



**Town of Whitingham  
Office of the Selectboard**

**MINUTES OF February 23, 2022**

*These Minutes are considered a DRAFT until accepted into the public record (with any corrections noted) at a future meeting of the Whitingham Selectboard.*

The Whitingham Selectboard held a regular meeting at 6:30pm in the dining hall of the Whitingham Municipal Center on Wednesday, February 23, 2022.

Selectboard members present: Scott Reed, Chair; Craig Hammer, Vice Chair; Chris Walling and James Weber. Greg Brown zoomed in at 7:15pm.

Others present: Gig Zboray, Selectboard Office Administrator; Almira Aekus, Clerk/Treasurer; Stanley Janovosky, Jr., Road Commissioner; Kristine Sweeter, Librarian; Edie Brigham, Library Trustee; Abby Crosby, candidate for Selectboard; Mary Lemaire; John and Johanna Robohm;

Attending remotely: Joann Erenhouse, Senior Solutions; Gail Anderson; Jen Stromsten, BDCC; Allison Maynard; Regin Dobbins, BDCC; Tyler Lederer of Deerfield Valley News;

**Call to Order. Read remote meeting script**

Scott Reed called the meeting to order at 6:30pm. Gig read the remote meeting script.

**Additions or Changes to Agenda**

None.

**Hearing of visitors (for concerns not on the agenda)**

None

**Hearing of questions regarding:**

Budget Mr. Robohm had several questions regarding the budget. First, he questioned the fund balance differences on pages 29 and in Article 1. Ms. Aekus explained what the differences are.

Article 13 says Highway appropriated fund balance is different from the fund balance on page 29, same answer.

Headings in Revenues where it says "Expended" did not make sense to Mr. Robohm, Mrs. Aekus will change the heading on future reports. The first and last column headings on the spreadsheet on page 29 says the same year end. Mrs. Aekus apologized for the error.

The General Fund line on page 29 doesn't agree with figures throughout the budget (but the interest matches up). Ms. Aekus replied that she has the answers in the audit report and will respond to his question.

Municipal Facilities in the fund balance on page 29, what was the \$13,287 spent on? New a/c-heat pump was installed in the Library.

Fire Equipment Fund, what was \$88,854 spent on? The new fire truck. Mr. Robohm questions why he can't find that answer anywhere in the Town Report.

Highway Garage, what was that \$5,952 spent on? The board responded that they thought it was engineering expenses but Mrs. Aekus will confirm.

Civil Defense generator has a fund balance on page 29 – Mr. Robohm questioned where is the generator? The generator is located at the school which is the town's emergency shelter.

Economic Development fund balance on page 29 – what was \$350 spent on if the committee was put on "pause"? Dues were paid to the Chamber of Commerce.

Highway Equipment Fund balance on page 29, what was \$116,799 spent on? The new backhoe.

Page 45 – Better Back Roads grant – how is that shown both in revenue and expenses? Mrs. Aekus will research and respond.

Mr. Robohm suggested it would be really useful to show the summary of expenses for each of the funds, for example the General Fund. Mrs. Aekus can print that information for anyone that asks for it, but it is too much to print in Town Report. There was discussion about putting information in the department reports.

Page 12 – under revenue – what is the definition of sewer bookkeeping revenue? The town gets a small stipend from the sewer department to pay for bookkeeping.

Page 25 – what are loan proceeds in sewer revenue? Versus what is on page 29. Mrs. Aekus will review and respond to Mr. Robohm.

Total equipment purchases throughout the budget equals about \$17,000, these purchases are not identified anywhere in the report.

Page 14, in Town Clerk's budget is a line items "Grant Expenditures" of \$22,240.02 On Page 12, grant revenue is \$23,047.52. Mrs. Aekus will review and respond.

Mrs. Robohm would like verbiage to show how grants are coming in and how they are spent.

Page 51 – Mr. Robohm questioned how someone hooked up to the sewer without paying the fee. This happened in 2013 when there was a sewer commission.

Page 12 – what is equalization revenues? From the state of Vermont, Mrs. Aekus will get an answer.

Page 28 – fire mechanic wages and fire equipment fund mechanic – what is the difference? The mechanic who worked on the new fire truck was paid out of the equipment fund.

