

**Town of Sunderland Selectboard Meeting
Tuesday January 9, 2024, 7:00 PM**

Members in Attendance:

Alex Bresnick
Andrew McKeever
Dixie Zens
Marty Nadler
Bruce Mattison

Others in Attendance:

Susan Whitney
Marc Johnston
Rick Timmerman

1. Call to Order by Dixie Zens at 7 pm. Happy New Year!
2. Introduction of Board Members: Marty Nadler, Alex Bresnick, Andrew McKeever, and Bruce Mattison by Chair Dixie Zens. Town Clerk Susan Whitney.
3. Approval of the minutes of December 11th and December 18th, 2023, Selectboard Meetings.
 - Dixie Zens asks for motion to adopt 12/11/23 minutes:

Mover: Bruce Mattison
2nd: Andrew McKeever
Result: Passed
 - Dixie Zens asks for motion to adopt 12/18/23 minutes:

Mover: Andrew McKeever
2nd: Bruce Mattison
Result: Passed
4. Public Comment-none.
5. Discuss, vote and sign, if approved, a Resolution to Apply for Village Center Designation.

- Dixie Zens explains that BCRC asks for a resolution to be signed to apply for Village Center Designation.
- Dixie Zens asks for motion to accept resolution or wait for following meeting?
- Bruce Mattison says he prefers to wait.
- Andrew McKeever asks what happens if they wait?
- Dixie Zens reiterates that this is the application step to move process onto state.
- Andrew McKeever makes a motion to accept resolution for application.

Mover: Andrew McKeever

2nd: Alex Bresnick

Result: Passed, with Bruce Mattison opposed, Marty Nadler abstaining.

6. Update on the Town Hall Hybrid Camera System Installation from Green Mountain Tech

- Susan Whitney said Sam had planned on attending tonights meeting to give an update. Points to copy of proposed work with quote for details.
- Dixie Zens asks for clarification if this is in addition to technology updates in the office? Susan Whitney replies that this is specifically for the conference room for virtual meetings.
- Marty Nadler asks whether funds have been approved, Susan Whitney responds that the funds have been allocated and this is part of the original proposal for technology update, that they just need to decide exactly what they want before it is ordered.
- Alex Bresnick says he would like to talk with the contractor about equipment and needs.
- Dixie Zens says they will ask the contractor to come to the next meeting. Susan Whitney asks if there are any specific questions and concerns on what the proposal currently says, to pass onto the contractor?
- Andrew McKeever asks if equipment and software will be easy to use, for the members of the board to set up for a meeting. Susan Whitney says that she emphasized the need for ease of use in the proposal.
- Dixie Zens says the system that the Town of Arlington uses is run by the board, turned on and off during the meeting by the members.

7. Review Budget items for Fiscal Year 2024-2025

- Marty Nadler asks about a missing line item from Northshire Day School, Susan Whitney says it is because it was already approved. The list they have is for new appropriations that need approval.
- Appropriation request from Martha Canfield Library for \$9,100.
- Appropriation request from Arlington Public Health Service \$1,500.
- Appropriation request from GNAT \$2,000.
- Appropriation request from Arlington Park and Rec \$5,000.
- Dixie Zens asks if there are any questions or problems with approving these funding requests?
- Bruce Mattison asks if this GNAT request is different from requests from the last meeting. Susan Whitney says, yes, it's a separate funding request.
- Dixie Zens asks if all in favor or approving requests?

