

SELECTBOARD >

2021-02-27

**TOWN OF MANCHESTER, VERMONT  
SELECTBOARD MINUTES**

Received  
& Filed  
MAR 24 2021  
*Quita J. Sheldon, cmc*  
Manchester Town Clerk *cmc*

**BOARD ATTENDEES:** IVAN BEATTIE (CHAIR), WAYNE BELL (VICE-CHAIR), GREG CUTLER, TODD NEBRASKA, and JAN NOLAN. ABSENT: NONE.

**TOWN STAFF:** JOHN O'KEEFE (TOWN MANAGER), MICHAEL DECUBELLIS, ERIC SEVERANCE, JACQUELINE LEWICKI, BRIAN VAN HORN, BRIAN VOGEL, JANET HURLEY, PATRICK OWENS, KATHLEEN YANEZ, CHRIS TOWSLEE, JAMIE GREENE, BILL BEIDEMAN, MICHAEL NAWRATH, ANITA SHELDON

**PUBLIC ATTENDEES:** BRIAN BENSON, FRANK KROPA, SHARRON KROPA, REPRESENTATIVE KATHLEEN JAMES, REPRESENTATIVE SETH BONGARTZ, WAYNE BELL, ANNE CORSO, ELIZABETH EDDY, CYNTHIA KILBURN, DOUG KILBURN, J. VIOLET GANNON, BOB STANNARD, ALISON HILL, KIT CHAMBERLAIN, KATHE DILLMANN, KELLIE MORRISON, BILL, CATHY, SEAN-MARIE, WES STANNARD, RON MANCINI, ROBIN VERNER, AMY VERNER, BECKY NAWRATH, GREG SUKIENNIK, SUSAN MCMANUS, JOHN BURNHAM, KATE O., JOHN CLARK, LISA HESS, NANCY WOLF, RUTH HOFFMAN, VICTORIA SILSBY, MARK LACHAC, RICHARD HEILEMANN, KRISTIN WILLIAMS, LENORA VOLKMER, ASHLEY HESS, E. SALA, FRANK KROPA, JON, KARALYN MARK, ANDY WHITE, KAREN PREISSLER, KATY MCNABB, STEVEN NICHOLS, LESLIE, MARIE FERRARIN, MARK & MARY, MARY BETH HAND, MARYBETH O'DONNELL, MAY STANNARD, MICHAEL, PAUL W. CARROCCIO, ROBERT POST, TOMRA VECERE, WILLIAM, JACKI BAKER, JON, MEG HANSEN, DAVE CITRON, FRAN, PETE WEBSTER, ANDREW MCKEEVER, CHRIS ROSE, ORLAND CAMPBELL, MICHELLE MEEUWIS, ANTHONY S. HOYT, CLARK FRENCH, DARREN MARCY, DAVE QUESNEL, GABRIELA TORRES, KATHERINE AND OTHERS.

BEATTIE CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 1:02 P.M.

**PRESENTATION OF AWARDS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Beattie provided introductory remarks. Nolan read the Town Report dedication honoring Dr. Thomas Sterling who served as the Town's COVID-19 point person and also serves as the Town's Deputy Health Office along with other local healthcare workers. Nolan also recognized Wayne Bell for his extensive service to the community.

**REVIEW OF THE TOWN REPORT**

Beattie acknowledged Mary Grimmig and town staff for their efforts compiling the Town Report. Representative Kathleen James and Representative Seth Bongartz provided a brief legislative update.

**REVIEW OF ARTICLES TO BE VOTED ON TUESDAY, MARCH 2, 2021 BETWEEN 8:00 A.M. AND 7:00 P.M. AT MANCHESTER TOWN HALL (40 JEFF WILLIAMS WAY MANCHESTER CENTER, VERMONT 05255)**

Beattie turned the meeting over to Moderator W. Michael Nawrath. Moderator Nawrath read the warning.

