

**TOWN OF CASTLETON
SELECT BOARD MINUTES
Monday, December 9, 2019 at 7:00pm
Castleton Town Hall
263 VT – 30
Bomoseen, VT 05732**

PRESENT: Jim Leamy, Chair; Richard Combs, Vice Chair; Zack Holzworth, Secretary; Robert Spaulding, Member; Joseph Mark, Select Board Parliamentarian; Michael Jones, Town Manager; Eliza LeBrun, Recording Secretary; Kathryn Paynter, Peg TV; Susan Day; Martha Molnar; Ted Molnar; Julius Riemurny(sp); Julie Finnegan of the Slate Valley School Board; Nicole Rice, Home School Coordinator for Slate Valley Schools.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Select Board Chair, Mr. Leamy at 7:00 pm

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mr. Leamy led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Holzworth made a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Combs seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

MINUTES FOR APPROVAL: 11/25/19

Mr. Mark made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of 11/25/19 with corrections. Mr. Holzworth seconded the motion.

The following corrections were noted:

- Page 5 5th paragraph from the top, change the word warrants to warning.
- Page 7, first sentence, change the time from 9:00pm to 8:15pm.

The Chairman called the question. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Mr. Mark made a motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Selectboard meeting on 11/11/19. Mr. Holzworth seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Mr. Combs made a motion to approve the Public Meeting minutes of 11/11/19. Mr. Spaulding seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

CITIZENS COMMENTS

Mrs. Finnegan and Mrs. Rice shared with the Select Board that the Slate Valley School District participated in a survey of students in grades 7 through 12. The data collected from this survey has been sent to Iceland for review. Upon completion of the review, recommendations will be sent back to the School District. These recommendations will give us as a community an idea on how to support our children.

Mrs. Finnegan gave some background on the survey. This survey was free and was based on a survey done in Iceland which they then used over 10 years to lower substance abuse and raise awareness within their school districts and communities.

The Slate Valley School District will be part of the pilot program beginning in the United States. Once the data is returned, Mrs. Finnegan would like to share this with the Select Board. The School District is looking for people to be involved.

Mr. Combs thanked Mrs. Finnegan for her efforts.

Mrs. Day wanted to congratulate everyone for the Christmas Bazaar and Lighted Tractor Parade on Saturday. The event was very well attended. Mrs. Day thanked the planners for taking the initiative.

JULIE FINNEGAN: SLATE VALLEY: CURRENT SCHOOL BOND PROPOSAL INFORMATION

Mrs. Finnegan presented the Select Board with documentation regarding the reasons behind the proposed school bond. In a nutshell, the infrastructure within the school buildings in all of the Towns are a problem. Mrs. Finnegan stated that alone, repairs for one building could be put into the budget, but together the district would need a bond. The Slate Valley School District now encompasses Castleton, Fair Haven, Benson and Orwell, now they would like to unify the middle schools.

Mrs. Finnegan noted that there is a shrinking population in some schools. The proposed Middle School would be autonomous, there would be some shared space with the High School, not through scheduling this will not be a problem. Currently, Vermont Legislature has school construction funding on their agenda. The Slate Valley School District proposed bond would be for approximately \$60 million. Mrs. Finnegan acknowledged that this is a fluid number, architects are looking for ways to save money and the number may continue to change.

Mrs. Finnegan pointed out that 80% of the school budget is personnel, one middle school will allow for better use of this budget.

Mr. Spaulding asked what the School District would do if the vote fails.

Mrs. Finnegan said that the School Board will go back to the drawing board. Mrs. Finnegan clarified that the proposed \$60 million would not come from one town, it would be divided between all the towns within the Slate Valley School District. If the bond passes, the cost to residents would be about \$179 per \$100,000 spent on last year's taxes.

Mr. Leamy asked if there would be some income sensitivity for lower income households. Mr. Leamy noted that between 63% and 66% of residents pay taxes based on their income, not their property. Mrs. Finnegan said that the School Board is aware of the need for income sensitivity.

The time frame for construction, if the bond were to pass, would be several years. The new middle school would be built first, then the high school students would move into that building while construction was being done on the high school. Currently the parking lots at Castleton Elementary School and Fair Haven Union High School fall under Act 64, so these must be repaired. The Fair Haven Grade School needs a new elevator. The Castleton Village School needs a new roof. The Orwell Village School has a heating issue and the Benson Village School has water issues.

Mrs. Day asked Mrs. Finnegan how this bond would fix education. Mrs. Finnegan explained that by changing the classroom structure, the teachers can change the way they teach to incorporate more group

learning in the middle school. There is no guarantee that this will succeed, but the goal is to have our children be college and/or career ready when they leave high school.

Mr. Leamy asked what the operational budget will look like. The School Board has not completed their budget yet but anticipate that it will remain like last year. If the bond passes, the hope is to have the project complete by 2023.

