

## WESTMINSTER SELECTBOARD MEETING

Wednesday, December 27, 2023 - 6:30 p.m.

### Westminster, VT Town Hall

**Selectboard Present:** Katrina Hamilton (chair), Dan Crocker (clerk), Stephen Major (vice chair) and Kevin Hughes. Jason Perry was absent.

**Staff Present:** Charles (Chuck) Lawrence (road foreman), and Millie Barry (recording clerk)

**Others Present:** Willis (Chip) Stearns

1. **Call to Order:** Katrina Hamilton, chair of the board called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. Information to access a future meeting using a remote connection is available on the Town of Westminster website or by contacting the Westminster Town Hall.
2. **Adjustments to Agenda:** Stephen Major motioned to add an executive session under unfinished business before A. Budget Discussion and to invite Chip Stearns. Kevin Hughes seconded; motion carried by 4-0 voice vote.
3. **Acceptance of Minutes:** December 13, 2023 – Kevin Hughes motioned to approve the minutes of December 13, 2023; Dan Crocker seconded; motion carried by 4-0 voice vote.
4. **Communications and Public Comments:** None
5. **Unfinished Business:** (Discussion/Action) –
  - A. Executive Session – Board moved to executive session at 6:40 p.m. Board reconvened regular session at 7:10 p.m. Katrina Hamilton noted no action was taken in the executive session.
  - B. Budget Discussion: Information included in packet – Mr. Stearns said as of December 11, 2023, changes were highlighted in the information presented.

#### **Revenue:**

- In answer to Mr. Major's question regarding 0.00 in delinquent property taxes FY (fiscal year) 2025 proposed, Mr. Stearns said the auditor indicated if the town budgeted for delinquent property tax revenue, there was a question of how to compensate for taxes in the current year that go delinquent and do not get paid before fiscal year end? The town will collect prior years delinquent tax that may cover what was short in the current year collection. Mr. Stearns continued, to determine the amount of delinquent tax total as of June 30, 2024, and budget an amount the town would collect of that delinquent amount, the auditor indicated not be done.
- State of VT (Vermont) Hold Harmless FY2024 budget \$106,000.00, FY2025 proposed \$91,000.00 – Mr. Stearns said the Current Use Program in State of VT (SOV) enables taxpayers to enroll in the program and reduce their assessment for taxation with the difference in taxation paid by the SOV.

This revenue is split (about 14% of the municipal tax rate) with Westminster Fire District #3. Mr. Stearns believed the selectboard and fire district committee made the decision to split the revenue opposed to a vote by taxpayers.

- Railroad Tax – FY 2023 actual \$6,069.85, FY2024 budget 0.00. Mr. Stearns encouraged the board to budget an amount. He said the National Transportation Board owns and operates on land the railroad runs on, and this property is taxed through a SOV process. The monies are distributed to towns with railroad properties. Mr. Major confirmed Fire District #3 received 14% of these funds. The board agreed to add approximately \$6,000.00 for railroad tax.
- Trash Bag Tags – FY2023 actual \$7,000.00, FY2024 budget \$6,000.00, FY2025 proposed \$6,000.00. The board agreed to add \$1,000.00 to trash bag tags revenue.
- Rental – Post Office – Board questioned FY2023 budget \$9,680.00, FY2023 actual \$11,012.04, FY2024 budget \$9,680.00, FY2025 proposed \$9,680.00. The board agreed more research be done so the numbers are accurate.
- Miscellaneous Revenue -FY2023 budget \$750.00, FY2023 actual \$6,386.54, FY2024 budget \$750.00, FY2025 proposed \$750.00. Mr. Stearns believed there were three penalties of \$2,050.00 paid to the town by the SOV for individuals leaving the SOV Current Use Program.