Result: Passed

- Dixie Zens goes on to list funds that are already approved in budget; Arlington Fire Department \$72,882, increase from last year. Arlington rescue \$26,750, same as last year.
- Bruce Mattison wonders if the fire department request will increase again next year? Susan Whitney says it is about a 10% increase this year, if it goes up again next year then the Selectboard can notify them of making a level funding for the same amount as this year.
- Andrew McKeever asks why there is an increase, is it inflation?
- Marty Nadler asks if funding is proportional to the towns that they serve (Arlington, Sunderland, West Arlington, Sandgate).
- Dixie Zens says fire department's total budget shows that appropriation is based on population. Board discusses the proportion of Sunderland payment compared to other towns. Board wonders if the fire department, board, or town administrator allocates funding.
- Dixie Zens plans to call Arlington Selectboard and discuss funding structure for the fire department.
- Marty Nadler brings up "significant" increase in funding for Sheriff.
- Andrew McKeever asks if the budget could be amended on the floor of Town Meeting, Susan Whitney says that isn't possible as it's on the Australian Ballot up for vote the next day.
- Decision is to leave the Fire Department funding the budget for this year and try to make a change for next year, with Dixie Zens calling board chair tomorrow.
- The increase is mostly going to reserve funding for a new fire truck (~\$15,000). Increase not for operating costs.
- Excess weight permit, Dixie Zens asks for motion for Bruce Mattison to sign it.

Mover: Andrew McKeever

2nd: Marty Nadler

Result: Passed

- To use Sunderland Elementary for Town Meeting, Taconic and Green needs form approval, acknowledging risk of use.

Mover: Bruce Mattison

2nd: Andrew McKeever

Result: Passed

- Andrew McKeever asks Marc Johnston if there are any line items in Highway Department budget that the board should be aware of? Marc Johnston responds that material costs have gone up in cost but they have asks for level funding. Maintenance costs are up a bit because work is harder/materials are more expensive. Reserve funds will include the bridge, guard rails, and road projects for this fiscal year. Next year line painting will double. This year has \$7k surplus, plus \$8k in 2024 budget (paint costs have gone from \$7,500 to \$16,000).
- Andrew McKeever asks how there is a \$15,000 decrease, Susan Whitney and Marc Johnston say that it has to do with eliminating some of the sinking funds for the year.
- Dixie Zens asks for a motion to accept Highway Fund.

Mover: Marty Nadler

2nd: Bruce Mattison

Result: Passed

- Marty Nadler asks about \$2,000 for Cemetery Committee mapping funds, wasn't that paid for by ARPA funds? Susan Whitney says this is for using a drone over the cemetery and is separate.
- The General Fund is increasing from \$413,00 in 2023 to \$427,000 in 2024. Susan Whitney says potentially higher after fund appropriations of outstanding organizations (Happy Days?).
- Alex Bresnick says a lot more money for absentee ballots, Susan Whitney says it is due to postage for voting.
- Susan Whitney says the policy is that organizations don't need signatures from the board if they're asking for level funding.
- Marty Nadler asks if the board wants to maintain the same level of police patrol service for increased costs, or would they consider taking less service for a decrease in funding.
- Alex Bresnick brings up the quality of service they are receiving and has some questions about service provided (generally no warnings, no summons, and paperwork time is included in budget).
- Bruce Mattison says he would like to see the cost lowered to \$30k from \$49 (~\$70/hour, 11-13 hours per month, this does not include emergency response). Alex says the board can choose specific services in patrols, maybe drawing down and specifying use could be considered.
- Dixie Zens reiterates that the town is covered for emergencies no matter what.