**ARTICLE 1. Shall the Town vote to appropriate \$5,979,211 to defray the operating and capital expenses of the Town for the ensuing year, of which \$3,318,311 shall be raised by property taxes and \$2,660,900 by non-property tax revenues (including \$1,170,000 in local option tax revenues); provided, that in the event that local option revenues are less than \$1,170,000, funds from the Property Tax Relief Reserve Fund may be used to offset the deficit?**

Beattie discussed the budget and corresponding pages in the Town Report, highlighting a decrease in every department other than the Fire Department, and a decrease of \$18,000 in payroll. Manchester enjoyed one of the lowest tax rates in the State of Vermont with only Woodford, Stratton, Rutland Town, Landgrove and Peru having lower tax rates than Manchester in Bennington County. Kathleen James and Beattie confirmed legislative funds within the budget were for the local legislative body, not State Representatives. Steven Nichols, Doug Kilburn, Brian Vogel, Beattie and O'Keefe discussed numerous questions posed by Nichols including an overview of the courthouse, the possibility of a forensic audit and sewer funding. Beattie confirmed tax dollars do not fund the sewer department and a forensic audit wasn't necessary as an outside agency completes the Town's audit. Brian Benson, Beattie and Ron Mancini spoke regarding who pays local option tax in Manchester. Nichols, O'Keefe and Beattie discussed the slight 3.75% increase in the budget. Beattie asked for support on Tuesday.

**ARTICLE 2. Shall the Town vote to charge the maximum interest and penalty allowed by law on overdue unpaid real property taxes, with payments delivered in person at Town Hall, or by U.S. Mail (must be postmarked by the due date), due in two installments, as follows:**

**1st Installment: Friday, September 3, 2021 at 4:30 p.m.: 45% of the town taxes and 60% of the school taxes; and, 2nd Installment: Friday, February 4, 2022 at 4:30 p.m.: 55% of the town taxes and 40% of the school taxes?**

Brian Vogel, Steven Nichols and O'Keefe discussed the tax due date and the inability to accept credit cards for tax payments.

**ARTICLE 3. Shall the Town vote to authorize the Selectboard to enter into an agreement for the lease/purchase of a fire truck funded by the Fire Department Equipment Reserve Fund and not to exceed \$400,000, plus interest and fees, and financed over not more than seven years?**

Greg Cutler explained that the article would allow for the replacement of Tanker 9. Fire Chief Chris Towslee stated tanker 9 should have been removed from service three years ago as it is non-compliant and urged for support.

**ARTICLE 4. Shall the Town vote to support entering into an agreement with the Old Railroad Bed, LLC to purchase parcel 11-20-59.01 and improvements that include a trail at a future date, contingent upon obtaining funding for the purchase and improvements, permitting, easements and the Town Meeting votes necessary to purchase the parcel; and to pursue federal, state and other grant monies to support the purchase and development of the trail as a public asset; and to support establishing a subaccount in the recreation fund to solicit and accept donations for the purchase and development of the parcel and trail? (Advisory, non-binding)**

Chamberlain introduced the article. Brian Benson, Steven Nichols, Bill Drunsic, Victoria Silsby, Kathe Dillmann, Beattie, Chamberlain and O'Keefe discussed the reasonable \$5,000 annual upkeep costs. The cost of the trail would be \$200,000 with an \$80,000 donation coming from a bicycle group in Manchester. O'Keefe clarified the purchase of the land would be added to a future Australian ballot vote unless public funds were not used for the purchase of the property.

**ARTICLE 5. Shall general obligation bonds or notes of the Town of Manchester in an amount not to exceed One Million, One Hundred Thousand Dollars [\$1,100,000], subject to reduction from available state and federal grants-in-aid [estimated to be Two Hundred Seventy-Five Thousand Dollars (\$275,000)] be issued for the purpose of financing the cost of making public water system supply, transmission and distribution improvements, including replacement of the Barnumville Road Water Main, the estimated cost of such improvements being One Million, One Hundred Thousand Dollars [\$1,100,000]?**

Doug Kilburn stated that the Town estimates \$275,000 in state and federal grants to reduce the burden on taxpayers. Beattie, O'Keefe, Steven Nichols, Karen Preissler and Bill Drunic discussed the potential 25% subsidy with the remaining balance paid through a low interest, 30 year loan from the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund. \$825,000 would come from water department funds, with annual payments approximately \$46,000 per year. The bond would most likely be held by the State instead of the U.S. Bank.

**ARTICLE 6. Shall the Town vote to appropriate \$50,000 to the Manchester Business Association to support marketing activities related to the Town and Village of Manchester in Fiscal Year 2022; and other functions associated with visitor and tourist services, as approved by the Selectboard; provided, that any funds authorized under this Article shall require an equal non-town match?**

O'Keefe, Nebraska, Paul Carroccio, John Burnham, Brian Benson and Bill Drunic discussed the Manchester Business Association and how funds may be used by the MBA after meeting the non-Town match required by the Selectboard agreement. Burnham urged for support.

