

**VILLAGE OF ESSEX JUNCTION
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
MINUTES OF MEETING
February 12, 2013**

BOARD OF TRUSTEES: George Tyler (Village President); Andrew Brown, Dan Kerin, Elaine Sopchak. (Lori Houghton was absent.)
ADMINISTRATION: Lauren Morrisseau Co-Manager & Finance Director; Susan McNamara-Hill, Co-Manager & Village Clerk/Treasurer; Robin Pierce, Village Development Director.
OTHERS PRESENT: Mary Jo Engel, Cecilia Polansky, Matt Reed, Jason Starr (Essex Reporter).

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Interviews

MOTION by George Tyler, **SECOND** by Dan Kerin, to go into Executive Session to interview candidate(s) for an opening on the Brownell Library Board of Trustees.

VOTING: unanimous (3-0)[Andrew Brown not present for vote]; motion carried.

Executive Session was convened at 6 PM.

MOTION by George Tyler, **SECOND** by Elaine Sopchak, to adjourn Executive Session. **VOTING: unanimous (3-0)[Andrew Brown not present for vote]; motion carried.**

Executive Session was adjourned at 6:20 PM.

1. CALL TO ORDER (regular meeting) and PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Village President, George Tyler, called the regular meeting to order at 6:30 PM and led the assemblage in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS/CHANGES

Add under 'New Business':

- Appointment to Brownell Library Board of Trustees

3. GUESTS AND PRESENTATION

1. Comments from Public on Items Not on Agenda

Cecilia Polansky, village resident, suggested the Trustees consider a pedestrian underpass crossing at Five Corners to eliminate cars stopping for pedestrians and creating more fumes from idling. George Tyler stated there is no such plan presently for an underpass, but one project in the immediate future to help alleviate traffic congestion is the crescent connector bypass road from Park Street to Maple Street and eventually to Main Street (Route 15). Citizens are encouraged to communicate their ideas for consideration to the Village Development Director, Robin Pierce. Also planning commission meetings are open to the public and comment can be made on applications under review.

2. Public Hearing: FY14 Proposed Budget

The public hearing was opened at 6:37 PM. Lauren Morrisseau gave a brief overview of the budget highlighting the following:

- Proposed budget increases are as follows:
 - General fund 3.14% increase.
 - Water budget 3.5% increase.
 - Waste water budget 3.4% increase.
 - Sanitation 1.8% increase.
- Total operating budget is \$8,626,971 which is a 3.2% increase over the prior year.
- Proposed Capital budgets total is \$1,024,757 as follows:
 - General fund reserve \$488,443
 - Rolling stock \$262,928 (includes debt payments)
 - Water \$60,555
 - Waste water \$100,957 (does not include treatment plant refurbishment project)
 - Sanitation \$111,874 (includes debt payments)
- The General Fund budget increase is \$102,373 or 3.14% more than the prior year due to the following increases:
 - Salaries/health insurance \$47,068
 - Website redesign \$8,000
 - Fire workers compensation \$13,185
 - Capital contributions \$28,639
 - Capital outlay for E-911 reprogramming of phones and a computer in admin office \$8,000
 - Capital outlay for streets including a new mower \$9,000
- The increase of 5.8% to be raised by taxes is mainly due to the loss of subsidy payment from IBM.
- Some growth (1%) is anticipated in the grand list.
- Challenges with the budget include:
 - Capital budget funding going negative in FY15
 - Department Heads were asked to keep the budget tight (3% or less increase)
 - IBM subsidy payment ends
 - Mandated storm water stream monitoring expense
 - Health insurance is uncertain with the Vermont Health Connect Exchange (a consultant may need to be hired to provide guidance)
 - Infrastructure maintenance/paving (unknown when state will pave state highways)
- Cost saving initiatives include potentially sharing one manager between the village and town, purchasing a less expensive sidewalk plow, delaying the replacement of staff, and seeking more grants.
- General fund capital reserve projects include office improvements (\$26,300), Woods End Road reconstruction engineering (\$52,798), crescent connector (\$284,345), and paving (\$125,000).
- Rolling stock purchases include a new pickup truck to replace the 2001 model (\$31,764), new loader (\$93,178), and a sidewalk plow/mini-loader (\$58,000).
- Challenges with the enterprise funds (water, waste water, sanitation) include:

- There is a minimal fund balance in the waste water treatment facility fund.
- Estimating operating costs with the waste water treatment facility refurbishment project is difficult.
- Utility rates are being revamped to be more reliable.
- Payment of the waste water treatment facility bond (\$15 million) will be phased over five years in the sanitation rate.
- Capital projects in water, sanitation, and waste water include continued upgrade of water meter in water and sanitation funds (\$30,555 & \$50,994 respectively), vacuum for the valve exerciser (\$30,000), pump station work (\$10,000), manhole rehab (\$20,000), and a new blower VFD at the treatment plant (\$50,000).

