

Bakersfield Budgeting Informational Meeting
Tuesday, February 22, 2022
7:00pm

Josh called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

Members present: Josh Goss (chair), Lance Lawyer, and Brenda Churchill via zoom.

Members absent: Gary Denton, Terri Gates

Residents/Guests attending: John West, Tami Brennan, Rosalie Williams and via zoom: Larry Westcom, Linda McCall, Mark Doremaz, Sue Sonski, Paul and Linda Stanley, Vera Lawyer, William Irwin, Katie and Dan Forand, Sharon Lawyer, Mary Schwartz, Euin Bear, Todd Cosgrove

Warrant signed:

Road Commissioner's order #8A-2022

\$143.89

Josh began the meeting by welcoming all attending and stated that the intention tonight is to go through the ballot, item by item, and discuss any questions or concerns.

He began by going over the vacant officer positions that have no one running on the ballot....

Auditor- 3-year term

Auditor- 2 years of a 3-year term

Planning Commission 2-year term

1st and 2nd Constable

Cemetery Commission 5-year term

Brigham Academy Committee 3-year term

Lance said that he believed Lisa Maynard was considering to be a write-in for the cemetery commission. Kathy said that a write-in must get 1% of the checklist or 30 votes, whichever is less, to be considered elected. The board said that if the candidate is not elected, then they invite the candidate to come to the next Select Board meeting to be considered for appointment. Linda McCall commented in the chat box: "I was interested in the Cemetery Commission position. I hadn't heard that Lisa was interested!" Lance said to let people know and run as a write-in, and to anyone interested in any of the vacant positions, if there is not an elected officer in the position, to come to the Select Board meeting after Town Meeting to be appointed to the position. Linda commented: "Will do!"

Josh began to run through the items on the ballot, one by one, beginning with:

Article #4- Shall the voters of the Town of Bakersfield authorize the Select board to appoint a Town Treasurer as provided by 17 V.S.A. Sec. 2651f?

Josh said that this item is to be able to hire a treasurer from outside the town. Tami said that if this is voted through the Select board will hire a

treasurer and the town would no longer vote for a treasurer. Kathy said that if the treasurer position remains an elected position, it must be filled by a town resident who is currently a registered voter. Lance said that the person who is in the treasurer position currently is doing very well and is running for the position on the ballot. If she gets elected and if the town votes to change the position to an appointed position, then the board will appoint the current treasurer to the position. Josh asked if there was any questions or comments about this item. There were none.

Article #5- Shall the Town vote to have its property Taxes due on October 3rd, 2022? Josh asked if there were any questions. There were none.

Article #6- Shall the Town authorize the Select Board to set a tax rate to cover expenses as voted? Josh asked if there were any questions. There were none.

Article #7- Shall the Town authorize the Select Board to borrow money in anticipation of taxes? Josh asked if there were any questions. There were none.

Article #8- Shall the Town appropriate \$386,384.84 for ROAD WORK? Josh said that this number includes the budget that was built of \$325,000.00 and also includes the truck payment which in a non-negotiable, so there is no longer a truck payment line item listed. Josh asked if there were any questions. There were none.

Bill Irwin commented in the chatbox: "May we ask questions or make comments during this?" And then unmuted and said that it would be useful if people knew that they could ask questions. Josh said that he had said that anyone with a question to please put it in the chat box and we'll go through it and unmute their microphone to speak. Brenda Churchill commented in the chatbox: "Yes. Just to reiterate what Josh said, please jump in to ask a question!"

Article #9- Shall the Town appropriate \$10,000.00 for a Paving/Grant Fund (Matching funds for Grants)? Josh said that this line item had been on the ballot as long as he could remember. This is a matching grant fund for Paving grants. Josh asked if there were any questions or comments? There were none.

Article #10- Shall the Town appropriate \$10,000.00 for BRIDGE REPAIR FUND? Josh said that this is also a matching grant fund. Josh asked if there were any questions. There were none.

Article #11- Shall the Town appropriate \$281,080.00 to defray the GENERAL EXPENSES of the Town? Josh asked if there were any questions or comments. Josh said that this number is up this year because it includes the Dispatching expense, which is also a non-negotiable and is usually on its own line item, but

we have rolled it into the General Fund. Josh said that seeing no questions, we would move to the next item.

Article #12- Shall the Town appropriate #19,000.00 for an outside audit for the year ending 2022? Josh said that they had looked back through the Select board minutes from 2007 and there was never a motion that was voted on regarding how often to have an outside audit. And down the road, if we had to deal with FEMA, FEMA has requested that we have regular external audits. Josh said that years ago, it was brought up and discussed about having an external audit about every 7 years, but nothing had been warned and voted on, so nothing was binding. Bill Irwin commented in the chatbox; "Don't we do outside audits already? If not, who audits? The elected auditors?" The board said that we do only inside audits conducted by the auditors that we elect or appoint. They said that there were three inside audits done this year because we had three treasurers through this year. Linda McCall commented in the chatbox: "I think some of the 3 audits were done in 2021." Tami said that all three audits were for the year 2021. An inside audit is done whenever there is a change in position, as well as once a year. The Town has had no outside audits since 2007.