- Bruce Mattison says the state police sometimes patrol for speed.
- Alex Bresnick says given how much budget and taxes have been increasing, it is important to look for areas, like law enforcement, that we can comfortably trim. Patrols are routinely on Kansas Rd and there is no change in speeding.
- Conversation about whether 7A is included in contract, or if that is part of State Police patrol.
- Bruce Mattison clarifies potential change in contract to reducing hours (to w/i \$30k/year) and specifying patrol areas, effective July 1st.
- Alex Bresnick asks if they should discuss the budget they want to dedicate toward patrols more specifically, what about \$25k, what about \$35k? Bruce Mattison explains that when the town paid \$28k it was when salary/costs were lower.
- Susan Whitney makes a point that sometimes people call the town office asking for patrols to focus on specific areas, keep in mind how much they cut so that that service is still provided.
- Marty Nadler says if you pay \$25k, that's 6 hours a month @ \$80/hour, 1.5 hours per week. If you pay \$35k, that's 9 hours a month @ \$80/hour.
- Andrew McKeever asks if there is a concern with speeding, what happens if we need to boost patrol? Can there be flexibility in the patrol schedule?
- Alex Bresnick says the patrol logs mostly show speeding management, what percentage of the budget is that, is it worth it?
- Dixie Zens offers up funding at \$35k.
- Susan Whitney says they also do security checks down roads, as well as patrols. Maybe when you write up the contract, invite the sheriff so you can discuss priorities and demands.
- Marty Nadler reiterates that there is very little service for an enormous cost.
- Alex Bresnick asks what they should be doing, that they're not doing, that would be worth the expenditure? He can't think of anything that he wants them to do that is worth more than 10% of the budget.
- Andrew McKeever asks about emergency capacity, the board responds that the State Police and Sheriff are required to respond no matter what.
- Marty Nadler makes the point that when they sign the contract in July it could always be for less than the amount they pass now, it just can't be for more.
- Bruce Mattison makes a motion to change from \$49k to \$35k funding toward Sheriff patrol contract.
- Alex Bresnick asks if everyone likes \$35k? Dixie Zens says to step down a bit and then negotiate with them, as Marty Nadler recommended.
- Alex Bresnick says that there isn't anything else that he sees a need for from the Sheriffs. Marty Nadler asks if they want more speed enforcement?
- Bruce Mattison asks Alex Bresnick if he would like to end Sherriff contract entirely? Alex Bresnick says the utility they provide for the town could be more useful beyond just patrolling (e.g. summons, responding to emergencies), he would like to radically different service than is being given, like welfare checks in storms, providing real value to the town for the cost.
- Alex Bresnick favors a budget to get specific utility at will, but not enough for patrol routine.

- Bruce Mattison says that can be discussed in writing the contract.
- Andrew McKeever says lets pass the \$35k and when the contract discussion comes up the final amount can change.
- Susan Whitney says there is a possibility to specify patrols in areas of “bad behavior”, when illicit activities are happening or disposal of illicit waste.
- Resident makes a point that discussing this at Town Meeting would be useful as some folks might want to know details about reduction.
- Dixie Zens repeats motion to reduce funding of law enforcement from \$49k to \$35k.

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Mover: Bruce Mattison

2nd: Marty Nadler

Result: Passed

- Susan Whitney says the Hazardous Waste numbers are based on last year (\$1,823 in 2023), but she hasn't heard the updated 2024 amount. Imputed \$2,000 as a guess for this year.
 - Bruce Mattison states that between landfill, solid waste, and hazardous waste the budget is about \$18,500.
 - Dixie Zens will follow up on Hazardous Waste for 2024 cost.
 - Bruce Mattison asks who gets funding, Casella? Susan Whitney says funding goes to BCRC and they manage county waste.
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- Susan Whitney says Bennington County court budget is increasing, she implemented a guess on the new budget.
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- A new payroll tax starting in Jull, a Vermont Child Care Tax. \$420 for general fund. As well as additional amounts in Highway and Cemetery Funds. Marty Nadler explains that it is to help families pay for childcare, providing money to approved care facilities for scholarships for affordable tuition.
 - Bruce Mattison asks if school tax covers that, Marty Nadler responds that no, that is just for MEMS. 10 hours/week per child at approved facilities.
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- Bruce Mattison asks Susan Whitney what the training funds are for this year, she responds \$500 and that there is usually surplus as VCLT trainings are inexpensive. He wonders if it should be higher. Susan Whitney recommends offering reimbursements with proof of successful completion so they don't have to do the work of getting money back for trainings not completed.
 - Dixie Zens asks for a motion to increase the training budget? But says level funding should be sufficient. Board decides to level fund.
 - Dixie Zens asks for motion to accept the general budget, with the reduction in law enforcement from \$49k to 35k.

