

Bakersfield Select Board Special Budget Meeting  
Wednesday, January 17, 2024  
6:00pm

Meeting was called to order at 6:08pm by Josh Goss.

Members present: Josh Goss (chair), Lance Lawyer, John West, Terri Gates, Todd Cosgrove

Members absent:

Residents/Guests attending: Vera Lawyer, Paul Stanley, Tami Brennan

Josh explained that this meeting was to continue constructing the budget. Vera gave the board a report with End of Year Balances, and an updated Finance Report, and Vera and the board went through some line items together.

**Town Meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 5, 2024.** The Board must schedule and hold an informational meeting within 10 days prior to the Town Meeting.

-Pagers- The three pagers for the road crew cost about \$625.00/year. The board said if Mac decides to retire this year, there is talk about having a Road Commissioner learning the ropes. The Road Commissioner and Road Foreman would not have to be the same person. Some towns have a Select Board member be the Road Commissioner.

-Simple IRA- Vera told the board they needed to budget \$600.00 for this category as there will be one employee that will participate in this.

-Court tax- Vera said we haven't received their invoice yet. It was \$12,500 last year. She said it's based on a per capita charge. The board budgeted \$13,000.00 for Court tax 2024.

-Direct Tax previous year- Vera said that \$5,000.00 should be enough. She said she always prints off the most current sheet for the school but there is always a difference when they send it to us and there is always some we have to pay.

-Unemployment- This is around \$136.00/quarter.

-VLCT Property and Casualty/Workman's Comp and a credit- Vera said the bills for these three all come together and are paid together. All added together, they came to \$25,500.00. Vera said she doesn't know where the credit comes from, and that Maria tried to get an answer about that and was unable to get an answer. There is a Worker's cost adjustment after they do their audit. Depending on what your job description is, the amount charged is different. We pay more for someone on the Road Crew than someone working at a desk. The board said they didn't want to assume any credits that were not guaranteed. The board budgeted \$31,000.00 for 2024.

-School Generator Maintenance- The board budgeted \$2,500.00 for this line item. Lance said there shouldn't be any regular expenses that would come up to \$2,500.00 but the generator has been there awhile. The board was asked

who determined that the school would be open as a shelter. Lance said that was one of the conditions required by the state in the grant and is written in the contract. He said the Emergency Coordinator determines when it can be opened. The town owned the school at that time. Josh said that in an emergency, we are allowed to use the school during the day. That is why there is a locked door from the gym to the rest of the school. They can't stop us from using it. Todd said that our Emergency Coordinator declares when it's an emergency. The school takes second place. John said when you have children in there it raises issues. Josh said it's a public building. John said it's a public building that is under lock down all day. Terri said we've had two storms back-to-back without power and we have had people who were cold. If we are paying upkeep the generator, then we should be able to use it. Terri asked why we can't move the generator. Todd said that Andrew Nichols is the Emergency Coordinator and also works for the State. He said that Andrew said that he would put his name down on the paper as long as he gets help from the whole dept. The trouble is that when there is an emergency situation, Andrew would be called out. Todd said that the Supervisory Union wouldn't give the Fire Dept. permission to put wires across the green to reach the Fire Station. The board said that we need to have our emergency plan updated and operational.

-Library Expense- operating cost for 2023 was \$53,635.70. The library is requesting \$49,485.70. for 2025. This amount is not budgeted, this is voted off the floor.

-Town Common Electricity- the board budgeted \$2,000.00 to upgrade the electric service on the town common and \$500.00 for electricity itself.

-Water- 2024 budget amount of \$180.00.

Paul Stanley spoke with the board to add two items to be included on the town warning.

- 1) Shall the Town vote to exempt Bakersfield Fire Volunteer Fire Department from property tax located at 181 Main Street North?
- 2) Shall the Town appropriate \$4,000.00 for Fireworks for annual Fourth of July celebration needs?

The board said that they included \$4,000.00 for the fireworks in the budget, and the \$650.00 for the port-o-lets. Paul said that 4,000.00 should be enough for the fireworks. He said that Larry throws in money for the Fireworks to help cover some of the expense.

The board later removed this line item from the budget and decided to put it on the ballot as a separate vote.

Missisquoi River Basin Association- budget request is \$650.00 for 2024. This is voted off the floor.

Terri said that she wondered what the Fire Dept would think of a skating rink on the land next to the Fire Station. Josh said that we need a skating rink. Paul said that it would be better to have it in front of Brigham to be covered by the town insurance instead of the Fire Dept. Terri said that is what she can't

stand about this town is that it is always worried about the liability. She said she bets that we could get a million-dollar insurance policy for a small amount of money.