Article #13- Shall the Town appropriate \$15,000.00 to the EQUIPMENT FUND? Josh asked if there were any questions or comments. There were none.

Article #14- Shall the Town appropriate \$25,600.00 for EQUIPMENT REPAIRS? Lance said that by the vote of the Select board last year, we determined that \$35,000.00 in the Equipment Repair Fund would be adequate to cover the costs of equipment repairs that were not covered under warranty and that we only need to ask for the amount needed to bring the fund back up to a beginning balance of \$35,000.00 each year. This year we spent \$25,600.00 on Equipment repairs so that is the amount that we need to recoup. Josh asked if there were any questions or comments. There were none.

Article #15- Shall the Town appropriate \$35,000.00 for the H.P. Brigham Library for 2023? Josh asked if there were any questions, comments or concerns on that one. There were none.

Article #16- Shall the Town authorize surplus funds in the amount of \$1861.74 from H.F. Brigham Free Public Library's 2021 operating fund, to be transferred to the Library's Improvement Fund? Mark Doremus asked in the chatbox: "How much money is in the Library Fund. Vera said in the chatbox: "It should be in the Town Report on page 50." Lance said that in the Town Report it says that there is \$5327.19 in the Library Improvement Fund. Josh asked for questions or comments. There were none.

Josh said that if anyone feels the need to speak, to post the question and unmute yourself to speak.

Article #17- Shall the Town appropriate \$10,000.00 for the Maple Grove Cemetery? Josh asked if there were any questions, comments or concerns. There were none.

Bill Irwin commented in the chatbox: "Sorry, not related to the current warrant item. I read the ballot was available on 2/20/2022. Where is it posted? Will it be online? I did not see it on the Town Website." The board said that the ballot was warned in the Town Report. Bill said that he wanted to see a copy of the actual ballot so he could see who was running for the officer positions. Tami said that there was a sample ballot posted in the Town Clerk's office.

Article #18- Shall the Town appropriate \$5000.00 for the Bakersfield Historical Society? Linda McCall said that the Historical Society was asking for \$5000.00, which was half of what it asked for last year. She said that the Historical Society did a major reconstruction this last year and the structural engineers recommended that we add a back gable to the project which added \$45,000.00, and we had to borrow the money. Linda said that the Historical Society hopes the town will support us in this. We do this to support the town and preserve its history and building for future generations.

Article #19- Shall the Town appropriate the following sums of money:

- a. \$2,776.00 for the Franklin County Home Health?
- b. \$1,400.30 for Northwest Vermont Solid Waste District?
- c. \$200.00 for the Franklin County Industrial Development Corp?
- d. \$1,500.00 for Age Well?
- e. \$1,426.00 for the Northwest Regional Planning Commission?
- f. \$600.00 for the Missisquoi River Basin Association?
- g. \$500.00 for the American Red Cross?
- h. \$100.00 for Green Up Vermont?
- i. \$2000.00 for the Fairfield Community Center?
- j. \$100.00 for VT Rural Fire Protection Task Force?
- k. \$95.00 for Vermont Center for Independent Living?
- l. \$600.00 for Northwestern Counseling?
- m. \$1000.00 for the Lucas James Williams Memorial Youth Fund Ltd.?
- n. \$500.00 for Cat Crusaders of Franklin County, Inc?

Josh asked if there were any questions or comments on those items?

Paul Stanley spoke on behalf of the Missisquoi River Basin Association. He said that they are continuing to do restoration and to improve Stream banks and improve water quality. They have educational programs in schools. Paul said that he is still Vice President of the Group. He said the group has been nursing some trees up at Brian Westcom's. He said that they lost some trees and are weed whacking some and hoping that they come along. He said that the Missisquoi River Basin Association report is on page 41 of the Town Report.

Linda Stanley spoke on behalf of the Fairfield Community Center. She said that the Center had some new volunteers. Linda said that 40% of the meals go to people in Bakersfield as well as 20% of the visits. She said that the Center prepared 3000 meals in 2021. She said that although the Fairfield Community Center information did not make it into the Town Report, it is a worthy cause.

Mary Schwartz asked in the chatbox: "Who or What are the Cat Crusaders?" Josh said that Cat Crusaders are a small group of people that go around to local farms and abandoned buildings, humanely trapping stray cats and then spaying and vetting them and fostering them and finding them homes. They work to reduce the stray and feral cats in the community. They also provide a neutering service as well and are based out of Enosburg.

