

**TOWN OF CASTLETON SELECT BOARD MINUTES**  
**Thursday, December 21, 2023 7:00 p.m.**  
**Castleton Fire Station Community Room**  
**273 Route 30N, Bomoseen**  
**In-Person & Zoom Virtual Public Meeting**

Zoom Meeting Recording Link:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/lxivzlgPjBdtTyO\\_uzSB63XU2L\\_OaNaJLX4feLaXcft0wjE9KRYI-W5yFOoBfwh.nJK7Naqa2EDCku3w](https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/lxivzlgPjBdtTyO_uzSB63XU2L_OaNaJLX4feLaXcft0wjE9KRYI-W5yFOoBfwh.nJK7Naqa2EDCku3w)

**PRESENT:** Richard Combs, Vice-Chair, Joseph Mark, Parliamentarian, Robert Spaulding, Mary Lee Harris, See Attached List  
**PRESENT VIA ZOOM:** Mary Droege, Nedra Boutwell, Jeff Davidson

**CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Select Board Vice Chair R. Combs at 7:00 p.m.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by M. Jones.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**ML Harris made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. R. Spaulding seconded. All voted in favor. Motion carried 4-0.**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES – December 11, 2023**

**ML Harris made a motion to approve the minutes of December 11, 2023 as presented. R. Spaulding seconded.**

Page 2 – second line on the page – *Department of Public Works Director* should be replaced with *Police Chief*.

Page 2 – fifth line of the ARPA Funds paragraph - *and* should be deleted between Fire Department and the Parson's Hill.

Page 2 – sixth line of the ARPA Funds paragraph - the first *either* in the line should be deleted, end of the same line, *the sidewalk* should be inserted and *those* should be deleted.

Page 2 – eighth line of the ARPA Funds paragraph *accurate* should be replaced with *needed*.

**All others voted in favor. Motion carried 4-0.**

**CITIZENS COMMENTS & CONCERNS - ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA:**

Tim Smith introduced himself as one of the three School Board representatives, and stated he was here to clarify an article about school tax that was recently published. It can be a controversial topic and the formulas and metrics are very complicated. T. Smith further explained how the taxes are calculated and what the State requirements are for determining the taxes. R. Combs stated some of the members on this board found the stuffer that was included in the tax bills as unfortunate, and in the future things of that nature will have to be approved by this board before being included in a town mailing. They consider it a personnel matter and it has been addressed.

M. Droege stated it was her recollection that the board was going to post the budget along with the minutes from December 11, and she was not able to find them.

M. Droege also stated that in the last budget meeting they were discussing whether the operating expenses of the CVS building were going to be included in the budget or not, and if it is included, what was the dollar amount that was included. M. Jones stated the budget was posted with the agenda for this meeting on the website.

**RECREATION UPDATE**

R. Combs stated J. Alexander, the new Recreation Director, has prepared a report for the board to review. He was not able to be present this evening. M. Jones stated it can be made available online with the minutes for public review and J. Alexander will be present at the next meeting to discuss the report.

## **POLICE UPDATE**

Police Chief is not present at this time. They are running a few minutes early, so he may arrive shortly.

## **APPOINTMENT OF INTERIM TREASURER EFFECTIVE JANUARY 5<sup>TH</sup> – Nedra Boutwell, Town Clerk**

M. Jones stated the Treasurer, Nancy Trudo has decided to retire as of January 4. This is an elected position, so between the time of January 4 and Election Day, they will have to appoint an interim to cover the position. Nedra Boutwell has agreed to perform the duties from January 5 until an election is held, so the board will need to make that appointment as the interim treasurer. **ML Harris made a motion to appoint Nedra Boutwell as interim Treasurer from January 5 until the March 2024 Election. R. Spaulding seconded. All voted in favor. Motion carried 4-0.**

## **ALLOCATION OF RETURNABLE DEPOSIT BOTTLE AND CAN REVENUE FROM THE TRANSFER STATION: Selectboard**

M. Jones stated he has briefly discussed this with the accountant, the tax collector and M. Clifford. It has been suggested that there be a sign posted with the revenues going to certain organizations who have signed up, and the remainder go to the recreation department, specifically perhaps the summer camp, where they have a problem meeting the revenues needed. J. Mark stated he felt the policy should be modified, as they had discussed at the last meeting, that the revenue from the returnables go to the adult and youth sports programs within the recreation department. However, he does not feel that it should be specifically to summer camps, as he feels that program should be self-sustaining. **J. Mark made a motion that they modify the Transfer Station Bottle and Can policy by deleting the first section that has four numerated points and replacing that with effective January 1, 2024 all proceeds from bottle and can redemption collected at the transfer station shall go to the recreation department for the support of youth and adult sports, programs connected to CVS, and maintenance and improvements and facilities used by the recreation department. R. Spaulding seconded. R. Combs asked if J. Mark would collaborate with the Town Manager to make those changes to the policy for the next board meeting. All voted in favor. Motion carried 4-0.**