George Tyler commented the downtown Wi-Fi project in the Economic Community Development budget will be more expensive than anticipated. An analysis needs to be done to determine if the project can be scaled down, and if the results indicate this is not possible then the \$6,000 in the budget for the project should be redirected. Elaine Sopchak noted the scaled down version of the service will only offer limited coverage so the money should either be redirected or the project deferred for a year. The Board concurred. George Tyler also suggested the website redesign be eliminated from the budget (\$8,000) due to the difficult financial times for everyone. The existing website is functional and this would be the third redesign within a decade. Removing the two budget items decreases the overall budget increase to approximately 2.7%. Robin Pierce noted a staff member is taking a course on web design so the village can capitalize on that training and can seek more grants.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Cecilia Polansky asked if property taxes will increase with the proposed increase in the budget. Lauren Morrisseau explained there are four tax bills for villagers (village, village school, town, and town school). The village budget increase equates to approximately \$33 for an average assessed value home in the village. Ms. Polansky questioned the significant increase in workers compensation insurance for firefighters. Lauren Morrisseau explained firefighters were removed from the insurance pool because they are considered high risk. Also, there was a large claim so the rate is high. Cecilia Polansky asked about the increase and decrease in the planning budget for other professional services. Lauren Morrisseau explained the money is there for the village comprehensive plan update which was delayed. Also, a grant was received that reduced the amount set aside in the budget. In addition funds are moved from one budget to another to cover deficits.

There were no further comments.

MOTION by George Tyler, SECOND by Dan Kerin, to close the public hearing on the FY14 proposed budget. VOTING: unanimous (4-0); motion carried.

The hearing was closed at 7:01 PM.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

1. Adopt FY14 Operating Budgets and Capital Plans

MOTION by Dan Kerin, SECOND by Elaine Sopchak, to adopt the FY14 Operating and Capital budgets as amended including the following resulting in a budget increase of 2.7%:

- **General Fund of \$3,344,713 with the removal of \$8,000 for the website redesign and \$6,000 for the Wi-Fi study;**
- **Water Fund of \$3,084,803;**
- **Sanitation Fund of \$453,545;**
- **Waste Water Fund of \$1,729,910;**
- **Rolling Stock Fund of \$262,928;**
- **Water Capital of \$60,555;**
- **Sanitation Capital of \$111,874;**
- **Waste Water Treatment Capital of \$100,957.**

VOTING: unanimous (4-0); motion carried.

2. Whitcomb Farm Conservation Project Financing/Letter of Support

The Board reviewed and approved the letter of support drafted by George Tyler. Lauren Morrisseau reported the budget for the Whitcomb Farm/Vermont Land Trust two phased project is \$549,500 for the first phase and \$602,500 for the second phase. Vermont Land Trust is asking for a total of \$50,000 from the village which can be paid in two installments. Payment would occur at the closing. The match will be met by fund raising by Vermont Land Trust. There is \$100,000 in the village land acquisition fund of which at least \$25,000 is reserved for down payment on land the village may want to purchase. The balance in the fund is used for internal loans to departments as needed.

George Tyler observed the donation by the village does not guarantee access to the property for recreation by village residents. The farm does apply sanitized sludge from the treatment plant on the land which is a benefit to the village and surrounding towns. The voters can decide at the annual meeting whether to support the project or not.

Dan Kerin weighed the operational expenses for the village against contributing to the project for a place to hike (a “nice-to-have” amenity). More information is needed on the number of people utilizing the property for recreation. Input is needed from the voters on the contribution. Andrew Brown agreed having access to the property is not a necessity, but may be a once in a lifetime opportunity.

Staff will draft language on access guarantees and discuss the matter with Vermont Land Trust and the Whitcomb family. A recommendation on language and amount of contribution will be presented to the Board at the next meeting.

3. Finalize Village Manager Job Description/Core Values

Spelling errors in the document were corrected and the words “this charter” were changed to “the village charter”.