**Expenditures:**

- Health Insurance – FY2023 budget \$85,500.00, FY2023 actual \$23,595.00, FY2024 budget \$102,600.00, FY2025 proposed \$55,000.00. Mr. Stearns said the differences were a direct result in the change and anticipation of town managers, adding a family plan of platinum health insurance could cost \$50,000.00. The board agreed to ask the town manager to verify the line item.
- Collecting Waste – FY2023 budget \$175,440.00, FY2023 actual \$186,026.42, FY2024 budget \$184,000.00, FY2025 proposed \$184,300.00. Ms. Hamilton said Ruggiero’s contracts included increases built in each year. Mr. Stearns noted when budgeting for current year FY2024, Ruggiero presented to the board he was losing money. At the time, the board voted to increase the payment (immediately) impacting FY 2022 actual/FY2023 budget.
- Waste Assessment – FY2023 actual \$18,920.00, FY2024 budget \$19,000.00, FY2025 \$21,615.00. Mr. Stearns said this amount was for membership in the Windham Solid Waste Management district, the fee was billed by

calendar year and the manager was waiting for clarification of rates and contract.

**Highway:**

**Revenue:**

- Ms. Hamilton noted information from Chuck Lawrence when budgeting for the new truck and loader, the lowest bid total (information included in packet) was \$275,000.00. Mr. Stearns said the amount in the equipment fund was \$230,000.00. Hamilton said the truck to be purchased in the current fiscal year was \$185,485.00. Mr. Major noted at the end of FY2025 there would be approximately \$20,000.00 in the equipment fund.
- Reimburse for Fuel FD (fire department) #3 – FY2023 actual \$9,331.11, FY2024 budget \$2,500.00, FY 2025 proposed \$2,500.00 – Fuel used by the fire department reimbursed to the highway department. Mr. Stearns said it was difficult to budget the amount of fuel used by the fire department, believing it was reasonable to increase this amount by \$2,500.00.
- Bridge Fund: Mr. Stearns said the current amount in the fund \$148,000.00.
- ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Fund: Mr. Stearns said the current amount was \$489,000.00. Ms. Hamilton noted repairs to Hearse house in the coming year of about \$20,000.00 had been discussed by the board. Mr. Major said the board would continue funding worthy projects such as repair/replacement of the Westminster New Cemetery wall and then find an appropriate use for the remainder of the funds, defining a use of monies in ten months. Stephen Major moved to change (transfer to retreatment), line 288 to 0.00 and line 287 (transfer to bridge fund) to \$175,000.00 with the intent to apply ARPA funds to retreatment. Kevin Hughes seconded; motion carried by 4-0 voice vote. Ms. Hamilton said the board must approve the town budget by 1/10/2024 adding the ARPA committee was scheduled to meet 1/17/2024. It was possible to discuss with the ARPA committee chair an earlier meeting date. Hamilton believed (with the motion) there were sufficient dollars left to cover anticipated projects. The board agreed the ARPA committee had done a good job, responsibly recommending the use of funds. Mr. Major stated the motion was a good idea, the board was sharing the plan and if it did not work, the dollars could be re-instated, the funds would be used to protect the town and tax rate in the future.
- ARPA funds and grant matching: Mr. Stearns confirmed ARPA funds

could be used to match grant monies. Mr. Lawrence said funding for the work on the Fullam Brook culvert repair was an emergency grant. When the cost is determined, it was possible to use ARPA funds as the match to the grant, reimbursing the emergency fund when the SOV funds are received. The entire project would be grant funded from two sources.

Mr. Stearns confirmed, with all budget changes discussed, a 2024 tax of .8304.

Also, Stearns noted the budget would be presented as two different numbers. The highway department monies were to be used for highway department purposes as opposed to general purposes. The change to present two budgets was authorized by the voters in 2023. Mr. Major confirmed articles at the town meeting for the town governance and another for the highway.

**6. New Business:** (Action/Discussion) – None

**7. Boards, Committees and Commissions** – None

**8. Other Business:** None

**9. Date of Next Meeting:** Wednesday, January 10, 2024, 6:30 p.m.

**10. Adjournment:** At 8:42 p.m. Kevin Hughes motioned to adjourn the meeting; Dan Crocker seconded; meeting adjourned by 4-0 voice vote.

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**Clerk**

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**Date**