

**BRATTLEBORO SELECTBOARD
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2018
SPECIAL MEETING – 6:15PM
SELECTBOARD MEETING ROOM, MUNICIPAL CENTER
MINUTES**

Selectboard members present: Kate O'Connor, Brandie, Starr, Tim Wessel, and David Schoales.

Staff Present: Town Manager Peter Elwell, Assistant Town Manager Patrick Moreland, Fire Chief Mike Bucossi, Public Works Director Steve Barrett, Recreation & Parks Director Carol Lolatte, and Executive Secretary Jan Anderson.

Media present: BCTV staff and volunteers.

Others present: Gershom Moore, Franz Reichsman, and ASL interpreters Janet Dickinson and Karen Todd.

Chair O'Connor called the meeting to order at 6:15pm. She confirmed that the meeting was properly warned.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Fire Chief Mike Bucossi noted that 250 households were still without power following yesterday's snow storm and some roads were not yet open. He reminded the public to avoid downed trees and wires. He also asked drivers to find alternative routes when roads were barricaded or had cones in the lanes, and requested they not drive around the barriers. He said that roads were closed for the safety of the public.

NEW BUSINESS

FY20 Proposed Budget –

- (i) Department of Public Works*
- (ii) Recreation & Parks Department*
- (iii) One Percent Local Option Sales Tax*

Town Manager Elwell invited the public to follow the budget documents and discussions by reviewing the proposed budget that had been posted on the homepage of the Town's website.

(i) Public Works Director Steve Barrett provided a general overview of DPW's FY20 proposed budget (page 15 under "Operating Budget" in the budget notebooks). He said that the proposed budget was much like the current year's budget. He then discussed certain line items that had significant increases or decreases as compared to the current budget. Board members asked several questions.

(ii) Recreation & Parks Director Carol Lolatte provided an overview of her department's FY20 proposed budget (page 18 under "Operating Budget" in the budget notebooks). She discussed the overall expense budget and then addressed certain line items that had significant increases or decreases as compared to the current budget. O'Connor asked Lolatte to also discuss the revenue portion of the proposed budget (page 4). Lolatte reviewed facility rental fees and participant fees for residents and non-residents. Board members asked several questions.

(iii) Assistant Town Manager Moreland reviewed his memo dated November 15, 2018 containing information regarding the possible implementation of a Local Option Sales Tax and resulting revenue that could be generated for the Town. He noted that state statutes require the Vermont Department of Taxes to collect Local Option Sales Taxes. He said that other towns in Vermont had implemented different taxes that could be collected by the municipalities as provided in their individual charters. Wessel spoke at length about the benefits of implementing the tax at this time. He said that the burden on property taxpayers was increasing from 84% to 86% and suggested that implementation of the Local Option Sales Tax would help shift some of the burden from the property taxes to tourists and other shoppers who had disposable income. He stressed that the tax would only add an additional 1 cent per dollar onto purchases. He also noted that implementation of the Rooms, Meals and Alcohol Tax in 2006 did not

negatively impact the health of the Town's economy and had added a substantial amount of revenue. Starr spoke in strong support of implementing the tax and said that necessities, such as clothes, diapers, and medications, would not be taxed. She said that increased property taxes trickle down to people living in poverty and affected renters. O'Connor said that she was conflicted between the rising property taxes and the concerns of merchants. She said that locals would also be impacted by a Local Option Sales Tax. She suggested that the Board not act at this time in order to provide more time for public discussion. Schoales spoke in strong support of implementing the tax. He said that Brattleboro was a hub town and the tax was a vehicle provided by the State to increase revenue. He encouraged Board members to vote at this meeting to add the matter to the Representative Town Meeting Warning. Franz Reichsman, from the Finance Committee, asked about available studies and data on the effect of increasing taxes. There was much discussion and the Board asked that staff provide additional information, including the effect on each \$100,000 of property value in dollars and cents (as opposed to percentages), and to bring that information to the December 11 meeting.

MOTION BY DAVE SCHOALES THAT THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE BE PLACED ON THE [REPRESENTATIVE TOWN] MEETING WARNING FOR SATURDAY, MARCH 23, 2019: "TO SEE IF THE TOWN WILL ASSESS A ONE PERCENT LOCAL OPTION SALES TAX IN ACCORDANCE WITH 24 V.S.A. SECTION 138." MOTION CARRIED 3-1 (O'CONNOR OPPOSED).

Chair O'Connor announced that the Board intended to enter into executive session. She said that no decisions would be made in executive session and the Board would reconvene in public to adjourn. She said that no further business would be conducted following the executive session.

MOTION BY KATE O'CONNOR TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION TO DISCUSS THE NEGOTIATING OR SECURING OF A REAL ESTATE PURCHASE OR LEASE OPTION, WHERE THE BOARD HAS DETERMINED THAT PREMATURE GENERAL PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE WOULD CLEARLY PLACE THE SELECTBOARD OR PEOPLE INVOLVED AT A SUBSTANTIAL DISADVANTAGE. THE TOWN MANAGER WAS INVITED TO ATTEND. MOTION CARRIED 4-0.

Chair O'Connor reconvened the meeting at 8:10pm.

There was no further business.

MOTION BY BRANDIE STARR TO ADJOURN AT 8:10PM. MOTION CARRIED 4-0.

Tim Wessel, Clerk