

**Public Works Consolidation Review Committee**  
**Draft Committee Minutes**  
**July 19, 2017**

Committee Members Present: Elaine Sopchak, Chair, Michael Plageman, Vice Chair, Susan Cook

Absent: Justin Rabidoux, South Burlington Public Works Director; Andrew Brown

Others Present: Dennis Lutz, Public Works Director, Rick Jones, Village Public Works Superintendent and Catherine Hammond, minute taker.

The meeting was opened at 7:02 PM.

**Agenda item #1: Public to be heard**

No public present

**Agenda item #2: Approve minutes of 5 July 2017**

Susan Cook MOVED and Michael Plageman SECONDED that the minutes be approved. The minutes were approved unanimously.

**Agenda item #3: Discuss Budgeting, Updated Integration Study, and Cost Reduction**

**Budgeting** -- The Committee members and attending Town staff had extended discussions about the budgeting process and the public's reaction to the process. Mr. Plageman said that he had no complaints about the way that the Budget is done on the Selectboard side. Ms. Cook agrees with Mr. Plageman, however she felt that the one problem was the line item for the Village highway cost, that it is voted on by the Village and passed on to the Town as a line item. Mr. Lutz said that it was structured that way, mainly because there are so many unknowns. The agreement was set up so that the Trustees provide that particular line item to the Town, because the Trustees, not the Selectboard, control the Village highway budget. However, both Town and Village residents get to vote on it. A recommendation from this Committee will be that in future budget processes, the Public Works Director would provide the Selectboard with a more detailed explanation of the Village highway budget line item.

The initial budget Plan A changed to Plan B to accommodate changes in some of the relationships between players, and was advisory on control, money, and people. Otherwise nothing changed. Ms. Sopchak asked Mr. Lutz whether he thought the same process should be used going forward. Mr. Lutz said that with a new manager, there will be a period of transition. He suggested no significant changes, and indicated that equipment is already being shared in some cases, and a lot of cost savings have already been achieved. Ms. Cook recommended

finding additional value through consolidation. Mr. Lutz said that they are working on sharing Town and Village computer drives to save time in emails and to have direct access on each side. Ms. Sopchak asked Mr. Lutz how he felt the budgeting process was working. Mr. Lutz recommended that the current process continue, and if the two boards decide to pursue a single board, additional changes to the budgeting process could be made.

Mr. Plageman asked about combining the rolling stock funds for both the Town and the Village. There was discussion on how the funds might be combined to minimize the impact on taxpayers. The Committee discussed putting all equipment funds, including fire and police, into one fund to have better purchasing power. The Committee also noted it would take significant adjustments to current business practices to accomplish this. Ms. Cook felt that it was not for the Committee to solve—it can recommend such a consolidation to the boards. Mr. Plageman agreed.

Ms. Sopchak stated that the Committee would discuss capital projects funding at this time, but would discuss the prioritizing process when Mr. Brown and Mr. Rabidoux were present. The Committee inquired how the Town sets aside funds for its capital plan, but then determined that this and other financial questions would be best answered by Lauren Morrisseau. Mr. Lutz said that Town public works staff identify projects that need to be done, and then meet with finance staff regarding available funds. He said that there are many different capital accounts, each with funds set aside for future projects. Ms. Cook recommended blending both accounts, and in the future having one capital account for both the Village and Town. Ms. Sopchak recommended that they pursue researching and consolidating the rolling stock and capital funds of both the Town and the Village, including how both boards would approve the budgets. Mr. Plageman suggested forming a process similar to the Village's Capital Committee—which Mr. Brown chairs—including some Selectboard members and Trustees, so both bodies see the same budget.

**Cost Reduction** -- Ms. Sopchak pointed out that Mr. Lutz provided thorough examples of cost reductions and savings in Tabs 5 & 6 of the materials provided to the Committee. She said the savings from overall consolidation (including the unified manager) have been significant, but the savings in Public Works budgets have not been a large percentage of overall savings. She noted that if the Committee recommends further consolidation, it should not be for the sake of consolidating but rather to continue tempering the increase of taxes over time and to continue to provide high quality services. Ms. Sopchak stated that in the materials provided she did not find a lot of evidence of improvement of services, but rather continuation of the currently high level of service without interruption. Mr. Lutz said that they do not get a lot of complaints that cannot be addressed. See-Click-Fix is working for the public to get things done.

**Integration Study** -- Ms. Sopchak observed that Public Works is waiting for the boards to give direction on next steps in the consolidation process, and that the updated Integration Study can

serve as a starting point for the Committee's recommendations. Mr. Plageman sees this Study as a stepping off point. Mr. Lutz said they have also done a study on water/sanitation consolidation; however, this study might need further work. He expressed concern that the rate structures for customers are very different, though the management of the systems could be consolidated. He recommended considering a water/sanitation consolidation after settling the highway department related issues.

Ms. Sopchak asked about the potential costs of two future consolidation items: integrating the GIS system and administrative workflow. Mr. Lutz and Mr. Jones stated they are already working on the GIS integration, and it is nearly complete and will cost very little. They discussed the possibility of having the Town Public Works administrative assistant handle both Town and Village administrative duties, or in general adapting the current administrative structure for service calls to accommodate both departments.

#### **Agenda item #4: Public Works Survey**

Additional input was made regarding the conduct and content of the survey. Final action on this item will be delayed until a later meeting when all Committee members can participate in the discussion. Ms. Cook recommended that there not be a "no opinion" option, and to reword the questions and options to make them more positive.

At the next meeting the Committee will discuss Item 6 - infrastructure management, including how to prioritize and budget for capital improvements. Ms. Sopchak stated she will request permission from Pat Scheidel to invite Lauren Morrisseau and Doug Fisher to the meeting. The Committee will also discuss Item 4, how the Town and the Village each handle engineering and how it is budgeted. They will look at what is being spent on outside engineering and what is done in-house. They will also finalize the staff survey.

Mr. Jones will be on vacation and will not be able to attend the next meeting.

The next meeting will be August 2 at 5:00 PM (please note the time change).

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM.