

Bakersfield Regular Select Board Meeting
Monday, January 23, 2023
7:00pm

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

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

Members absent: none

Guest/Residents attending: Mac Newitt, Alice Foote, Amber Foote, Nicky Cribb, Sue Sonski, Paul Stanley, Dan Forand, Deanna Robitaille, Tod Cosgrove, Pat Evans, Linda McCall, Sharon Evans, Mark Doremus

Previous Minutes- John made the motion to approve the previous minutes from the Select Board meetings of January 9, 2023, and January 16, 2023, as written. The motion was seconded by Lance and the motion carried with a vote of 5-0.

Warrants signed:

Selectman's order #2-2023	\$5,176.40
Road Commissioner's order #3+4-2023	\$28,255.14
Road Commissioner's order #2-2023	\$1,651.40

Sue Sonski and Deanna Robitaille met with the board via zoom regarding the Town Reappraisal. Josh asked Deanna for a list of Appraisers and instructions on how to get on the list to have a Town Reappraisal done. Deanna said that she gave Sue a list of approved appraisers and contract managers. She said that there were not a lot of options in Northern Vermont. She said many towns are needing reappraisals and the state expects to send out 100 new appraisal orders this July. Deanna said that appraisers are stretched pretty thin. She told the board that they wouldn't be able to get an appraiser for a few years, so they would be looking at 2025 or 2026, which could give them more time to build up the money needed. Josh asked for a ballpark figure. Deanna said that a couple years ago, appraisers were charging around \$120.00/parcel and for some reason, right now they are charging closer to \$100.00/parcel. She's not sure why that is but to lock in with a company now would be good. Sue said we have around 700 parcels which puts us up around \$70,000.00. Deanna said to make sure to add between 10-15% to your lister budget that year because there is a lot of legwork for the listers during a reappraisal. She said the next step to getting on the list is to send out a "fishing" letter with a copy of the town's 411 and see who comes to the table. She said if you get more than one offer, aim for someone in the middle, and look for the one who will work best with your listers. She said it may not be the cheapest, but you will end up with the best product. She told the board to reach out to her at any time. Deanna asked if the board had any questions about the articles that the listers were asking to go on the warning. The board said that all three articles would go onto the warning. Josh asked if the \$15,000.00 request from the Grand List surplus still an accurate number and Sue said that she wasn't sure what the

amount was that was left in there so instead of a specific amount, the article will read “remaining funds” instead of a specific amount.

Paul Stanley met with the board regarding the Fourth of July. He said the Fire Dept is willing to move forward with the same format as last year. He said there would be no parade. He said that they have worked out a budget. He said they would need \$4000.00 for Fireworks this year. Paul said that they ran a little short last year, but Larry and Derek Krygier were willing to put in some money. He said to expect to pay \$350.00 for the sound system. Paul said they expected to need two regular port-o-lets, at \$135.00/each, and one handicap port-o-let for \$160.00, to handle the crowd, which would total \$430.00. That way we wouldn't be bothering the Historical Society and the Church with using their bathrooms. Lance agreed that the Historical Society and the Church septic were not adequate to handle that much use. Paul said that he emailed Dave Stetson and the Rusty Bucket, and he said that he was pretty certain that they would be willing to play. Paul thought that maybe the Cold Hollow Community Collective wanted to sell burgers again and the Church was willing to do their thing again this year. John said that he didn't know what the Cold Hollow Collective was going to do. He said they were having a meeting in February and would discuss it.

Paul said no parade unless somebody wants to step up and arrange everything. He said they would need to get permits for the road from the state, and he has copies of previous permits to help someone fill out the forms, and that takes a lot of work. They would need to get people to be in the parade and arrange all that. Paul said that the Fire Dept could work in the traffic control at the event, they will have a guy with a radio and a roadblock, but putting it all together, he said, we just don't have the people. The time of day would be 6:00pm. They need to decide on a date, since July 4 is a Tuesday this year.

