

**Town of St. Albans**  
**Selectboard 'Special' Meeting Minutes**  
**Monday, December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018**  
**5:00 p.m.**

On Monday, December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at 5:00 p.m., the Town of St. Albans Selectboard met at Town Hall for a 'special' budget meeting.

**Officials and staff present:** Chair Bill Nihan, Brendan Deso, Stan Dukas, Al Voegelé, Town Manager, Carrie Johnson, Town Clerk, Anna Bourdon, Public Safety Administrator/Fire Chief Bob Cross, and Director of Public Works, Alan Mashtare. Absent was Vice Chair Bruce Cheeseman.

**Public present:** None.

Chair, B. Nihan called the Selectboard 'special' meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

The purpose of this 'special' meeting was to conduct a budget kickoff meeting to begin work on the fiscal year 2020 budget.

**Fire Department Budget**

The group started the budget meeting by reviewing the Fire Department budget, with questions being answered by B. Cross and C. Johnson. B. Cross concluded this portion with the request to put a ballot question on the town meeting day warning to replace the quint ladder truck. Cost estimated at no more than \$796,000, trade in of current 2005 estimated to bring in \$200,000 - \$250,000. The undesignated fire department apparatus reserve fund is adequate to replace this apparatus paying cash for the new truck. We will not have to ask the voters for more money. B. Nihan asked A. Bourdon how much we had in the reserve fund. A. Bourdon stated that we currently have over \$700,000 in that account. Those funds are available for all trucks in the Fire Department. She explained that she'll put another \$121,000 into the reserve account this year.

B. Cross explained that the next big purchase for apparatus will be the rescue truck which is slated for replacement in 2024. B. Nihan asked B. Cross how often the quint/ladder is used and asked how often they used the rescue truck. B. Cross explained that it is used in just about every fire call. It is used to for lighting, filling the fire fighters' air tanks, and as a cascade system.

B. Nihan suggested refurbishing the current ladder truck as well as purchasing a new one to have two trucks. B. Cross explained that to maintain two trucks, they do not have room in the garage for a second ladder truck and it would be expensive as it needs to be aerial tested (weight on the ladders) and certified each year at a cost of \$1,200. If the truck fails testing, the State of Vermont will take the truck out of service.

Changes requested in a few account descriptions, but no FY'20 proposed budget changes requested.

**Parks and Recreation Budget**

A. Mashtare and C. Johnson reviewed the Parks and Recreation budget with the Selectboard. The justification for the increase in the salary line was that A. Mashtare added two part-time staff members to the Parks crew which gave the parks more coverage. He went on to explain that the year before, the Selectboard had said that it wasn't safe for just one person to close the parks at night and on weekends, wanted full coverage. Staff is usually there from Memorial Day to Labor day. Rob Morrill, the Parks Supervisor was on until the end of October and a couple of the college kids who were on staff came back during Thanksgiving break to help with decorating the Park. S. Dukas stated that his problem with the Parks budget was that it has gone up almost \$71,000 in four years, from 2017 to what is being proposed today. Over a 50% increase overall. A. Bourdon explained that \$45,000 was added to the Parks budget for recreation reimbursement. That's part of it. S. Dukas stated it was \$30,000 and it was in the Town Manager's budget. It's a 54% increase and he stated that we are out of control.

C. Johnson explained that during the budget process last year, it was agreed upon to hire another person for the Parks. We also had the challenge of hiring staff for the rate of pay we were offering. At one point, it was lower than McDonald's. Changes were agreed to on reducing the Parks salary line for parks from \$70,600 to \$61,500.

There was much discussion regarding the funds given to the Town by Jeff Davis and what its intentional use was. Those funds are to go towards restoration of the

Stonehouse at the Bay Park. B. Nihan asked A. Mashtare what is the total cost of restoration to the Stonehouse. A. Mashtare said the soft costs are up near \$600,000. The Park Restoration line item is to upgrade things in the park itself. B. Nihan suggested that some items such as potable water should be a capital expense.

B. Nihan asked what "Dock Expense" was used for. A. Mashtare explained that what he has used it for in the past for floats that had broken off docks that we had put in the water. This year, we only put in a few docks and only housed the Fire Department boat. S. Dukas stated that the dock was inspected and we cannot use it to rent boat slips. The Town is not renting out slips due to ADA compliance concerns. A. Mashtare agreed. The Dock Expense line item was reduced from \$10,000 to \$5,000 and those funds will be used for general repairs to the dock.