Paul said that Linda wanted him to ask if the Brigham Academy meeting had been rescheduled. Lance said that the meeting has not been scheduled yet. He said if nothing else, Lance will do a short presentation at Town Meeting.

Paul asked the board if he should contact Dave Stetson about having his sound system for Town Meeting. This will be around \$300.00. The board yes, that they have budgeted \$750.00 for PA System for Town Meeting and Fourth of July.

Paul gave the board a request from Franklin County Field Days for \$5,000.00. He said that they need to find another piece of land in which to hold the Field Days. Paul said that he would like to put a plug in for Franklin County Field Days. He said that he really hopes that they can shift things and find some land. He said that beyond the tractor pulls, etc., what the Franklin County Field Days does to show off agriculture in Franklin County is huge. He said he knows that we're going to get a lot of static about the amount requested, but that Maple and Dairy are huge agricultural staples in Franklin County, and they are highlighted at Field Days. Paul said when we look at the kids that have gone through, a lot have stuck with it. Josh said that the biggest push is that \$5,000.00 is a big chunk of money and the general public sees drugs and alcohol at the Field Days.

Terri asked Paul if they ever have had Field Days without the Beer Tent. She asked if he knew how much Field Days actually made from the Beer Tent. Paul said they get a percentage, but he doesn't know how much that comes to.

-Equipment Repair Fund- The Equipment Fund is intended to be budgeted to bring the balance of this fund up to \$30,000.00 to cover repairs through the year, the Equipment Funds balance is at \$2,800.00, so the budgeted amount will be 27,300.00 for 2024.

-Historical Society is asking for \$5,000.00 and this item will be voted from the floor.

Another line item that Sue Sonski had told the board that needed to be added to the warning.

-Shall the voters exempt Fairfield Fire District #1 Water and Reservoir Building from property taxes under 32 V.S.A. 3832 paragraph 1 for a period of five years starting April 1, 2024?

The board tallied up the budget and said we have to cut some. Todd said the fixed contracts have all gone up. Terri said that the budget items that we can control are nothing. It's all the things we can't control. Everything is going up. Terri asked if we needed the Bridge account. Lance said that Goat Path bridge cost \$90,000.00 just to take out. It was \$600,000.00 to put the bridge back in.

Lance said that our bridge fund is only for matching grants. Brian Westcom said that Pender's bridge is going to go sometime as it is way overdue. He said they knew that bridge was going to need it back when he was on the board, and it never got done. And there is another one on Witchcat. Brian said that bridges are something you'll probably never get a handle on. He said that you can't take out the Bridge fund because if a bridge goes out and you need to replace it so people can get to their homes, you'll need something.

Lance said that the State of Vermont still owes us \$55,000.00, FEMA \$15,000.00, and the State another \$20,000.00. Lance said that he doesn't know how long this will take to get paid. He said he doesn't dare to take this off the budget this year in case it doesn't come. Lance thought it would be good that if we receive it, that the money be held and placed in a separate account to take off the 2025 budget.

The board took a vote as to whether they would include the \$5,000.00 for Franklin County Field Days be included on the warning. The board voted 5-0 to not include this item on the warning.

Requests from outside entities:

-Franklin County Senior Center-request for \$1,000.00...the board voted, 5-0, not to include this item on the warning.

-Franklin County Home Health-request for \$2,776.00...The board voted 4-1 to include this item.

-Northwest Vermont Solid Waste District- request for \$1,655.00...the board voted 5-0 to include this item.

-Franklin County Industrial Development Corp- request for \$200.00...the board voted 5-0 to include this item.

-Northwest Regional Planning Commission- request for \$1,521.00, this is a charge per capita....the board voted 5-0 to include this item.

-Missisquoi River Basin Association- request \$600.00...the board voted 5-0 to include this item.

-American Red Cross- request for \$500.00...the board voted 5-0 to include this item.

-VT Rural Fire Protection Task Force- request for \$100.00...the board voted 5-0 to include this item.

-Lucas James Williams Memorial Youth Fund Ltd- request for \$1,000.00....the board voted 5-0 to include this item.

-Cat Crusaders of Franklin County, Inc.- request for \$500.00...the board voted 5-0 to include this item.

-Laurie's House for St. Albans- request for \$1,500.00...Terri made the motion to change the donation amount to \$1,000.00, motion was seconded by John and motion carried with a vote of 5-0. The board voted 5-0 to include this item.

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

Meeting adjourned at 9:29pm.

Meeting minutes recorded by Tami Brennan.