

TOWN OF CLARENDON, VERMONT

MINUTES

SELECTBOARD MEETING-BUDGET

Wednesday, November 18th, 2015

SELECT BOARD MEMBERS:

Robert Bixby, Clerk
Robert Congdon, Jr
Michael Klopchin, Chair
Arthur Knox
Richard Wilbur

CALL TO ORDER: 6:00 p.m.

PRESENT AT MEETING: Selectboard (5), Administrative Assistant, Treasurer, Town Clerk, Lister Arthur Menard, Lister Robert Underhill. Road Crew members present: Joseph Parker, Timothy Kennedy, and Joel Baker. Also present were Cindy Davis and Marjorie Southard.

AGENDA ADDITIONS/DELETIONS: There were no additions or deletions.

LEVEL FUNDING: There was no action taken on level funding.

INSURANCE:

Health: The Administrative Assistant presented the Board with a spread sheet detailing the current cost to the Town for employee health insurance, as well as different options to cut costs, noting that at the present the Town is paying less than it was last year. The Treasurer advised on the importance of saving the Town money, and Lister Underhill spoke of his past experience in insurance policy writing, and the importance of not surprising employees with a large change that they might not be able to afford. A discussion followed on buyout possibilities that had been discussed in previous years, and how salary fits into the discussion. The Administrative Assistant advised the Board that many surrounding towns pay 100% of the monthly premium, as the Town does now, but that the other towns often have less insurance eligible employees. Lister Underhill advised that whatever health insurance plan the Board chooses it needs to be affordable now and in the future, if employee situations change and the cost to the Town increases. The Board Chair asked the Road Crew of their opinion of the insurance; Mr. Parker detailed the expenses his family entails on the insurance. Selectman Congdon gave a brief background of what the Town has done in the past for insurance, including going down from the Platinum plan to the Gold, and then covering 100% of the premium to compensate for the decrease in quality of coverage. Mr. Kennedy of the Road Crew spoke to the fact that he is not on the Town's insurance, and had no compensation for not being on the insurance, while the rest of the Road Crew receives insurance without premiums. A discussion followed on buyouts, and the risks and benefits of endeavoring to make things equal between employees. Selectman Congdon suggested health savings accounts, and Ms. Southard detailed her past experience with insurance with no buyout. Selectman Congdon again suggested a health savings account for discussion, the Administrative Assistant advised that the current plan the Town is on does not offer an HSA, but does offer a Health Reimbursement Account, and cautioned the Board to be aware of the "Cadillac" insurance tax, which penalizes towns that offer a large amount of insurance benefits. A discussion followed on the Cadillac tax and HRAs, in which the Treasurer detailed that the Town is currently below the "tripping point" of the Cadillac tax, ending with the Board Chair instructing the Administrative Assistant to research HRAs. The Treasurer commented to the Board that a larger wage helps the Road Crew in day to day living, and while benefits are important, they do not help in daily living.

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There followed a brief discussion recapping past salary discussions and the possibility of merit pay raises versus across the board raises. The Board Chair asked the Road Crew what they wanted from the health insurance. Mr. Parker and Mr. Baker both stated affordability was important, Mr. Kennedy reiterated his desire for a buyout. Lister Underhill advised the Board to consider what other towns are doing to avoid offering too much or too little, the Board Chair agreed, and stated that the conditions in the work environment were important as well, and that he wanted the Road Crew to be properly compensated. There was a brief discussion on possibly changing insurance plans, where the employee would pay the difference in premium from the current plan to the next plan up, and the different types of plans available. Selectman Knox advised that he wanted to see the employees get the best plan they could. The Board Chair suggested that the Town stay with the current Standard Gold plan, and continue to pay 100% of the premium, the Board agreed, with Selectmen Congdon and Wilbur reiterating their desire to learn more about a possible HRA, and if Mr. Kennedy would be eligible for that as well.

General: No action was taken on General Insurance.

ROAD CREW SALARY: The Board Chair polled the Board on a possible merit pay system for the Road Crew, and keeping the Road Crew salary separate from other employees. Selectman Wilbur stated that all of his jobs had been performance based in terms of pay, and that he was in favor of doing this with the Road Crew. Selectman Congdon agreed with both performance pay and keeping the Road Crew salary separate. Selectman Bixby also agreed, and spoke of performance evaluations for the Road Crew. Selectman Knox agreed with the other members, and stated that if the pay goes with skill level, there should be opportunity for advancement by learning new skills. A discussion followed on skill level pay, how evaluations contribute, and the concern of possible discrimination; the Board stated that any employee who felt discriminated against or disadvantaged should feel free and welcome to come to the Board with their concerns.

The Board Chair brought before the Board the possible idea of having a part-time Road Commissioner elected by the people to do the administrative duties of the Highway, and having a full-time Road Foreman hired by the Town to do the crew supervising and road work. A discussion followed on what the duties of the Road Commissioner would be, and the pros and cons of the possible change.

The Board Chair opened a discussion on the Salt Shed, reiterating that the Town will be building a stick built structure, and asking the Board if they approved of Brownson Spencer doing the drawings for the building. Selectman Knox asked if the permits had been issued yet; they had not. A brief discussion followed on what still needed to be done to construct the building, and how the salt will be protected for the time being, ending with the Board agreeing to have the Board Chair call Mr. Spencer. The Board Chair advised that three (3) contractors' bids would be needed for the construction of the building.

The Road Crew requested that pickup trucks not park in front of the Town Hall, as it makes it difficult for the Road Crew to see when they drive the trucks up out of the garage. The Board Chair advised that signs would be placed at the Town Hall advising pickups where to park.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS ONLY (5 minutes): There were no public comments.

TOWN OFFICER REPORTS: There were no reports.

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SELECT BOARD MEMBERS CONCERNS: There were no concerns.

RECESS: At 7:30 p.m., Selectman Knox motioned to recess until December 2nd at 6:00 p.m., Selectman Wilbur seconded, the motion passed unopposed.

SIGNED: _____ Michael Klopchin, Chair /s

SIGNED: _____ Robert Bixby, Clerk/s

These minutes taken and respectfully submitted by Heather Kent, Administrative Assistant, and are scheduled for approval on December 2nd, 2015.