



Town of Thetford Vermont

3910 Vermont Route 113 • P.O. Box 126 • Thetford Center, VT 05075
802-785-2922 • thetfordvermont.us

Selectboard Regular Meeting Minutes Thetford Town Offices (w/Virtual Attendance Option) Monday, October 3rd, 2022 7:00 PM

Selectboard members present: Sharon Harkay (chair), Li Shen (vice-chair), Mary Bryant, Steve Tofel

Selectboard members absent: David Goodrich

Others present: Town Manager Bryan Gazda (via Zoom), Town Clerk/Treasurer Tracy Borst, DPW Foreman Dale Lewis, Selectboard Assistant Martie Betts

Participating community members: Melissa Krzal

Sharon Harkay called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.
Introduction of Selectboard members.

1. Agenda Review

Mary Bryant would like to add a discussion about agenda meetings.

2. Town Manager Report – Bryan Gazda

1. 2023 Budget Update

Bryan said he has already connected with some of the department heads. There are 2 items he would like the Selectboard to be aware of, first, health insurance will increase between 10% - 20%, and it might be worth considering putting a pause in employee contribution. The second item is the CPI index will have a 7.2% increase.

2. Capital Projects Update (Latham Road & Stowell Bridge)

The Latham Road project is in budget and on schedule. The Stowell Bridge bid openings will be this Wednesday at 10:00 AM. It is anticipated that bids will come in less than \$250,000.00. Per our procurement policy, the Town Manager can approve that amount. It is expected to be a 2–3-week project.

3. Rice Mills Community Association Grant Assistance

Bob Walker reached out to Bryan about the town being a fiscal agent for a grant for the Rice's Mills Community Association. The Town manager agreed that the town would be a fiscal agent.

4. VT Housing Commissioner Tour

Bryan participated in a meeting with Josh Hanford, state housing commissioner. They toured areas in Fairlee and Bradford, and Mr. Hanford gave an overview of programs available for housing.



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5. Donation of Louise Stark art

A painted circular saw, created by artist Louise Stark, was donated to the town by Melissa Krzal, and is a representation of Thetford. Bryan thanked Melissa for her generosity. It will be installed where people can see it when they enter Town Hall.

Melissa said it was painted specifically for her husband Richard, who was great friends with the artist, and she wanted it to be where it could be seen.

6. Other

Bryan said he had been speaking with Tracy Borst and it is time to figure out when we are going to cover the remaining balance of the bank note that covered 2017 flood damages. We were waiting until all of the FEMA funds had been received.

Steve Tofel asked about the interest rate on that note and whether or not it is a fixed rate. The interest rate is in the neighborhood of 2% and will go up after November 1st.

Steve asked if there was enough money to do Phase 1 of Latham Road. Bryan said no, and that in discussions with Seth Potter they need to research whether or not paving has already been done on part of that section of road.

3. Public Comment

No public comment.

4. Presentation of Town Audit with Chad Hewitt of Sullivan and Powers

Chad Hewitt from the accounting firm of Sullivan and Powers gave an overview of the audit report. He explained that the first three pages are his opinion of Thetford's financials as of December 31, 2021. Town Treasurer Tracy Borst and assistant Kristie Wadsworth put all of the actual numbers together. Pages 4-5 are required and show everything together. The balance sheet on page 6 has 4 columns that are the 4 major funds: general, highway (2 biggest and most active), flood, and the Route 132 project. The 5th column is a combination of about 30 other funds with supporting schedules in the back that explain what they are.

Pages 11-38 are basically foot notes, and pages 39-47 are essentially your general fund budget report.

The legal budget was over by \$19,000.00, and there was a huge cost in the Police Department. There were savings in the recreation department, and the town did not have to borrow against taxes, so that was about \$27,000.00 in total savings. All in all, the general budget was under budget by \$13,000.00.

The highway budget shows a \$240,000.00 profit, mostly because of expense savings.

Tracy noted that there is quite a bit of cash right now, and what did Chad think about getting that payment to Community Bank for FEMA and seeing where we are at the end of the year.

Chad said it would be wise to pay it off immediately and save the interest.

Pages 53-60 cover the non-major funds; they are important but not as significant as the first four. Chad said credit should be given to Tracy and Kristie, and he thinks the town is very healthy and doing well.



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Steve asked if there was a reason or statute that the audit goes by calendar year when our fiscal year does not?

Chad said he would argue that Thetford does not run on a fiscal year. Thetford has always been on a calendar year. A majority of municipalities are on a fiscal year, because on a calendar year you operate two months and a few days without a budget. It would require a town vote to change from calendar to fiscal year. The biggest advantage would be taking away a lot of the stress around town meeting time. The downside is with the fiscal year, you are always kind of working with three years; the past years audit, the year you are in now and building next year's budget. There is no requirement that determines what financial year you choose.

Tracy asked how the tax due dates would change if the move was made to a fiscal year.

Chad said you most likely have to create an 18-month budget. This means your budget would be 1 ½ times, but the property tax schedule would change to installments. The first year is the toughest.