OFF ROAD DIESEL

Mr. Jones received 3 bids for 60/410 blend fuel oil for the Town. Mr. Jones recommends that the Select Board award the bid to Sam's USave Fuels as their bid was the lowest at \$2.32/gallon.

Mr. Combs made a motion to award the bid for 60/40 blend fuel to Sam's USave the price per gallon of \$2.32. Mr. Mark seconded the motion. Mr. Spaulding recused himself from the vote. The remaining Select Board members voted in favor and the motion passed.

NEMRC UPDATED FEES

Mr. Jones shared the letter he received from NEMRC regarding the increased annual fee. The annual fee for support and license will increase from \$1,460.81 to \$5,000.00. This is an increase of \$3,539.00. The Town Manager recommends that the Town stay with NEMRC Mr. Jones recommends that the Town stay with NEMRC for at least a year, during which time he can research other available options and costs. And staff do not have to learn a whole new system.

Mr. Mark made a motion to remain with NEMRC for the next year for an annual fee of \$5,000.00. Mr. Holzworth seconded the motion.

Mr. Mark would like to find out what other towns are paying. Mr. Spaulding would like to know what other options exist. Mr. Jones will research these topics for the Select Board.

Mr. Leamy called the question, all were in favor and the motion passed.

WASTEWATER QUALIFICATIONS

Mr. Jones noted that he received documents from Aldrich & Elliot and Dubois & King. Mr. Jones met with both companies and determined that both are qualified. The Town of Castleton has used Aldrich & Elliot from day 1. Aldrich & Elliot completed a 10-year study for the Town of Castleton. Mr. Jones recommends that the Select Board choose Aldrich & Elliot for this project.

Mr. Combs made a motion to approve Aldrich & Elliot for engineering services for the Wastewater Treatment Facility and Collection System. Mr. Holzworth seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

PLANNING COMMISSION TO DISCUSS SOLAR PROJECTS

Mr. Jones invited Ms. Currie, Chair of the Planning Commission to discuss the Planning Commission's position regarding the proposal of two new solar projects in Castleton.

Ms. Currie shared that MHG Solar had come to the Planning Commission meeting on November 26, 2019 to share their proposals. The Planning Commission is concerned about the number of solar projects in Castleton, they would suggest a moratorium until an energy plan is established. With help from the

Rutland Regional Planning Commission, Ms. Currie believes that the Castleton Planning Commission can put together guidelines so that Castleton does not become inundated with solar arrays within the next 5 months. It was clarified that although there are only 2 spots left in the Castleton substation, it may be possible in the future to add more and the Planning Commission would like to have a plan in place if that happens.

Discussion was held on what the benefit to the Town of Castleton would be to bring in more solar arrays as the Town is maxed out on solar credits. The Planning Commission has not decided if these projects are preferred sites yet.

Mr. Combs was concerned about the possible exposure to Castleton's firefighters should there be a fire. Discussion was had on how the electrical power would be shut off by Green Mountain Power and how the solar power would need to also be shut off. It was not determined how much risk there would be of back feed to homes connected to the solar power.

Mr. Leamy stated that there would be no action by the Select Board until they receive a proposal from the Planning Commission. Ms. Currie would like to defer any decisions until there is a full Commission present.

REVIEW PROPOSED BUDGET 2020-2021 FOR APPROVAL

Mr. Jones provided the Select Board with a final copy of the Budget for FY' 2020-2021.

Mr. Holzworth made a motion to approve the FY' 2020-2021 budget of \$3,418,269, a 2.5% increase. Mr. Combs seconded the motion.

The Select Board and Town Manager reviewed different line items and changes. The following budget lines items were discussed;

- Litigation was decreased due to the approval of the union contracts. Negotiations will no longer be necessary.
- The Police Department reserve is only \$17,000 for a police car. There was concern over the cost of outfitting new vehicles. Several different options were noted such as removing equipment from old cars and reusing and using the money generated from the sale of the old cars.
- The Taurus and Impala at the Police Department were discussed.
- Town lands and Historical Cemeteries were also discussed.

Mr. Leamy called the question. Mr. Spaulding voted against the motion. The remaining Select Boards voted in favor of the motion. The motion passed.

MANAGER'S UPDATE

Mr. Jones provided his Town Manager's Report to the Select Board for discussion.

Bob Spaulding and Tim Gilbert recently attended a meeting at the Rutland Country Solid Waste District and the Town of Castleton will be receiving 9.45% of \$150,000 of surplus funds. This equals \$14,176.83. There are no strings attached, the Board of Selectman can decide what they want to do with the money. The Town Manager would like to recommend that the money be used to make needed improvements at the Transfer Station. In particular, to either building a roofed structure (pole barn) over the bulky/C&D

bins to keep the rain and snow from saturating the materials, especially items such as mattresses, couches, sheetrock, and other items that absorb and hold water. The Town is paying for the weight of the water that is absorbed into these items when we bring the items to Gansevoort. In most cases, if the items are frozen in the bins, there are no assets at Gansevoort to loosen/free them and they are not able to be removed and the driver brings the bin back to our Transfer Station partially full. The Town Manager believes that \$14,176.83 would almost be enough to cover the estimated cost of one such structure.