Josh asked that if a subcommittee of people who were disappointed that there was not a parade last year, wanted to step up, the Fire Dept would work with them. Paul said yes, but that they would need a commitment by March or April. Paul thought that maybe Town meeting would be a good time to ask that question.

The board discussed raising the budgeted amount for port-o-lets from \$150, for the single port-o-let on the town park for the summer, to \$600.00 to cover the extra port-o-lets for the 4th of July. Lance made the motion to raise the budgeted amount, John seconded the motion, and the motion passed by a vote of 5-0. Terri said it would cost \$5000.00 for the 4th of July weekend. Josh said that the cost of this event has been brought up a couple of times this year. Paul said we passed the hat last year and we got \$200.00. John said the collective made about \$800.00 but that he thought \$200.00 of that was donated by Euin Bear who won the 50/50 raffle. John said that a cotton candy machine would make a good fundraiser, and a popcorn machine. Lance said the school owns two popcorn machines. Someone said they could check with Franklin County Sugar makers about a cotton candy machine. John said the nice thing about selling food is that you can get a good deal donated.

Hannaford's is good about donating food and maybe the Fire Dept could do the condiments.

Paul said what if we let the voters decide. Josh said we can put it on as a separate line item as an article on the warning. Lance said that is what we've always done. The reason we didn't last year is because we had the money approved and set aside before Covid and then didn't have any celebration for two years. The board decided to put the article on the warning to put before the town. Shall the town approve the sum of \$5,000.00 toward the 4th of July celebration. If yes, we'll have the 4th of July celebration, If no, then everyone can go enjoy the fireworks in St. Albans. The board decided to have the celebration on Saturday, July 1st, if it does get approved.

Nicky met with the board on behalf of the library. She presented an updated library budget to the board with an increase of \$10,555.00, after having been level funded for the last 4 years. Nicky said that the increase is in salaries, antivirus software with a quote of \$1500.00, and they plan on increasing their programs and partnering with the After School Program, and then also an increase in utilities and their accounting went up from \$700.00 to \$1200.00/year. Nicky said that currently the library hours open total 31 hours/week and the librarian works an additional 2 hours of administrative work, such as writing grants and developing programs. She said that Terri was right and she was able to get their post office box free since they are a municipality. She said they were reducing the amount to purchase books because the librarian is confident that she can get some grants to increase our collection. Nicky said they reduced the amount spent on periodicals based on what is being read, and reduced money for conferences and mileage. She said their budget is pretty lean where it's at. Nicky said there was a question regarding the carry over and they have since sleuthed it out. She said there was a carryover of \$10,718.07 from 2021 and they have been trying to figure out why. She said the librarian at the time is no longer there and they have little info. They are suspecting that since the library returned \$15,000.00 to the town the previous year, at the end of 2020, because the library was closed due to COVID and nobody got paid, that the carryover from 2021 was more of the same, since during 2021, Covid was still with us and effecting the library services. The library wants that amount to be rolled over into our improvement fund that we originally started to save for a new furnace, so they can use it to replace the floor, along with the left-over balance from 2022 operating fund, of \$1,277.11. Nicky said presently, they have \$7,188.00 in there now. Lance said that the board needs to see that breakdown of funds in the future, itemized into cash on hand, improvement fund, and operating balance. John asked Nicky how many computers they had for antivirus needs and Nicky said they had 3 computers, 2 laptops and a PC. John said that the \$1500.00 is an astronomical quote. He said that you can get a good business anti-virus for \$3.00/month with a cloud option. John will email Nicky the information. Nicky said the library floors are asbestos and are stable with the coating glue that is on them, so you don't want to disturb that, but something must go

down when the carpet is peeled away. The glue is no longer holding it in place and the carpet is easily lifted. Nicky said that the library had not over budgeted for 2020 and 2021 but Covid had shut down the library in 2020, so the library gave back \$15,000.00 to the town, and Covid was still affecting services in 2021, and that left funds as well, that the library would like to put into their improvement fund to go towards repairing the floor. They also need a new front door and are saving for a new furnace.