## **2024/2025 BUDGET DISCUSSION & APPROVAL**

J. Mark stated he finds the reassessment of the numbers provided by the Town Manager helpful, which shows an increase of 5.76%. J. Mark explained the various carryovers are used to decrease the apparent cost of paving, sidewalks, etc. which can change the numbers drastically, taking those onetime funds out of the budget, using real numbers makes the increase 14.3%. He feels the numbers in the budget are realistic to actual operations and can feel it has been reviewed and updates as much as it can be without there being other huge increases in future years. R. Combs stated he agrees with J. Mark and also added that they need to explain very well to the taxpayers why there is an increase as there is. **J. Mark made a motion to endorse the budget the town manager has provided on 12/19/23 without change for a total expenditure of \$4,235,731.00. ML Harris seconded. All voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried 4-0.**

## **DISCUSSION ABOUT REALLOCATION OF UNASSIGNED HIGHWAY CARRYOVER**

M. Jones stated in the past year, he has asked the board to use unassigned highway carryover, and explained where some of it was used, \$109,000 that was available to use. He is still working on the numbers, but he is considering asking the board to use ARPA funds to refill the highway carryover. M. Jones further explained the situation with the shortage for repairs with no highway carryover and nowhere else that it can come from. Options are ARPA or overspending the highway budget. He stated they also have a highway department vehicle replacement plan that he will be presenting to the board at another meeting. J. Mark asked for a status on the reserve funds for each department that has one. Further discussion on reserve accounts and vehicle replacement plans for the years to come.

## **EXPLANATION OF PROPOSED PAYROLL TAX**

M. Jones stated beginning July 1 2024 a payroll tax will be imposed, which has not been included in the budget figures so far. It was not put in the budget, it is his understanding that the board can choose to have the employees pay 25% of the tax. They will not be exempt from the tax, it is an offset for child care that is being imposed by the State. Discussion on the numbers and how it should be added to the budget, whether it should be divided into the payroll for each department or a lump sum somewhere in the management budget. It is anticipated there will be an anticipated \$5,600 addition to the payroll expense due to this legislation. The board feels the town should absorb the cost, rather than requiring employees to cover any part of it.

**MANAGER'S REPORT**

None at this time.

**PURCHASE ORDERS FOR APPROVAL**

None at this time.

**WARRANTS FOR APPROVAL**

J. Mark made a motion to approve check warrant #1225A in the amount of \$104,500.00, check warrant #1208 in the amount of \$4,773.40, check warrant #1214 in the amount of \$6,336.24, check warrant #1218 in the amount of \$1,819,021.52 check warrant #1221 in the amount of \$6,193.59, check warrant #1225 in the amount of \$238,720.09, check warrant #1214P in the amount of \$17,296.34 and check warrant #1221P in the amount of \$17,020.24. R. Spaulding seconded. All voted in favor. Motion carried 4-0.

J. Mark made a motion to approve check warrant #1215P in the amount \$631.91, check warrant #1222P in the amount of \$631.91. ML Harris seconded. R. Combs recused himself. All remaining members voted in favor. Motion carried 3-0.

**SELECTBOARD COMMENTS and/or CONCERNS:**

J. Mark thanked R. Spaulding for his suggestion on the content of the Selectboard report for the Town Report. Budget increases is a major topic, and they will do a review for the rest of the year.

J. Mark stated there are concerns with aiming of the light at the Medical Center, and asked if it could be moved to point more directly on the entrance.

ML Harris asked about the dedication of the Town Report, if there were any ideas. R. Combs suggested everyone get suggestions to M. Jones in the next week or so. J. Mark suggested honoring larger businesses, ie: Hubbardton Forge or Brown's Auto Salvage are both good candidates, as well as the Medical Center possibly for the photo on the front, with as many employees as possible out in front of the building. R. Combs suggested Honoree Fleming for a dedication. ML Harris also suggested Joe Bruno

**BRIEF RECAP & ITEMS FOR FOLLOW UP:**

None at this time.

**ENTER EXECUTIVE SESSION – 7:10 PM**

J. Mark made a motion to enter Executive Session to discuss Real Estate to include the Town Manager. R. Spaulding seconded. All voted in favor. Motion carried 4-0.

**EXIT EXECUTIVE SESSION – 7:25 PM**

J. Mark made a motion to exit Executive Session, no action taken. R. Spaulding seconded. All voted in favor. Motion carried 4-0.

**ENTER EXECUTIVE SESSION – 7:26 PM**

ML Harris made a motion to enter Executive Session to discuss Labor Relations to include the Town Manager. R. Spaulding seconded. All voted in favor. Motion carried 4-0.

**EXIT EXECUTIVE SESSION – 7:34 PM**

J. Mark made a motion to exit Executive Session, no action taken. R. Spaulding seconded. All voted in favor. Motion carried 4-0.

**ADJOURN – 7:34 PM**

**ML Harris made a motion to adjourn at 7:34 p.m. R. Spaulding seconded. All voted in favor. Motion carried 4-0.**

Respectfully Submitted  
Allison Harvey, Recording Secretary

F E N D A L