

Bakersfield Regular Select Board Meeting
February 13, 2023
7:00pm

Meeting was called to order by Josh Goss at 7:00pm.

Members present: Joss Goss (chair), Lance Lawyer, John West, Brenda Churchill, Terri Gates

Members absent: none

Residents/Guests attending: Vera Lawyer, Gary and Alice Foote, Linda McCall, Dan Forand, Alex Barkley, Mac Newitt, Rosalie Williams, Rachel Santos, Tami Brennan, Joyous, James Gregoire

John made the motion to accept the Jan 23rd minutes and the February 6th minutes, with the corrections already made in the minutes posted, Brenda seconded the motion and the motion carried with a vote of 5-0.

Warrants signed:

Road Commissioner's order #3-2023	\$3,239.81
Selectmen's order #ARPA 1-2023	\$954.08
Selectmen's order #4-2023	\$99,130.58
Road Commissioner's order #6&7-2023	\$15,425.40

Finances- Vera gave the board numerous reports. The board said that the most important budget report are the ones for Road and Town that state what we had budgeted, what we have spent and the balance remaining. Vera said that she is working on everything, making corrections on spreadsheets and formulas. She said that we won't have the results of the external audit in time to add it to the Town Report. She said that she has been having some issues with QuickBooks and needs to set it up differently. She said we have been paying for a payroll service that we are not actually using. She said that we put in all the figures as Kathy does the warrants and puts in the social security and taxes. Vera said that putting it in manually is not a problem. Lance said that there has been no update for last 700 days. Vera said it is about how the data is entered to pay liabilities. She said it hasn't been done right since Abby. Vera said that there are liabilities that say they haven't been paid and she knows that they have been paid and she doesn't know how to fix that. Vera said that she was going to try some things with the library and set it up as manual instead of payroll and see how it goes. John said to call QB support and have them walk you through. Vera said that they will only talk to Abby since it has never been changed since Abby. John said we need to get that updated. He said that maybe we can use Kathy as someone they can talk to because she is more of a constant or Vera. John said that it has to be the administrator. John said we have to call QB and have a conversation so we can get that converted over and get it set up correctly.

Josh confirmed with Vera that the amount for the Fire Dept contract was listed as the correct amount of \$83,814.00, on the budget paper. Vera said that she has been updating reports and dating them so that she keeps track of the most

current, and she will check to make sure that is the correct number on what she has.

Brenda said that she went to the bank regarding signature cards. She said they are preparing 13 new cards for us to sign. She said that she needs to bring the letter from the Select Board accepting the resignation of Maria. Vera said they are picky about that. Vera said that she left a message for Kerry Flieger to get Vera's name added on the library so that she can sign checks for them. John had questions regarding the library figures on the report and Vera said she hasn't connected with the library to update those yet.

John questioned a reimbursement for the road and was told it was a clothing reimbursement. Vera said she would move that number to the clothing allotment line item. Vera asked the board if they would like sheets that show the receipts on them as well as the spreadsheets that show the total to date, and Josh said that would be great.

Mac confirmed to Josh that the state aid is received quarterly.

Josh checked with the visitors attending as to what they wanted to talk about or if they were just observing and Linda McCall said that they were here for an ARPA update and a Brigham update listed under board business.

Rachel Santos spoke to the board with an update on the speeding issue on RT 108, through the village. She said that she reached out to Lieutenant Hardin with the State Police. She said that he was very informative and told her that the SP are no longer offering contracts anymore because they are so short staffed. He suggested speaking with the Franklin County Sheriff's department. She said that she spoke to Ernie with the Department of Transportation. He said Enforcement, Enforcement, Enforcement! She asked about signage like Slow Down, School Zone. He said that 30mph is kind of a miracle. He said 25 is pretty much impossible. He said someone must have worked very hard to get it as low as 30. The board said that was Linda McCall. Rachel said that the signage and crosswalk would have to come out of the Town's pocket.

