

**BRATTLEBORO SELECTBOARD
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2019
REGULAR MEETING – 6:15PM
SELECTBOARD MEETING ROOM, MUNICIPAL CENTER
MINUTES**

Selectboard members present: Tim Wessel, Elizabeth McLoughlin, David Schoales, and Daniel Quipp.

Staff Present: Town Manager Peter Elwell, Town Assessor Jenepher Burnell, and Executive Secretary Jan Anderson.

Media present: Chris Mays representing the Brattleboro Reformer and BCTV staff and volunteers.

Others present: Bruce Whitney, Franz Reichsman, ASL interpreters Elizabeth Fox and Virginia Clark, and others who did not sign the attendance sheet.

Acting Chair Tim Wessel called the meeting to order at 6:15pm. He confirmed that the meeting was properly warned.

APPROVE MINUTES

Wessel asked the Board to approve the minutes from the November 26 and December 3, 2019 meetings. There was no discussion.

MOTION BY DAVE SCHOALES TO APPROVE MINUTES FROM THE NOVEMBER 26 AND DECEMBER 3, 2019 MEETINGS. MOTION CARRIED 4-0.

CHAIR'S REMARKS

Acting Chair Wessel spoke of the recent death of young Michael Vose. He said that the hearts of the community go out to the family. He noted that this was the last Selectboard meeting before the holidays, and he suggested that everyone count their blessings and hug their kids.

MANAGER'S COMMENTS

Town Manager Elwell announced that Stephen Dotson had been hired as the Town's first Sustainability Coordinator. He mentioned the large, strong pool of applicants for the position and the difficult selection process. He said that he and several other people had been involved in the screening and interview process, including Selectboard members Dave Schoales and Elizabeth McLoughlin, Human Resources Director Sally Nix, Public Works Director Steve Barrett, Planning Director Sue Fillion, Chair of the Energy Committee Oscar Heller, and Executive Director of the Windham-Windsor Housing Trust Elizabeth Bridgewater. He said that Dotson would be working in the Planning Services Department and be part of the management team. He spoke of Dotson's past work history and community involvement. He welcomed Dotson to the Brattleboro team.

SELECTBOARD COMMENTS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

Schoales noted that during the recent snowstorm, drivers were being remarkably considerate and careful.

Wessel said that the Fire Department was asking citizens to clear nearby fire hydrants of snow after the recent storm.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Franz Reichsman suggested that the Selectboard add funds to the FY21 budget for the possible installation of municipal broadband.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Continued Consideration of Municipal Broadband. Elwell said that the Board had discussed this matter previously but Selectboard member Dave Schoales asked that it be added to tonight's agenda. Elwell said that the Board previously directed staff to monitor and be engaged in the regional effort to create a

communications union district (CUD) for southeastern Vermont and to write a letter to members of a State study group looking into whether towns may be allowed to use general obligation bonds to fund municipal telecommunications facilities. He said that, at the direction of the Board, staff was actively engaged in meetings regarding the formation of a CUD and that he sent letters to members of the State study group, copies of which were included in the Board's back-up materials. He said that subsequently the State study group issued a report (also enclosed in the back-up materials) that recommended against allowing the use of general obligation bonds and to adopt a "wait and see" approach to any decision to relax restrictions on municipal bonding for telecommunications infrastructure. Schoales said that he was asking the Board to discuss the State's report and to discuss further steps to continue to pursue broadband service. He spoke of some conversations that he had with other people who were involved in CUDs. He spoke of several models of broadband service that had been rolled out in other communities. Elwell noted that a meeting organized by the Windham Regional Commission was scheduled in January 2020, and that Assistant Town Manager Patrick Moreland would attend the meeting and report back to the Board. Schoales suggested adding funds to the FY21 budget for this matter, asked whether the matter should be discussed at Representative Town Meeting, and noted his sense of urgency in pursuing the matter. There was much discussion by the Board, including whether there was community support for the matter, the need for more time to research and consider joining a CUD, possible costs and the need for substantial additional infrastructure, the Board's previous consensus about exploring a CUD, competition of local providers, and current internet coverage. Schoales concluded that he was not asking for an action by the Board at this time.

NO ACTION TAKEN.

NEW BUSINESS

Financial Report – Monthly Report, November. Town Manager Peter Elwell presented the monthly financial report for November 2019. He spoke about certain items in the report, including closing out the defaulted loan by Cultural Intrigue. There was a brief discussion by the Board, including how late payments were treated and the health of the parking fund.

NO ACTION TAKEN.

