possibility of running for Treasurer, having done much of the work; that the offices are combined in many municipalities in Vermont; that a search for qualified people could continue over time.

Mr. Mello suggested appointing Mr. Tanza as Treasurer immediately. Mr. Tanza discussed the importance of timing and stability. Ms. Maggio read a statement from Mr. Rucker, that Ms. Zwick had followed generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) properly, and the discussion was timely.

Ms. Zwick noted Fund D, with a balance of \$79,000.

Mr. Noga suggested combining the search for an individual and an accounting firm. There was discussion; that a treasurer is an elected official with the ability to hire and fire assistants; and different approaches to personnel search.

Ms. Maggio will discuss plans with Mr. Masters. Mr. Tanza offered to run for the position in the event that no person could be found by Town Meeting.

Unscheduled members of the public

New Business

A. Road Salt for Winter 2021-22 Discussion

Ms. Maggio noted a quotation for bulk salt from American Rock Salt, \$77. per ton delivered. Mr. Bills noted only one vendor response. There was discussion.

Ms. Maggio moved to accept the offer from American Rock Salt for ice control salt delivery at a price of \$77. per ton. Second by Mr. Noga. **All in favor.**

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B. Vendor Packet - Customized according to project discussion

Ms. Maggio had sent the packet to Continental Screen and Glass, Larson Electric, and Kerry Bourne; and discussed various requirements (Form W9); had also discussed with Mr. Jones. Mr. Noga discussed communications with Ms. Zwick and VLCT about liability certificates, W9, a non-employee form, etc.; and noted that the signage vendor had been informed of the need for paperwork. There was discussion of the statutory circumstances under which the various forms are required.

**C. Letter of Intent to participate in the municipal roads Grants - in - Aid Program Equipment Purchase. Leaf Blower attachment to clean leaves and sediment from ditches and reduce culvert plugging
Estimated cost \$7,000.00 Grant 80% = \$5,600 Town 20% = \$1,400.**

Non-binding.

Ms. Maggio discussed an email from Jeff Nugent to the effect that Brookline had not applied for a municipal road grant, and could apply by 5:00 p.m. to take advantage of the opportunity; that this was done. Mr. Bills discussed the related equipment and its use.

D. Discuss / Vote to appoint Guy Tanza as a temporary administrative assistant to work on the FEMA Application and reports at his normal hourly rate as town clerk. Monies paid are 100% refunded by FEMA. \$____ Sample letter to this effect will be emailed to each SB member for review.

Ms. Maggio confirmed the amount of 21.75 with Mr. Tanza.

Ms. Maggio moved to appoint Mr. Tanza as temporary administrative assistant. Second by Mr. Mello. **All in favor.**

There was discussion; that the applications had been submitted, and no responses forthcoming to date.

E. Request asking the Brookline Selectboard to collaborate on a letter regarding the flying of a Nazi flag in Townshend during the Jewish Holiday earlier in October. The letter is to be sent to the Townshend Selectboard.

Ms. Maggio discussed the letter regarding the incident; there was discussion of the appropriateness of the selectboard making an official statement.

Tabled.

**F. Music at the Brookline Meetinghouse on November 6th --
Discussion**

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Ms. Maggio noted that Peter Sears and others had expressed interest in playing music in the building to hear the acoustic qualities; that this could be a step forward. Mr. Mello discussed his earlier research into building acoustics.

Old Business

A. Discuss / Review Job Description for Road Supervisor

There was discussion; modifications had been made and circulated.

Tabled.

B. Discuss / Review Vt Municipal Loan Fund for equipment purchase tabled last meeting. See email of Sept 15, 2021 from Stanley Noga

Ms. Maggio noted an additional application deadline of April 15. There was discussion; that this could be addressed next Spring; that the amount of the loan would have to be known; that the process would probably include a town financial statement, etc.

C. National Opioids Settlement Discussion from the Attorney General's Office of the State of Vermont.

There was discussion. Mr. Tanza suggested a lack of relevance to the town. Mr. Noga discussed an application process. Ms. Maggio offered to discuss specifics with Mr. Noga, the deadline being in January.

D. Discuss and Appoint one additional member to the Regional Emergency Management Committee. Brookline has two voting members. The local EMDirector or Designee and a representative of the local emergency services community to be appointed by your executive or legislative branch. November 16th is the first meeting. There will be 4 meetings a year.

Ms. Maggio, being the designee, invited participation in the meeting. Mr. Bills offered to participate.

Ms. Maggio will inform the REMC.

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Placement of Handicapped Sign

Ms. Maggio discussed factors affecting placement of the sign, suggesting a location.

Reports

A. Town Clerk Report - Guy Tanza

Mr. Tanza noted a robust real estate market, and notification regarding redistricting the town, with the possibility that the board of civil authority would meet on the matter; that there were no penalties or fines for dogs because of Covid, but the public was encouraged to have their animals inoculated and licensed; and discussed an encounter with a bobcat on the Tanza's front lawn.