Josh asked if Rosalie would like to speak to the Lucas James Memorial Fund. Rosalie said that the Lucas James Fund is a 501C3 community-based program for youth. She said they began in May 1999, providing free services to children in Franklin County such as: Fishing Derby, Firearm Safety, Food, Summer Day Camps which average between 100-150. She said that they distribute about 10-15,000 lbs. of donated food a month. She said that they are asking for \$1000.00 this year because they have not been able to hold their regular fund raisers due to COVID. She said they serve kids from all over and they also do things for adults and for seniors. Rosalie said that a lot of people don't know that we exist. She said that they have never asked for funding before. She said we wanted to show the community what we could do simply on donations. She said we now have a 40x100 ft. pavilion that can be used for meetings, weddings, etc. And the Lucas James memorial has a permanent home. Rosalie said they started with a tent, an extension cord, and a gas grill. Rosalie said if anyone had any questions, that she is open to answering them.

Josh asked if there were comments, questions, or concerns about any of the budget items covered here tonight.

Bill Irwin said that he would put in a plug for the NWRPC. He said that this state does not have county governments and that instead we have regional planning commissions. They work on a variety of projects...planning, roads, energy. They focus on good clean water for inland ponds and lakes and Lake Champlain. They also are working for affordable housing. Bill said that it is really difficult for young people to be able to get home with the prices of homes being so high.

Bill asked the Select Board to share what is happening with Brigham Academy. He said there were a lot of interested parties that would like to hear what is going on. Lance said that we have been given a \$45,000.00 grant that provides money for professional people to do a feasibility study. He said that they plan to construct 20+ elderly housing units in the Brigham Academy. Lance said the

feasibility studies will be available at the Town Hall on Town Meeting Day. Lance said that the Brigham Residence group planned on having question and answer sessions hopefully when the COVID situation gets better. He said that those working on the project are Kathy Lavoie, Patrick Shell, Paul Dryer the architect, and Heidi (?). Lance said that things are progressing. He said that the Fire Dept should be contacted by the Civil Engineer about septic systems. He said they were thinking about doing test pits in May. He said that they had planned to test last October but things got held up. Lance said that anyone interested in learning more could contact him personally and if he didn't know the answers that he would find out and get answers for them. Bill said that as part of the Fire Dept, it would be wonderful if we could all join together to make something memorable. Lance said that at the informational meetings they will be soliciting public opinion.

Euin commented in the chatbox: "There are several usual items missing from the warning: authorization for Brigham Library trustees to spend the funds they are granted by the town (and by grants); and fees for dispatching, for example. Please explain." Josh explained that they had touched on dispatching fees, that as a non-negotiable, they have been rolled into the General Fund and not listed as a separate item. And that by voting in the library trustees, you are giving them authority to use funds, so that request was redundant, and we removed it. Euin asked if they were going to elect a new moderator, and she said that she was not running. Josh said that item number one on the Town Meeting Warning was to elect a moderator. Lance asked Euin if she said that she was not running. Euin said that she was not running because of upcoming surgeries and past surgeries that have made it hard for her to handle managing a meeting. Lance Thanked Euin for serving and said that she will be missed. Euin said that she would still be at the meetings, raising her hand.

Bill said that he wanted to agree with Lance and thank Euin and he appreciated anyone who serves the Town. He said that he hoped that there were plans for the 4th of July this year and that he was hoping that we can celebrate and bring us out of all this. Josh said that the Fire Dept plays a major leading role in what happens at the 4th of July celebration. He said that for the last 4 years, they have been the leaders of what's going on since the Special Concerns committee is not as involved as they used to be. He said that the town is financially responsible for the Fireworks. Bill said that he would take it to their business meeting next Tuesday and get back to you about what our membership thinks can be done safely in 2022. Josh said thank you and that they really appreciate the open door and working relationship with the Fire Dept. Paul Stanley asked if the funds were still available for the Fire Works. Lance said that the funds were appropriated and have been held and are available.

Paul Stanley asked about the status of the Zoning Administrator. Josh said that we have a zoning administrator. Brenda Churchill filled in for a short time

after the previous Zoning Administrator and then became permanent when the Select Board appointed her to the position last August. Brenda said that we had to jump right on it as there was a lot of work. She said that they advertised on VLCT and the paper, in fact she believes the ad is still on the VLCT website and needs to be taken down. She said that she volunteered for a couple of weeks and then we made it more permanent. Brenda asked Paul if he was interested in the position and Paul said Oh noooo!

Josh asked if there were any other questions and there were none.

Josh said that the next Regular Select Board meeting was scheduled for Monday, February 28th, the night before Town Meeting. He said that meeting may be an abridged meeting with limited items on the agenda and that will be in the warning.

Josh asked if there were any other questions and there were none.

Josh thanked everyone for attending and he said that he hoped everyone can come out to vote next Tuesday.

The meeting ended at 7:52pm.

Meeting minutes recorded by Tami Brennan.