Errors and Omissions to Grand List – Assessor's Office. Town Assessor Jenepher Burnell said that the Board was asked to approve changes in the 2019 Grand List. She said that if an error or omission was discovered on real or personal property after the Grand List was lodged on June 26, the Selectboard had the opportunity to approve corrections on or before December 31. She said that the changes to the Grand List were listed in her memo dated December 12, 2019. Elwell spoke about the unusually complicated adjustments to the value of Commonwealth Dairy's taxable and assessed value and its tax stabilization agreement. There was some discussion by the Board, including Commonwealth Dairy and the business personal property tax.

MOTION BY ELIZABETH McLOUGHLIN TO APPROVE CHANGES IN THE 2019 GRAND LIST, AS SET FORTH ON THE REPORTS ENTITLED "ERRORS AND OMISSIONS SCHEDULE 2019 GRAND LIST" AND "ERRORS AND OMISSIONS SCHEDULE 2019 TAX STABILIZATION" FROM TOWN ASSESSOR JENEPHER BURNELL. MOTION CARRIED 4-0.

Windham-Windsor Housing Trust 2016 Scattered Site Grant Close-Out – Public Hearing. Elwell said that the Board was asked to hold a public hearing in order to close out the Windham-Windsor Housing Trust 2016 Scattered Site Grant, as set forth in the memo dated December 3, 2019, from Grants Manager Kim Ellison.

Wessel opened the public hearing. Elwell said that when a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) project was completed, the Town was required to hold a public hearing to discuss the results and provide the public with an opportunity to discuss the program and results. He said that the project impacted a broad regional area and that counties, other than Windham-Windsor, received funds through

this program. Bruce Whitney, Director of Homeownership at Windham and Windsor Housing Trust (WWHT), provided the Board with a copy of an updated report and corrected figures. He spoke about the Scattered Site Grant and related projects, including the partnership with Downstreet Housing and Community Development who acted as the fiscal agent and grant manager in providing Scattered Site services in the three additional counties of Orange, Washington, and Lamoille. He said that the services provided through the grant were home repair loans for income eligible people, housing counseling advocacy, and homeownership assistance. He spoke about the number of loans provided through the grant, the number of persons counseled on housing, and the number of people who became first-time homebuyers, as set forth on the report he handed to the Board. Whitney said that another similar grant would start on January 1, 2020, to fund pending projects. He said that people interested in participating in the grant project could go online to homemattershere.org or by calling 802-254-4604. McLoughlin congratulated Whitney and WWHT for their work. Schoales noted that Lamoille County was working on a new low-income housing project and mentioned the adjusted eligible income level requirement. Whitney said that Downstreet would be the agency involved in housing projects in Lamoille county, and that the Snow Block in Brattleboro benefitted from this grant. Quipp inquired about outreach for the home repair program and whether WWHT was actively looking for projects. Whitney said that they were actively looking for projects and working with local agencies. He said that WWHT advertised through the local media and on social media. There were no comments from the public. Wessel closed the public hearing.

NO ACTION TAKEN.

FY21 Proposed Budget

- (i) *Review Current Status*
- (ii) *What Decisions Still Need to be Made?*
- (iii) *What Information is Needed for Decisions that Still Need to be Made?*
- (iv) *Schedule of Meetings for January 2020*

Elwell said that the Board had completed its initial review over the past 7 meetings of every line item in staff's proposed FY21 budget. He discussed the minor changes to the budget that had been previously agreed upon by the Board, as set forth in his memo dated December 11, 2019. He reviewed the list of unfinished budget topics that the Board identified as needing more information and/or review, as specified in his memo. There was much discussion by the Board, including meeting with the bus company in February to discuss operations and advancement of one of the Board's goals, meeting with members from Rescue, Inc. in the spring, and learning whether the fees paid to Windham Regional Commission (WRC) were mandated or voluntary, McLoughlin spoke of her concerns about the WRC fees being based on a per capita model and whether Brattleboro was getting as much for its payment as other towns, particularly with having a very active and functional Planning Department. Elwell said that he would provide more information about WRC at the January 7 meeting. There was further discussion about whether the pending business could be completed in three meetings in January, rather than four. Elwell said that it was possible that the special meeting on January 14 could be eliminated but the Board was required by statute to meet during the last week in January to finalize the Warnings for Representative Town Meeting.

NO ACTION TAKEN.

There was no further business.

MOTION BY ELIZABETH McLOUGHLIN TO ADJOURN AT 8:13PM. MOTION CARRIED 4-0.

Elizabeth McLoughlin, Clerk