Bryan noted there was a recent change in statute with highway fund and asked Chad for his thoughts.

Chad said the legislature just changed the law so now you don't have to track highway funds anymore. It is no longer a requirement that the 2 funds stay separate, although Chad prefers that they are. Bryan agreed.

Chad mentioned that several communities have gone to an investment company for CD's or treasury notes with a higher interest rate, and there may be some opportunity there for Thetford. The Selectboard thanked Chad for his explanation of the report.

5. Request from T-Mobile for a Certificate of Public Good to Raise the Cell Tower on Quail John Road by 15 Feet.

The town received notice that T-Mobile has filed for a Certificate of Public Good to raise the current cell tower by 15 feet. Bryan noted that the extent of what we can do is to request the PUC hold a hearing to get comments. The town was notified because it is an abutter to the property and there is a 60-day public comment period.

The Selectboard directed Bryan to get more information on the process of a public hearing.

6. Discussion of the Treasure Island Stewardship Plan

Sharon said she heard back from Lisa Niccolai concerning the additional information the Selectboard would like added to the plan but did not get answers to follow up questions.

Bryan suggested waiting until next year to get the wetland delineation done.

Sharon thought the stewardship plan should include the beach area and noted that the Treasure Island Exploratory Committee is held up with the management plan until this stewardship plan is done.

Motion by Sharon Harkay that we approve Lisa Niccolai working on a Stewardship Plan for Treasure Island. VOTE by Roll Call: Mary Bryant – in favor, Steve Tofel – in favor, Li Shen in favor, Sharon Harkay – in favor. **Motion passed.**

7. Review of the Social Services Appropriation Policy

Steve Tofel brought this to the Selectboard's attention and said he doesn't think the current policy makes sense. There is very little opportunity to actually review the organizations that we



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are funding, and he reviewed a list of the things he thinks the agencies should be submitting to the town.

Steve said the forms should all go to the Town Manager before they go to the Selectboard. If the Selectboard chooses not to put them on the warning they could submit a petition.

Selectboard assistant Martie Betts, who currently receives the submissions, reviewed the timing of requests for reports and petitions, noting that the Selectboard would have to act fast if they wanted to make changes for the 2023 year.

Li asked if this means that any social service could just send in this form and have the Selectboard vet the request. A lot of agencies dropped out because Thetford was supporting way more social services than larger towns. It was out of control and that is why the previous Selectboard came up with a petition requirement.

Steve felt this will tighten things up from what we currently have and will get us very quickly to where we want to be on how we are spending our money. Steve said this will bring more transparency.

Tracy said she thought the Selectboard should be deciding how much in total the town should be giving to social services. The current policy and our discussions don't address that.

Melissa Krzal said the Selectboard needs to take into consideration the actual benefits for the people who do receive the services. She urged the Selectboard not to just think about the money part, but also how many Thetford people are receiving these services.

Steve said the purpose of this is for the Selectboard to be aware of where the money is going. It would replace what is in the agency reports.

Steve will write suggested changes to the current Social Services Policy and create the form by the October 17th meeting.

8. Discussion of Tax Stabilization for Agriculture

The Selectboard reviewed the original draft and second draft documents.

The discussion will be tabled until the town attorney can look at it.

9. Possible Adoption of the Facilities Use Policy

Motion by Sharon Harkay that we adopt the Facilities Use Policy on this day, October 3rd, 2022.

VOTE by Roll Call: Mary Bryant – in favor, Steve Tofel – in favor, Li Shen – in favor, Sharon Harkay – in favor. **Motion passed.**

10. Possible Appointment of Angela Jones as E911 Coordinator

Motion by Li Shen to appoint Zoning Administrator, Angela Jones, to be the Town E911 Coordinator. **VOTE by Roll Call:** Mary Bryant – in favor, Steve Tofel – in favor, Li Shen – in favor, Sharon Harkay – in favor. **Motion passed.**

11. Possible Appointment of Matthew Parno to the Conservation Commission

Motion by Sharon Harkay to accept Matthew Parno's request to join the Conservation Commission with a 4-year term ending in 2026. **VOTE by Roll Call:** Mary Bryant – in favor, Steve Tofel – in favor, Li Shen – in favor, Sharon Harkay – in favor. **Motion passed.**



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12. Warrants and Minutes

CT-2022-004 \$73.50
#18.2 \$734.01
#19.4 \$22,116.99
#17.2 \$11,366.32
#31.3 \$128,153.62
#37.1 \$2,407.05
#38.1 \$21,739.34

Motion by Mary Bryant to accept warrants as presented. **All in favor (4-0-0). Motion passed.**
Motion by Sharon Harkay to accept the regular Selectboard meeting minutes of September 19th, 2022, as presented. **All in favor (4-0-0). Motion passed.**

13. Adjourn

Motion by Steve Tofel that we adjourn the meeting at 9:29 PM. **All in favor (4-0-0). Motion passed.**