\$20,000 was kept for the Bay Park Events line item.

#### **Department of Public Works Budget**

C. Johnson explained to the Board that both she and A. Mashtare support raising the salary line because they had found in the last 12 months that our pay scale was not adequate enough to encourage new hires. Setting the salary line item at \$375,000 will allow us to increase the pay scale. B. Nihan stated that he wanted to see some comparisons, how the Town stacks up to other municipalities. C. Johnson explained that's how they arrived at the number they came to; looking at other municipalities similar to ours. We couldn't get people to apply for \$18/hr. A. Mashtare explained to the Board that he's had a couple of his current employees tell him if they find something for more money, they plan to leave.

A. Mashtare explained that the job descriptions need to be updated with more detail for each position. B. Nihan said that then a salary scale could be set with regards to those job descriptions after specifications for each pay grade are done.

The Department of Public Works (DPW) salary line item was reduced from \$390,000 to \$375,000. The VMERS/Fica/Medi will also be adjusted downwards to accommodate that change.

B. Deso asked when we would consider a stormwater utility and removing the stormwater budget out of the general fund. C. Johnson stated that Director of Administration, Ned Connell had proposed some money in his budget to actually have someone to start working on this this coming year.

A. Bourdon explained that in FY'18, there was about \$120,000 left on the stormwater line, which is in the Department of Public Works (DPW) budget. By statute, she can roll over that \$120,000 and create a stormwater utility account. For FY'19, whatever is not spent will also get rolled over into the stormwater utility account. C. Johnson stated that FY'17 was the first year we rolled over stormwater funds. S. Dukas asked how we use the funds. C. Johnson explained we use the funds through the grant. We can put zero funds in the stormwater line and wait until we have used all the money in the stormwater reserves.

B. Deso agreed with rolling over the stormwater funds at the end of the fiscal year, zero out funds for the stormwater line item and review a stormwater utility while we have the back funds to work with. B. Nihan stated that our matches can be charged against that account. C. Johnson said that they can.

A. Voegele stated that we must make sure that what the anticipated expenses are to finish the 5 stormwater ponds that we are responsible for. C. Johnson agreed and suggested keeping \$30,000 in the stormwater line item. Our ongoing annual expenses for stormwater every year are about \$30,000. This covers our annual rain gage contract which is \$10,000, the stormwater general permit that must be renewed every year is \$2,000, the Regional Stormwater Educational Program (RSEP) is \$5,000.

S. Dukas explained that we are \$200,000 more this year in our budget that we were last year. What he would like to do is drive down that \$200,000 so we have the same budget to go to the voters with. C. Johnson reminded him that the police budget went up close to \$100,000 so we are going to have to cut something else in our budget to make up for the difference.

The Street Crimes Unit is separate from the base police contract and is included in the Police budget. S. Dukas asked if it was legal to do it. C. Johnson explained that he has asked if it was an addendum to the contract and it is not. It is its own separate contract.

S. Dukas asked whether or not we need to go out to bid. C. Johnson said no, that we don't have to go out to bid for the Street Crimes Unit. B. Nihan suggested separating the police contract and the Street Crimes Unit in the budget.

Back to stormwater, the Board agreed to C. Johnson's suggestion of putting \$30,000 in the stormwater line item as a place holder until they can see how much is actually being spent each year.

A. Mashtare explained that last year when we bought the 10-wheeler and we went to vote to put all our money together for trucks, that was the year to switch out one of the F-550's. He needs a truck and wanted to know if we needed to put that on the ballot even though that money is already established? It's in the reserve, do we have to go on the ballot? He went on to explain that with the new DPW garage going on the ballot, he didn't want to look greedy. C. Johnson stated that we don't have to put it on the ballot but, we have done it that way in the past. A. Bourdon said it's a courtesy to the taxpayers to put the article on the ballot. A. Voegelé stated that we want to make this vote for the new garage as simple as possible.

It was agreed upon that both the fire department and DPW trucks will go on the ballot for Town Meeting.

S. Dukas asked when we needed to make a decision on the police contract for the option years. C. Johnson said by the end of the month.

#### **Adjournment**

**MOTION: B. Deso made a motion to adjourn the Selectboard 'special' meeting at 8:30 p.m. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Carrie H. Johnson