Mr. Combs made a motion to allocate \$14,176.83 towards building a pole barn over the C&D bins at the Transfer Station. Mr. Holzworth seconded the motion.

Mr. Spaulding would like to make sure that the Board understands that this surplus came from everyone not just the people that use the Transfer Station.

Mr. Leamy called the question. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Mr. Jones will add Transfer Station Policies and Procedures to the agenda for the December 23, 2019 meeting.

Mr. Jones discussed the amortization schedule for the new trucks in the Highway Department. Both new trucks for the Highway Department are at Viking to have plow packages installed. Paul and Bob Ward visited the facility to inspect the trucks and were told the packages would not likely be installed before late February or early March. Lesson learned is to order new trucks that need plow packages about this time of the year if they are back and operational for the following winter season. The Town Manager is looking for the Board to approve the loan agreement with People's United Bank for the loan on the International Tandem dump truck and plow package. Mr. Jones confirmed that the amount owed is no more than the amount approved by the Board. People's United Bank will give the Town the same rate for both trucks. The Town Manager also requests the Board to approve a \$40,000 payment toward the International. This reduces the payment by \$40,000 and the Town can finance \$148K and pay less in interest by reducing the loan term to 4 years. Mr. Jones asked that the Finance Department be allowed to make two payments per year instead of one, thus reducing the amount of interest paid on the load, to which the bank agreed. The payment dates requested are July 15th and January 15th of each year.

Mr. Combs made a motion to allow the authorization of the amortization schedule of 4 payments annually for a total interest of \$7,765.05. Mr Holzworth seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Mr. Jones showed the Select Board the newly formatted Conflict of Interest Policy. This policy was approved and signed on July 9, 2019.

SELECT BOARD COMMENTS

Mr. Combs shared that he had submitted a copy of the New England Police Benevolent Association at the last meeting. There was one change made that he provided to the Select Board.

Mr. Combs made a motion to approve the agreement between the Town of Castleton and the New England Police Benevolent Association, Local 426 from July 1, 2019 – July 1, 2022 as presented. Mr. Holzworth seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Mr. Combs suggested an article be drafted for the voters at Town Meeting that would allow allocation of the \$20,000 unallocated surplus into the Capital Improvements and Reserve Accounts for the Town Office and the Fire Department.

Discussion was also held regarding creating another reserve account for the Salt Shed project. The project would begin with a scoping study, it would take at least 3 years to get the construction up and running. This project could cost \$500,000 and the Town may be responsible for 20%. By creating a reserve account for this project would allow the Town to put the 20% aside for the project.

Mr. Combs made a motion to authorize the Town Manager to draft two articles for the warning, the first article would be to create a reserve account for the salt shed using proceeds from the sale of the real estate properties and the weed harvesting reserve account and the second article would be to transfer fiscal year 2019 unallocated surplus to reserve accounts. Mr. Holzworth seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Mr. Spaulding asked what the status was on the new vehicles. The Town Manager will provide the Board with an update at the next meeting.

Mr. Spaulding also asked if there were any updates on the Sand Hill Project.

Mr. Holzworth stated that he had spoken to Ms. Currie who said that the investors are still waiting for the scoping study.

Mr. Holzworth mentioned that he was very impressed by the Holiday Bazaar and Parade. He wants to say thank you to those who put it on.

WARRANTS FOR APPROVAL

Mr. Combs made a motion to approve check warrant #1209R in the amount of \$3,750.00, check warrant #1209 in the amount of \$202,783.78, check warrant #1205 in the amount of \$7,823.73, check warrant #1129 in the amount of \$5,711.50, check warrant #4455 in the amount of \$332.75, check warrant #1205P in the amount of \$14,018.77, and check warrant #1227P in the amount of \$15,070.17. Mr. Holzworth seconded the motion. All were in favor, and the motion passed.

Mr. Holzworth made a motion to approve check warrant #1206P in the amount of \$676.30 and check warrant #1128P in the amount of \$682.97. Mr. Mark seconded the motion.

Mr. Spaulding asked why the 2 amounts were different, they are normally the same. Mr. Mark noted that the fringe amounts were not the same on each check and would like to know why.

Mr. Jones will look into this and report back to the Select Board.

The Select Board Chairman called the question. Mr. Combs recused himself from the vote. Those remaining were in favor and the motion passed.

BREIF RECAP & ITEMS FOR FOLLOW UP

Mr. Combs asked the Town Manager when he thought the Community Development and Economic Revitalization Advisory Committee would have their first meeting. The Town Manager will begin to poll the members on their availability.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no executive session.

ADJOURN

Mr. Combs made a motion to adjourn the Select Board Meeting at 8:49 pm Mr. Holzworth seconded the motion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Respectfully submitted; Eliza LeBrun, Recording Secretary