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CORNWALL SELECT BOARD

Regular Meeting

Location: via Zoom and at Town Hall

September 3, 2024

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tanya Byker, Don Burns, John Roberts, Shawn Fetterolf,
Brian Kemp

ALSO PRESENT: Laura Fetterolf, Steve Rheaume, Nicholas Gill

Recording of meeting—announced

The Meeting was called to order by the Chair Tanya Byker at 7 pm.

QUORUM—established

AGENDA - Brian K. MOVED / Don B. SECONDED a motion to approve the agenda as amended, with the addition , in New Business, of an update on Ordinances from John R. ***Motion passed—4 in favor, 0 opposed***

MINUTES - August 6, 2024

Don B. MOVED / Brian K. SECONDED a motion to approve the minutes as presented
Motion passed—4 in favor, 0 opposed.

General Fund and Highway Orders - signed

Unreconciled Bank Statement - reviewed

CORRESPONDENCE REVIEW

- **Notice from the Vermont Department of Taxes** - In 2024 the Vermont Legislature passed Act 183, which updates the education funding formula starting with the 2025-2026 property tax year, beginning on July 1, 2025. By January 1, the Department of Taxes will have completed its “Equalization Study” that determines the CLAs for each Vermont town. But unlike prior years, beginning in 2025 these CLAs will not be applied to each town’s education property tax rates. Instead, every town’s CLA will be divided by a single “statewide adjustment” and the result will be applied to each town’s education property tax rates. The statewide adjustment can be thought of as the average level of appraisal of the entire state. All Vermont property will still be taxed at 100% of fair market value, but the factor applied to education property tax rates will be calculated differently.
- Financial Monitor Acceptance Letter from Mathew Kimble from the Department of Public Safety, stating that “All corrective actions have been accepted for the financial monitoring review of Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities

2021 (BRIC) award #02140-31237-004J. No further action is required.”

- Information about a “surprise” fireworks display scheduled in October - the Fire Chief is aware and permit has been obtained.

PUBLIC COMMENTS - none

TOWN CLERK - Laura Fetterolf

- Laura is putting together a Board of Civil Authority Handbook, as part of preparation for the November election.
- Fire Alarms were tested in August and no issues were found.
- Laura updated the town website with information about elections, the Open Meeting Law, and how to file a complaint about potential Open Meeting Law violations.
- The Town has received a \$5,000 grant from the Center for Technology and Civic Life that can be used to increase the security and transparency of elections.
- Board of Civil Authority meeting has been scheduled for September 17, 6:30 pm, just prior to the meeting of the Select Board.
- Laura will be attending the annual conference of the Vermont Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Association (VMCTA) on September 11, 2024 and the Secretary of State’s election training. Sue Johnson will be covering the Town Office that day.
- Laura and the Board discussed the issue the role of the Town auditors in regard to Open Meeting Law requirements - are they advisory or non-advisory? After discussion, Shawn F. MOVED / Don B. SECONDED a motion to designate the Auditors as an advisory body, and therefore not subject to Open Meeting Law requirements. **Motion passed—4 in favor, 0 opposed**
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TOWN TREASURER’S REPORT - Nicholas Gill

- Nicholas reviewed the 2024 Tax Rate document with the Board.

The total Municipal Rate is 0.4203, representing a slight decrease from last year.

The Homestead Education Rate (calculated by the State) is 2.121 (up .23%)

The Non-homestead Education Rate (calculated by the State) is 1.9703 (up 16%)

Cornwall has one of the highest increases in the State. After discussion it was decided that Tanya and Nicholas will follow up with the State to find out why. The tax bills are ready to go out, but more information from the State is needed to respond to taxpayers concerns. Brian K. MOVED / Shawn F. SECONDED a motion to send out a postcard explaining that the tax bills are not being sent out yet because the Select Board is checking with the State to better understand tax rate increases. **Motion passed—5 in favor, 0 opposed.** John and Tanya also plan to check with the Vermont League of Cities and Towns on the issue. Tax bills must go out by the end of September, by Statute.