B. Selectboard Chair Report - Dot Maggio

i. Larson Electric LLC will be working at TH on Wed 11/17/21.

It was noted that Larson Electric would be working on November 17, and that additional work beyond scope may incur additional charges.

ii. ARPA

Ms. Maggio noted the governor's announced release of some funds; had inquired about grants to residents for personal property not covered by homeowners' insurance; and had been promised an answer. There was discussion; about ADA compliance and an underground tank at SLP; about combining grants for out-of-town needs; about Newfane's planning commission working on ARPA funding; about the vagueness and uncertainty of the system.

iii. FEMA

Ms. Maggio asked about the billing except for paving on Putney Mountain. Mr. Bills explained that almost all funding was completed. Ms. Maggio suggested RFP for the paving. There was discussion of the amount of paving needed, expected cost around \$20,000. Mr. Bills explained different methods of contracting for the work, and that the weather could interfere with timing and deadlines. Ms. Maggio will inquire about further details.

iv. Windham Regional Road Foreman's meeting 9 am on Wednesday October 27th at the Dover Town Garage. Will attend with E. Mark Bills.

Ms. Maggio noted this suggestion from Jeff Nugent.

v. Budget meeting schedule

There was discussion; that an extra meeting would be needed; **a meeting will be warned for November 10 at 6:30 p.m.**

Workshop on public space and ARPA funds

There was discussion. Mr. Bills had removed the sign from the ball field, parts all saved. Ms. Maggio noted six \$4,000 in available grants.

DV Fiber, CUD

Ms. Maggio explained that Donald Demaine, a new resident, could be attending a meeting and could ask for an appointment.

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C. Building Commissioner Report — Bruce Mello

Mr. Mello discussed the town office and BMH, rodent abatement vendors; a possible work bee; application for Cota & Cota burner service; offer of SLP lease before Christmas; contingencies in the event of non-renewal.

Mr. Noga noted a hole in need of attention; and asked for a digital copy of the SLP lease.

D. Highways & Roads Report — E. Mark Bills

i. FEMA Update on repairs

Mr. Bills asked about the salt paperwork account number; and discussed installation of a culvert on Putney Mountain, completing the road segment under a grant; had deposited mulch-hay on disturbed construction areas with the rented excavator; noted that Bennett Road is a Class 4 road, for which the town does have some maintenance responsibilities; that Mr. Swing's camp had been slightly vandalized, and a vehicle got stuck coming down the hill; that there are five culverts on the hill, and the water jumps all the barriers and reaches Putney Mountain Road; that some culverts were exposed, and could be repaired and cleaned with a day's rental of an excavator, to make the road passable as far as Swing's camp.

There was discussion; a requirement to maintain a road as "passable"; the cost of a day's excavator rental; some historical background on the Swing property. Mr. Bills will follow up.

ii. Recent and Planned Projects

Mr. Bills noted gravel shaped with the grader; other grader work over the next couple of weeks; developing a blacktop-repair RFP; another blacktop repair at intersection of Putney Mountain Road at the bridge, damaged during the flood, possibly part of the upcoming paving RFP; roughness on Grassy Brook Road by West River likely to worsen and should be considered, previously shimmed, there was discussion of whether ARPA funds could be available for this. Mr. Bills discussed culverts in stock at the town garage, some replacements, and the possibility of obtaining some new ones for better drainage; and trees to be removed. Mr. Bills will see about an invoice to the town for the mulch hay that was used.

Communications

A. Email

- Request to address the Nazi Flag in Townshend

Ms. Maggio had composed some possible language. There was discussion.

Mr. Noga moved that the matter be put to a vote. Second by Ms. Maggio. **All in favor.**

- Appropriations request for \$300 from Groundworks Collaborative
- Appropriations request for \$100 from Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

B. Regular Mail

- Southern Vermont Therapeutic Riding Center re: appropriation.

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- Dept of Health re: substance-use survey.
- Efficiency Vermont re: florescent lighting discounts (Mr. Tanza will ask Mr. Larson about this).

Pay Orders

A. Payroll Warrant

Ms. Maggio moved to approve Payroll Warrant #2022-15, dated October 13, 2021, in the amount of \$7,818.17. Second by Mr. Mello. All in favor.

The document was signed.

B. Accounts Payable Warrant

Ms. Maggio moved to approve Accounts Payable Warrant #2022-16B, dated October 20, 2021, in the amount of \$40,613.99. Second by Mr. Noga.

In discussion, Mr. Noga questioned an item (\$95,042); Mr. Bills confirmed this as part of road repairs. **All in favor.**

The document was signed.

Set Agenda for next meeting - November 3, 2021

- Paving
- Drainage on Hill Road
- Covering gravel in the town yard

Adjourn the meeting

Ms. Maggio moved to adjourn. Second by Mr. Mello. All in favor.

The meeting was Adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Peter Barus, Recorder, October 27, 2021