Rachel said she spoke to Tom Desaro, the town manager in Enosburg and he said that they found a flashing crosswalk sign has helped and been more efficient at lowering speeds. The board said it might not help down at Rachel's end of town. She said that her husband has already been clipped pulling out of their driveway and they had an incident of road rage right in front of their house. Rachel said she hasn't had a chance to reach out to James Gregoire. Lance said that he also had a discussion with Lt. Hardin, and he recommended that we attempt to contact the Sheriff's dept and try to band together with neighboring towns to see if they can afford a joint contract.

Tami said that they recently had a domestic incident on the porch of the Town Hall during business hours. She said that Matt Sullivan, chief of police in Swanton was heading to work and heard the commotion and came over. He was out there for over an hour and called the State Police and they still didn't come. Without a contract of some kind, no one is coming.

Linda suggested that we put a sign with a flashing report of the speed traveled by the oncoming car. Josh said that Gary helped install the sign by TD bank in Enosburg and said that it worked for about one week and then it became more of a game to see how fast they could get it to flash. Rachel said that signs might make people feel better and she would love to see signs go up, but they all keep saying Enforcement, Enforcement, Enforcement. Lance said that he has had the discussion with the police that it amounts to protection money. Tami said some of this might stem from the shortage due to the defund the police experiment. Lance said this was much older than that. They have been having this argument with the police for decades.

Josh asked Tami to invite James Gregoire to the next Select Board meeting. Josh told Tami to get Rachel's contact information so she can inform her when James is coming so she can attend that meeting as well.

Lance said that after his discussion with Hardin, they did have a trooper here at the Fire Station for a morning. Josh asked if that was Officer Paquette parking there when he was visiting his mother. He said even that has some effect. Lance said the Lt. Hardin offered to be a resource if we had any questions.

Terri said that somebody was parked by the Y, and they flashed a badge. She said that she called the State Police to see if they had any undercover thing going on and they said no, it wasn't them. She told them that they had flashed a badge and they came right up. Whoever it was hasn't been back since.

Josh said that maybe we should have James Gregoire, Lt Hartin, and the sheriff come to the same meeting.

The board said they should look into a sharing a contract with another town. They don't believe that Fairfield has a contract. Lance said with the contract that we tried to get the town to pass a few years ago, we were getting a few hours a week and he thought it was around \$38,000.00. Rachel said that she knows that the town has been dealing with this in the past. Lance said that we've been trying and anything that Rachel can come up with that might work, she had the board's support 100%.

Tami asked if it was just James Gregoire to invite to the next meeting. Josh said yes, at this point and if he tells us we should talk to the sheriff, we will invite the sheriff and make sure that James can come to the same meeting when the sheriff is here and remind him that he serves Bakersfield as well.

Roads- Mac said that so far, the roads were holding up and showed no signs of work needed at the moment. He said the sap trucks were running. Josh said that he talked to Cold Hollow, and they are going to go along 108 instead of traveling the full length of King Rd. Alice asked if the sap haulers abuse the roads, does the town have anyway to charge them to use our roads. Josh said they looked into that, and the State of Vermont shut that down pretty quick. He said agriculture is top priority in this state. He said that the sap haulers in this town have been willing to help fix any damage done for the most part. Mac said that the chipper trucks are on the roads as well.

Mac said that they were contacted by FEMA and told that they are off by \$59.49 and asked if they wanted to refile some forms or forfeit that amount. Our FEMA numbers came to \$173,459.94 and FEMA's numbers came to \$173,400.43. Mac and Lance and Tyler Billingsly have submitted the same forms over and over and it is very frustrating. The board said tell them not to pay us the \$59.49.

Terri said that there is a tree that came down across from the town garage that is just lying there on the side of the road, and it just looks awful. Mac said that it is in the Town ROW, and they would get to it. He said there are a lot of trees down that they are working on.