**ARTICLE 7. Shall the Town vote to authorize up to \$20,000 from the Capital Improvement Contingency Reserve (CIRC) Fund to provide an additional match for a grant to construct a splash pad, an aquatic feature located near the Town swimming pool, at the Dana L. Thompson Memorial Park?**

Cutler stated the Town received \$12,500 from the Circus Smirkus fundraising and \$100,000 from state and federal grants. The article would allow for the additional funds to move forward with the project.

**ARTICLE 8. Shall the Town vote to authorize up to \$15,000 from the Capital Improvement Contingency Reserve (CIRC) Fund to provide a match for a grant to construct a crosswalk at the intersection of Bonnet Street and School Street?**

Chamberlain stated the article, if approved, would include new ADA concrete sidewalk landings on both sides of the road, bump outs to create better visibility, signage, road markings and a rectangular rapid-flashing beacon. Hess and O'Keefe discussed additional signage to alert drivers prior to approaching the area.

**ARTICLE 9. Shall the Town vote to authorize up to \$10,000 from the Capital Improvement Contingency Reserve (CIRC) Fund to match private funds raised by Troop 332 Boy Scouts for the construction of a pocket park at the intersection of Depot Street and Center Hill Road, on land owned by Green Mountain Power, and under license to the Town of Manchester?**

Nebraska stated the pocket park would include tree plantings and benches. The purpose of the article would be to authorize up to \$10,000, as the Eagle Scout has raised approximately \$2,700 as of 2/27/21.

**Articles 10 through 23 are under the provisions of 24 V.S.A. § 2691 and § 2692. Shall the Town vote to appropriate general funds to social service agencies?**

**ARTICLE 10. To appropriate \$243,740 to the Manchester Community Library?**

J. Violet Gannon spoke in favor of the Manchester Community Library and urged for support.

**ARTICLE 11. To appropriate \$10,000 to the VNA & Hospice of the Southwest Region?**

Tom Bourgeois provided a brief overview of services available to Manchester residents and urged for support. Brian Vogel asked how the board justified the salary of the CEO. Bourgeois stated it was equivalent to other CEO's due to the size, magnitude and complexity of the agency.

**ARTICLE 12. To appropriate \$4,000 to the Southwestern Vermont Council on Aging?**

Alison Hill referred voters to page 62 of the Town Report, gave an overview of services offered and asked for support.

**ARTICLE 13: To appropriate \$2,500 to the Tutorial Center?**

Sean-Marie Oller provided an overview of services offered to Manchester residents and asked for support.

**ARTICLE 14: To appropriate \$2,400 to Bennington Area Habitat for Humanity?**

Meg Hansen gave an overview of Bennington Area Habitat for Humanity and urged for support of the voters.

**ARTICLE 15: To appropriate \$2,000 to Greater Northshire Access Television?**

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 16: To appropriate \$2,000 to Center for Restorative Justice?**

Wayne Bell referred voters to pages 54 and 55 of the Town Report and asked for support.

**ARTICLE 17: To appropriate \$1,850 to Project Against Violent Encounters?**

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 18: To appropriate \$1,811 to Community Action in Southwestern Vermont?**

Elizabeth Eddy provided an overview of assistance provided to Manchester residents and asked for support.

**ARTICLE 19: To appropriate \$1,500 to Retired Senior Volunteer Program?**

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 20: To appropriate \$1,500 to Neighbor to Neighbor?**

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 21: To appropriate \$1,000 to The Collaborative?**

Victoria Silsby gave an overview of the Collaborative and urged for support.

**ARTICLE 22: To appropriate \$500 to Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired?**

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 23: To appropriate \$420 to Vermont Center for Independent Living?**

No discussion.

**ARTICLE 24. To elect Town Officers for the ensuing year.**

No discussion.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

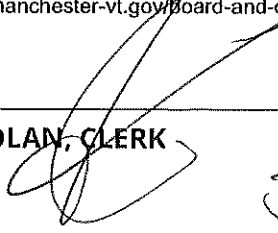
Beattie and Sheldon discussed voting by Australian ballot to be held at Manchester Town Hall on Tuesday, March 2, 2021 between 8:00 A.M. and 7:00 P.M.

**ADJOURNMENT**

*With no further business to come before the board, Chamberlain moved, seconded by Cutler, to adjourn at 4:42 P.M. Motion carried 5-0.*

APPROVED BY: \_\_\_\_\_

JAN NOLAN, CLERK



J. O'Keefe