Pat Evans met with the board on behalf of the Conservation Committee. They are proposing to submit an article asking the town for \$500.00. They said they have not previously asked the town for any money but have received all their money from grants. Pat said that they do have some uses for this money. He said they spent at least that amount last year trying to get a pollinator garden going. Pat said that they would like to develop and improve the Shattock Mtn Trail and the Town Park trail, and one of the ambitions of the committee is for Bakersfield to have a town forest. They would like to have an operating budget and be able to set up a fund to preserve Bakersfield Land. He said this year, it is mostly for gardens, but they have memberships coming up. Alice said that they have never gotten money from the town, that it has all come from grants, etc. She said that it would be convenient for making trail signs and placing a bench. Pat presented the article as worded to the board. Shall the town authorize the sum of \$500.00 to be paid to the Bakersfield Conservation Commission, for expenses: pollinator plants, trail signs, association membership, kiosk repair, fencing, etc.?

Roads- Mac said that the roads are not muddy or icy at present, they are just waiting for the next snowstorm. Josh asked if they place a little more sand in front of the Trihorn Shop as that is where he turns his bus around and it's pretty slippery. Terri said that she found the sinkhole on King Rd, where the water comes down and washes out the road. She asked if the crew could put a stick or a cone with ribbon marking off the edges of it on the road so nobody drives into it.

Mac updated the board on the school generator service. He said the fuel lines were sucking air and the fuel that was in there was like jelly because it was so old. He said it needed more fuel, and they got it running. Josh asked if there was a place that they could record when it was serviced each time according to the service plan. A place to sign that showed verification of startup, like a schedule sheet as part of the procedure. John said it should be started biweekly. Josh asked that if the power at the school failed, would the generator automatically start, and Mac said that he didn't think that it would. Terri said that it needs to be set to kick on each week and run for 20 minutes and then automatically switch back over. It used to do that as a weekly test. Mac said that the switch has had no maintenance done on it for the auto start/auto switchover. The board said that the maintaining the switch is the school's responsibility. Mac said that the fuel gauge is shot.

Mac said that the wing push arm on Truck #2 busted and needed a new carbide blade which usually lasts 3-4 years. He said Rick came up and worked on the loader that had something to do with a seal on the back of the motor. The board asked about Kings Hill Rd and Mac said that Dan goes up there every day after his regular route and puts sand on it.

Linda McCall asked about getting signs placed on Rt 108 and Route 36 to warn drivers of a school bus stop ahead. Josh said that the town has no authority to put signs on 108 and 36 because they are state roads and not town roads, so the town can't do anything.

Linda said that Shane Lumbrá looked at some trees in the cemetery that need to be taken down, some that he said were in the Town Right-of-Way. He said one was close to electric wires and GMP might want to take that one down. Linda said that the line goes right through the branches. Terri said that GMP had come up before to look at one and said no. Linda said this one has been dropping a lot of limbs and has a GMP line through the branches. Josh said he doesn't want any of our guys touching any of the trees that have a line in it that might come down. He said that he saw one line that came down once and blew a hole in the ground the size of a Volkswagen beetle. Terri said she would send John Richards up here tomorrow to take a look at it.

The board went through the items to be warned for Town Meeting. They noted town officers that are normally voted by Australian ballot and other town positions that are to be voted off the floor. Josh told Linda McCall that the board needed the paperwork to show that the Bakersfield Garden Club is an approved non-profit organization, by the meeting on Wednesday night in order to have their article on the ballot. Josh said if they have the paperwork, he has no problem putting the article on the ballot, if not then he would have them wait until next year. Linda said that sounds good.

The board confirmed that the cemetery is asking for \$15,000.00 this year and Linda said, yes. She said that a little over \$10,000.00 for mowing and they need to be able to pay for tree removal, pruning and maintenance.