MOTION by Elaine Sopchak, SECOND by Andrew Brown, to adopt the changes to the Village Manager job description as amended. VOTING: unanimous (4-0); motion carried.

V. NEW BUSINESS

1. Bid Award for Main Street Bike path Fence

Lauren Morrisseau reported the budgeted amount for the replacement fence along the bike path on Main Street near Fairview Farm Association pool is \$16,500. Bids received were below that amount. The low bidder did not meet the specifications. F.E. Hart was the next low bidder and did meet the specifications. Staff recommends awarding the bid to F.E. Hart in the amount of \$8,213.

MOTION by Dan Kerin, SECOND by Andrew Brown, to award the bid to F.E. Hart Fence Co., Inc. in Williston in the amount of \$8,213 for replacement fence along the bike path on Main Street by the Fairview Farm Association pool. VOTING: unanimous (4-0); motion carried.

2. Draft Annual Meeting Warning

The Board reviewed the draft warning and will take action pending additional information relative to the amount to be taken from the land acquisition fund.

3. Discussion of Zoning Restrictions of Retail Stores in the Village Center

Robin Pierce, Village Development Director, reviewed the memo, dated 2/12/13, regarding definition of ‘retail/retail sales’ (a vendor who sells items for use off premises) and the purpose of the Village Center District. Uses such as a massage parlor would be allowed under ‘personal services’. George Tyler expressed concern about a drug paraphilia store locating on Railroad Ave. in light of the unwanted drug activity occurring by the Amtrak train station. Robin Pierce said the planning department has heard potential tenants may be a café or restaurant. Elaine Sopchak pointed out regulation can be done through an ordinance, not necessarily through the land development code.

4. Brownell Library Board of Trustees Appointment

MOTION by Dan Kerin, SECOND by Elaine Sopchak, to appoint Daisy Benson to the Brownell Library Board of Trustees to fill an unexpired term until the annual meeting.

DISCUSSION: Positive comment was made on the wonderful addition Ms. Benson will be to the board.

VOTING: unanimous (4-0); motion carried.

VI. VILLAGE MANAGER’S REPORT

1. Meeting Schedule

- February 26, 2013 @ 6:30 – Regular Trustees Meeting
- March 12 @ 6:30 – Regular Trustees Meeting
- March 26 @ 6:30 – Regular Trustees Meeting
- April 9 @ 6:30 – Regular Trustees Meeting
- April 23 @ 6:30 – Regular Trustees Meeting

Special Meetings/Events:

- February 26 @ 6:00 – Board of Abatement
- April 3 @ 7 PM – Annual Village Meeting
- April 9 @ 7 AM – 7 PM – Australian Ballot Voting

2. Date Needed for Annual Joint Meeting with Prudential Committee

A meeting date needs to be scheduled for the annual joint meeting with the Prudential Committee.

VII. TRUSTEES COMMENTS/CONCERNS & READING FILE

1. Board Member Comments

- Elaine Sopchak announced she will not be able to attend the April 23, 2013 Trustees meeting.
- A Trustee needs to be appointed to the Block Party Committee.

2. Reading File

- ❖ Minutes
 - Planning Commission 1/17/13
 - Block Party Committee 1/28/13
- ❖ Thank you letter for MLK Day donation
- ❖ Land use permit application for 243-245 Pearl Street

VIII. CONSENT AGENDA & READING FILE

MOTION by Andrew Brown, SECOND by Dan Kerin, to approve the consent agenda as follows:

1. Approve Minutes of Previous Meetings (1/22/13)
2. Approve Warrants including Checks #10046498 through #10046619 totaling \$408,283.87.
3. Approve WWTF Cogen System Upgrade Design Agreement
4. Approve Waiver of Public Parks Ordinance Prohibiting Dogs for Essex Dog Days
5. Approve Staff Request for Abatement of Invoices
6. Approve/Sign 2013 Certificate of Highway Mileage
7. Approve Draft Annual Report Dedication
8. Approve Closing Maple Street on 5/4/13 for Little League Parade
9. Approve Banner Application for VT Home and Garden Show

VOTING: unanimous (4-0); motion carried.

IX. EXECUTIVE SESSION and/or ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Dan Kerin, SECOND by Andrew Brown, to adjourn the meeting.

VOTING: unanimous (4-0); motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 PM.

RScty: M.E.Riordan