Treasurer position- Tami told the board that she had waited to publish the ad in the papers until the board has furthered its discussion thinking that she might have more information to put in the ad. The board said that they had no more information to put in the ad and approved the ad, as written, to be placed in the Messenger, the Courier, the VLCT website, both Bakersfield Community pages on Facebook and Front Porch Forum, notifying people that the town is accepting Cover letters and Resumes for the open Treasurer position. Tami said that would be sent into the papers tomorrow. The board discussed inquiring to other towns to see if they had a treasurer in a part time position that might even be using the same system and would like to add Bakersfield to their worktime as well. Tami said she thought most of the treasurers around us are using the NEMRC system and that's really expensive. John said that he looked into that, and it was super expensive at around \$10,000.00/year for the programs and support. The board said even someone familiar with QuickBooks is good. Terri said that a lot of towns have the Town Clerk and the treasurer as the same person.

The board discussed pay for the new treasurer. Terry said we should keep it at the approved amount of \$18,500.00 that we have budgeted and have that be the scale as to whether they have experience or not. Josh said that it is a hired position now, so we don't have to limit it to a Bakersfield Resident. Lance said that he just wanted to have it noted that the person who is working for us as treasurer now, who has stepped in this second time to save us from disaster, is currently receiving a salary from us that is less than what she was making when she retired years ago, which was \$20,000.00. John said that Vera had asked to receive the treasurer's salary that the board had budgeted for this year.

John said that he thought the treasurer's position should receive an hourly wage. Josh said the problem with that is that the first year it will take them more hours while learning the job and then the second year when they are more experienced and can do the job in less time, they will make less. He said he guarantees that not a soul is going to stay in that case. He said if we pay the way that you want to pay, it gives no incentive to become more efficient and improve. With a salary position, you have an incentive to improve. He said if we hire someone with no experience, then we can start with a lower salary. The

board tabled the discussion until they see who applies for the position and the experience that they bring.

ARPA and Grant writing- Brenda said that she has scheduled an ARPA meeting for February 28th at 6:00pm. She said that they would review what has already been put in for proposals and go forward with anything new. She said that she plans on having one meeting a month until we have everything figured out. Josh asked John to send him the proposal that he is working on for the town as there are adjustments to be made.

Brenda introduced Alex Barkley who attended the meeting via zoom, as a possible grant writer to do some work for the town in writing grants to receive additional funds to leverage what we have. Alex said that he has 10 years of experience writing grants for non-profits. He said that he worked writing grants for a community center that had a budget of 3.2 million and that they were successful at meeting that budget with the aid of grants. He said that he still works as a consultant for a few contractors and would like to put his experience to good use. He said that Brenda asked him to put a proposal together and this proposal has been handed out to the board tonight via Brenda. Brenda asked Alex to talk about follow through with the grant process as well since there is a lot of maintenance to grants. She asked Alex to give them the knowledge of the follow through. Alex said that would be part of the contract. That once we were successful and got an award, that when the terms of the agreement came in, that he would provide that in a written summary or he could sit down with the Select Board or the person that will be administering the monies to make sure that they understand what needs to happen in terms of compliance in spending the money and all those details. Brenda said she had additional information that Alex had sent her that she had not had time to print off for tonight but that she would email that to the board members. Alex said he did about ½ hour to an hour of research, and he came up with 5 opportunities that he quickly came up with, which he said is most likely the tip of the iceberg. He said there have been words of possibly more ARPA money coming through.

He also found Vermont Community Development Program that covers public facilities which could include Town Hall, school, library, even housing and public services and handicap accessibility modifications to be looked into; FEMA grants for assistance to Firefighters and could possibly help with needed equipment and help in replacing an old truck; The Natural Trust for Historic Preservation which has the Johanna Fabro fund with a smaller grant of up to \$15,000.00 for buildings that meet the Historic criteria; also the Vermont Community Foundation which has a grant right now called Equitable and Inclusive Communities for doing some planning to make towns and cities more accessible and equitable for people of color, etc.