The board went through various request from entities within the town;

Maple Grove Cemetery- \$15,000.00.

Historical Society- \$10,000.00

Bakersfield Conservation Commission \$500.00

Lister's articles to be added as worded-

1. Shall the voters of the Town of Bakersfield authorize the Select Board to establish a reserve fund for a town-wide reappraisal in accordance with 25 V.S.A. 2804?
2. Shall the Town authorize remaining funds to be transferred from the Grand List to the Reappraisal Fund?

3. Shall the Town appropriate an additional \$10,000.00 to the Reappraisal Fund?

The board also went through the letters requesting funds for various organizations:

Missisquoi River Basin Association- \$600.00 which is the same as last year.

Home Health Agency-\$2776.00 which is the same as last year.

Lucas Memorial Foundation- \$1000.00 which is the same as last year.

Green Up Vermont- \$100.00 which is the same as last year and based on population.

Vermont Center for Independent Living- supports the disabled- asking for \$95.00.

Franklin City Industrial Develop Corp- \$200.00 which is the same as last year.

Northwest Counseling- \$600.00 which is the same as last year.

Fairfield Community Center- asking for \$4000.00.

NWSWD- \$1,400.30. Last year they requested \$1527.60 which based on cost per capita.

Red Cross- \$500.00 which is the same as last year.

Cat Crusaders- \$500.00 which is the same as last year.

NWRPC- \$1477.00. Last year they requested \$1426.00.

Vermont Rural Fire Protection Task Force- \$100.00.

Laurie's House against Violence- \$1000.00. Brenda requested that the board add Laurie's House to those organizations that are put before the voters. She said that having been the victim of domestic abuse this last year, that this is important.

The board is to receive the final library budget and the article for the rollover request of library funds at the Wednesday meeting.

Tami to warn an Emergency Budgetary Meeting for Wednesday at 5:15pm.

The board discussed wording for the article that allows the town to choose whether or not to vote on the budget by Australian ballot beginning in 2024 and then perpetually. Josh said he is neither for nor against Australian ballot. He said it has been asked for and argued against. He said it was voted down a long time ago. He said that we went through Covid and had to use Australian ballot for the last two years. The board pointed out that at present, when the budget is voted from the floor, there is a chance to discuss the budget and adjust it and then vote on it. One of the downfalls of Australian ballot is that it either yes or no and no discussion and if it gets voted down, then it's back to the drawing board and we would have to set up a whole new warning and polling day, which costs money.

There wouldn't really be a Town Meeting anymore, there would be informational meetings before the day of the vote and Town Meeting Day would just be a polling day.

The board said that there is also the option to move Town Meeting Day to a Saturday so more people can attend. A lot of people don't get town meeting day off anymore and Saturday could make more people able to attend.

Lance said that he has a meeting face to face with Kathy Lavoie this coming Wednesday regarding the Brigham Residence. Linda said that there are Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization grants and Brigham Residence is on the National Register of Historic Places. Preservation Trust is working with Kathy Lavoie. Linda said this year would be a good year to get the clock's face fixed.

John asked the board for permission up to a \$1000.00 limit, to purchase a computer and switchboard for the recording of the meetings. He said that Northwest Access will no longer be recording out meetings for us because they deem our system able to do so. John said that the present computer that we are using keeps glitching and failing to record. This would come out of the ARPA funds because that is one of the primary designated uses for that money and the requirement for zoom access and some recording is being talked about as being permanent.

Josh made the motion to allow John to spend up to \$1000.00 on a switch and computer to operate and record public meetings, using his expert technical knowledge. Lance seconded the motion and the motion passed with a vote of 5-0.

John said that he has put together some of the town proposals for applying for ARPA funds according to ARPA instructions on how to submit. Josh said he wants to see and revisit their proposal before submission.

John made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Brenda seconded it, and the motion carried with a vote of 5-0.

The meeting adjourned at 10:15pm.

Meeting minutes recorded by Tami Brennan.