Mover: Alex Bresnick

2nd: Andrew McKeever

Result: Passed

8. ARPA Funds

- Sunday Jan 14th, 7pm is the first meeting.
- Agenda is on the website.
- Bruce Mattison asks how ideas will be processed, can a list of ideas be sent out to residents to choose their top ideas?
- Marty Nadler says the meetings are open to the public, part of the group's process will be to go through the ideas, remove some, and then rank list the ideas.
- Alex Bresnick says a list of actionable ideas, partially fleshed out, will be brought to the select board for discussion.
- Marty Nadler says the cost can then be researched after selectboard makes some final choices.
- Bruce Mattison asks if it should be included in the Town Meeting? Marty Nadler says they may not have a list ready by then. He doesn't think it should be just a five panel decision since it's about \$300/person funding.
- Dixie Zens says Leagues of Cities and Towns has a draft resolution to put funds into general and highway funds before March 31, to create a sinking reserve fund.
- Susan Whitney says they can add it to the ballot saying these anticipated funds will be added to reserve fund as "revenue replacement", once there, then it loses its federal character and is not beholden to those regulations.
- Board agrees that this is a smart idea to take pressure off quick decision making for specific ideas. This could be voted on at the next meeting to give time for a Warning to be put out before voting day. Board agrees to pursue this avenue.

9. Road Liaison Report

- Bruce Mattison reports that the highway department has been out doing tree work, plowing, and maintenance.

10. Energy Committee

- Zoom meeting Wednesday Jan 10, link on website.

11. BCRC, SWIP- none.

12. Old Business-

– 1. Review "Welcome to Sunderland" Signage

- Input from elementary school, need to discuss the award for winner.

- Winner chosen through rank choice via email. Consensus not made.
- Dixie Zens made a certificate of participation/appreciation for all contestants.
- Need to discuss with the Planning Board re: ideas and process.
- Marty Nadler says his neighbor is offering to make a sign at cost.
- Alex Bresnick asks if the award is a framed picture of final rendering as a keepsake for the winner with a letter of thanks signed by the board.
- Marty Nadler and Alex Bresnick offer the cover bridge as the closest rendering that represents the town of Sunderland.
- Andrew McKeever says to consider what rendering will cost.
- Marty Nadler asks if the covered bridge is a representative idea that everyone can agree on. Without pictures the board decides to make a final decision at the next meeting.

- 2. Winners and awards for Sunderland Elementary Village Sign participants.
- 3. ATV Winter Access on Kelly Stand Rd

13. New Business-

- Andrew McKeever discusses a community visit to Sunderland in spring of 2025, but a cancellation by another town allows for spring of 2024.
- Bruce Mattison asks what the visit consists of?
- Andrew McKeever says it's a community dinner, a mailing, and a discussion about the future of town.
- Susan Whitney says this year will be a busy year with voting etc, so 2025 might be a better option.
- Alex Bresnick says the point of community visit to discuss use of ARPA funds, etc.
- Andrew McKeever says he is excited and eager but maybe pushing it off to 2025 for more planning is strategic.
- Susan Whitney asks if there are expenses, Andrew McKeever says likely \$1,000-\$2,000 for the town. Mailing would be completed by BCBR but the town would likely be involved.
- Alex Brenick asks about being responsible for a dinner, which would be five figures?
- Susan Whitney says if it's in spring of 2025, the costs should be included in the budget to be passed this year.

- Andrew McKeever discusses 250th anniversary, a march of Green Mountain Boys in May or June of 2025.
- Meeting of state commission on anniversary at Arlington Library on Feb 21st, please join!

14. Review of Correspondence/Signing of Warrants-

15. Executive session, if needed.

- Dixie Zens asks for motion to move into Executive Session

Mover: Bruce Mattison
 2nd: Alex Bresnick
 Result: Passed

- Alex Bresnick moves to exit executive session

Mover: Alex Bresnick
 2nd: Bruce Mattison
 Result: Passed

- Alex Bresnick moves to raise minimum wage of Town of Sunderland to \$20/hour, increase hourly wage of the Lister Chair to \$30/hour, increase the annual pay of Town Clerk to \$21,630, and annual pay of the Town Treasurer \$16,225.

Mover: Alex Bresnick
 2nd: Marty Nadler
 Result: Passed

- Dixie Zens asks for a motion to decline hearing on dog bite matter because it lacks jurisdiction.

Mover: Bruce Mattison
 2nd: Alex Bresnick
 Result: Passed

16. Next Regular Business Meeting for the Sunderland Selectboard will be January 22, 2024

17. Adjourn-