Brenda said that the Brigham Project has some things underway so Alex could touch base with Lance on get the information on that so that nothing is duplicated. Terri said that maybe the Johanna Fabro grant could help the Historical Society building. Tami said that she thought the problem with the

Historical Society is that they aren't eligible to receive grants because they have a loan. Alex said that may vary by the funder and that he would have to take that into consideration. Brenda said that we could cover some the cost of grant writing from our ARPA funds. She said it would come out of our pocket but go back into our pocket. Linda said that 3 years ago the town voted to hire a grant writer. Josh said that we put it in the budget for that year and we got one applicant that never responded beyond the initial contact. He said that was put in the general fund that year, but he doesn't think it has been put in since. Alice said that this is not a new idea. Josh said that they have been wanting this for a while, but they haven't had the right applicant.

Josh said that they received an email from the state saying that they have extended the option to hold a remote town meeting if we wanted. He said we have already decided to hold an in-person town meeting and that's our plan.

Lance had a Brigham Project Update. He said that in the next couple of weeks we are at the point of requesting the reimbursement of the \$45,000.00 grant to pay Paul Dreher of Dreher Design for his services thus far. Lance said there is progress and some serious interest of a party that is exploring possibilities. He said this is the time to research and begin as ARPA and State money designated to expand housing is higher than ever. He also said that now is the time because of the failing infrastructure and of the structure itself. Linda said the cost of taking it down safely will cost at least \$100,000.00 dollars and that would all be on the taxpayers. Lance agreed. He said that if decide not to preserve it, all those who are willing to help and support us will not help but turn their backs on us, as well as the older generation of Bakersfield. He said that the Town of Bakersfield has lost out on opportunities to receive grants because we don't have a grant writer. He said we do need a grant writer. He said I'm not saying that it has to be this gentleman, but we do need a grant writer. Linda said that Regional Planning has grant writers too. She said we pay the Regional Planning Commission funds every year. Lance said that we receive a lot of benefits from Regional Planning that more than covers what we pay.

John said that we need to call for a repair for the furnace in the Town Hall that heats the meeting room downstairs in the back. He said he turned it on for this meeting and it made a ton of noise and kicked off. He reset it and tried again, and it did the same thing....so no heat for the meeting tonight. He said we may need to replace it sooner rather than later.

James Gregoire joined the meeting via zoom at the end of the meeting and told the board to always feel free to invite him to a meeting to discuss any concerns or issues. Lance said that his predecessor didn't need an invitation, that he showed up pretty regularly, but that he's not passing judgement. James said that if they didn't have anything to discuss then just dropping in might not be the best use of time. James said he's happy to come and said we'll get a plan

for attending. Josh invited him to the next Regular Select board meeting on February 27th to discuss the lack of patrol of Route 108 by the State police or the Sheriff's dept or any other entity at all in the Town of Bakersfield. Lance also added the lack of State Statutes on 4-wheelers and lack of enforcement there as well. James asked if we had our roads open to 4-wheelers and Josh said they are open to those who purchase a Bakersfield sticker to use the roads, and they are only open from May to the end of October. James said that they have been talking about more rules for law enforcement agencies about enforcement. James said whenever they have a concern or even if an individual has a concern, he is always open for a call.

Terri asked him for a run down on what he has been working on. James said that he is on the Human Services committee, and they have been working on the childcare issue; older Vermonter issues; insurance; and family leave are big items and take a lot of time. He said they are beginning the budget process and dealing with the Child Development division, also what we do and do not agree with in the governor's budget in according to the Budget Adjustment Act. He said the childcare issue takes a lot of time and they are at the early stages. He said that he would put something together for you. Terri asked if there is a reimbursement for those paying for childcare and James said not at this time. He said that currently the homebased childcare usually gets left out. James said that he will relate anything that he hears and take it to Montpelier.

Brenda made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Terri and carried with a vote of 5-0.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30pm. Meeting minutes recorded by Tami Brennan.