Page 20 – Fire Department line item of \$30,000 for nominal fee – but report on page 41 says it's \$32,295. Mr. Janovsky explained the larger figure includes FICA and Medicare, the \$30,000 is what will be used to divide up their points system.

Abby Crosby questioned if this is the first year paying volunteers? Has anything else been tried to be a motivational tool? She noted in New York the local Fire Departments do fundraising. Mr. Janovsky responded that they have tried many different ways to encourage new members to join.

The point system was explained. The idea is to keep the members they actually have and hope to attract more members. Mary Lemaire spoke to her support of the point system.

Mrs. Robohm complained that there is a lot of detail missing in the reports, she finds it difficult to balance the different items. For example: Contract Law Enforcement on page 17 – she saw nothing in the revenues for the expense that we are paying for the police coverage. The board responded that police coverage is not a money-making prospect, we might get some revenues from tickets issued but the expense is a safety issue. She questioned if the board was interested in a Town Constable. That would be far more expensive and even the State Police have a hard time finding qualified candidates.

Mrs. Robohm questioned if we have gotten any ARPA funds yet; Mrs. Aekus answered yes, but they were in the current fiscal year, it doesn't show in the budget in the Town Report. Mrs. Robohm again suggested the use Front Porch Forum to distribute information to locals.

#### Warning for Town Meeting

Mrs. Robohm questioned why money was going to Economic Development (Article 21) when the EDG has put on pause? The board responded that it hopes EDG will come back, and the funds will be used in the future to update the website, for events such as the Blueberry Festival and for dues such as the Chamber of Commerce and VDCC.

Mrs. Robohm questioned the wording on the Cemetery article. Mrs. Aekus explained.

Discussion around the Highway Garage Committee being disbanded and why Article 16 asks for funding. The board responded that the town will need to either renovate or replace the garage in the future and this article puts funds away for that goal. Mr. Robohm questioned if the fund was a "sinking" fund and stated he did not think they were legal. Mrs. Aekus will double check with VLCT but it was noted that the voters voted to create the fund for a specific purpose.

#### Town Report

Mr. Weber questioned Mr. Robohm if there is a dollar value that he would like identified in future town reports? Discussion ensued, no clear answer given.

#### Library: food pantry shelf

Edie Brigham discussed the library's plan for the food pantry shelf. They will have a shelf in the library on a rolling book cart. They would like permission to roll the cart out into the hallway by the listers office or outside during library hours. The board agreed and are thankful the library is willing to take this project on.

### **Cannabis: discuss possible creation of Cannabis Control Board**

Several meetings ago Cindy Hayford made a presentation to the board suggesting the creation of a Cannabis Control Board, she then sent more information on the topic. Gig's research indicates that a municipality must "opt-in" to host a retail cannabis establishment by majority vote by Australian ballot at an annual or special Town Meeting. The state has sole authority to issue licenses for cultivator, manufacturer, wholesale, and testing labs. Discussion ensued. It is too late to put the topic on this year's ballot.

### **Sewer**

Update provided and discussed. Worst case scenario is that the bid will not be advertised until March 8<sup>th</sup>, but we were pushing for February 18<sup>th</sup>, it is already much later that we would have liked.

### **Approval of Payables Warrant – February 24, 2022**

**A motion was made by Craig Hammer to approve Payables Warrant #W2236 dated February 24, 2022, seconded by Chris Walling, all in favor.**

### **Approval of Payroll Warrant – February 24, 2022**

**A motion was made by Chris Walling to approve Payroll Warrant #W2235 dated February 24, 2022, seconded by James Weber, all in favor.**

### **Approve Minutes of January 26, 2022**

**A motion was made by Chris Walling to accept the Minutes of February 9, 2022, as written seconded by James Weber, all in favor.**

### **Other Business**

Mary Lemaire mentioned how the towns will be divided for State Representation. She is concerned that Chittenden County has 6 votes, we have two. She suggested everyone contact the Apportionment Board to say each district should have one vote. You can reach the Apportionment Board at <https://sos.vermont.gov/apportionment-board/contact-the-board/>. You can see the maps <https://sos.vermont.gov/apportionment-board/map-drafts/>

### **Adjourn**

**A motion was made by James Weber to adjourn, seconded by Scott Reed, all in favor.**

Scott Reed adjourned the meeting at 8:08pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
~Gig Zboray