- Nicholas brought the Telling & Hillman engagement letter for the 3 year audit

and Tanya B. signed it.

- Nicholas discussed NEMRC's current role with bank statement reconciliation with the Board, and recommends a change. The Board agreed that Nicholas can move forward with finding a different professional to reconcile the bank statements.

ROAD COMMISSIONER'S REPORT - Steve Rheaume

- Steve R. reported that he successfully striped the parking lot with equipment rented for \$25.
- The plan for paving is on hold until 2025.
- Several culverts have been installed.
- Morgan Huestis, new road crew person, starts next Monday, after HR paperwork is complete.
- Sand hauling has begun, in preparation for the winter season.
- The search continues to find a contractor for work on the Town Garage. \$25,000 in ARPA funds have been reserved for this purpose.

OLD BUSINESS

- **Update from Website Subcommittee: RFP Progress Report** - John R. reported that the RFP has been sent out to 9 companies. The deadline for quotes is the last Friday in September.
- **Update of meeting regarding DAR ARPA request** - John R., Shawn F. and Tanya B. met with members of the DAR regarding their ARPA request. They are still waiting for quotes, so the amount to be requested is still not yet determined.
- **Update on discussion with ARK Child Care LLC** - Shawn F. and Tanya B. met with Rebecca Kerr, director of ARK Child Care LLC. After examining the DAR building, she concluded it is not a suitable location for child care services. The second floor of the Town Hall is suitable, if fire protection sprinklers were to be installed. After discussion, about sprinklers and the benefits of protecting the historic Town Hall, Shawn F. MOVED / Brian K. SECONDED a motion that the Town move forward in reaching out to Fire Protection services for quotes on installing a sprinkler system.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Discuss possibility of delegating certain authorizations (i.e. catering, facilities) to town officials and/or employees** - Laura has begun a list of vendors. For now, Steve R. will respond to any building or equipment issues in the Town Hall. It was also noted that the Town has no HR person and this is an increasing problem as the required HR paperwork and other HR activities has become more extensive and more complicated, and better done by trained

professionals. Tanya will talk with the League of Cities and Towns to find out how other towns are handling this issue. Matter to be discussed again at the next meeting.

- **Address Open Meeting Law Requirements** - The Board discussed the requirement that when there is a quorum of members (including via email), that constitutes an open meeting that must be warned and duly recorded. Communications via email to a quorum of members must be limited to scheduling meetings and agendas.
- **Update on Ordinances from John R.** - John attended a recent training about how to make and enforce municipal ordinances. He will write up his extensive notes and send to all for a future discussion.

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OTHER BUSINESS

- It was noted that State planning to replace the covered bridge on Swamp Road is still in the scoping phase.
- The Fire Department is no longer requesting ARPA funds of \$15,000 for a well, as their plans have changed.
- CORA has made an additional request for ARPA funds for landscaping.
- Tanya B. reminded the Board that ARPA funds must be allocated by December 31, 2024.
- Steve R. said that he would like to have a highway related policy discussion added to the next meeting.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Brian K. MOVED / Shawn F. SECONDED a motion that premature general public knowledge regarding non-public information related to employee matters would clearly put the Town and the employee at a disadvantage. **Motion passed** - 5 in favor, 0 opposed.

Don B. MOVED / Brian K. SECONDED a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss non-public employee matters. **Motion passed** - 5 in favor, 0 opposed.

The Board went into Executive Session at 9:10 pm and came out at 9:41 pm. No decisions were made.

ADJOURNMENT

Shawn F. MOVED / Brian K. SECONDED a motion to adjourn the meeting. **Motion passed—5 in favor, 0 opposed.**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:41 pm.

Submitted by Sharon Tierra, Secretary of the Select Board