

Town of Sunderland Selectboard Meeting
Monday January 22, 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
Todd Lawrence
Mike Perra
Rick Goddard
Tammie Reilly
Sam Woods (Green Mtn. Smart Tech)

1. Call to Order by Dixie Zens at 7 pm.

2. Introduction of Board Members: Marty Nadler, Alex Bresnick, Andrew McKeever, and Bruce Mattison by Chair Dixie Zens. Guests Susan Whitney, town clerk and Marc Johnston, road foreman.

3. Approval of the minutes of January 9th, Selectboard Meeting
 - Dixie Zens asks for motion to adopt 1/9/24 minutes:

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

4. Public Comment

- Todd Lawrence shares concern about cutting the police budget. Concern is that the proposal is a substantial cut back, and with increasing crime in state (references 2022 police crime report), feels that cutting the police budget without it being on the ballot isn't fair for citizens in town. References notes from previous meeting that cite discussions on budget cuts to be based on speeding and traffic

management and he believes that is subjective. That a lot of time patrols are a deterrent, that he worries about response time without those patrols.

- Dixie Zens says that Alex Bresnick and Marty Nadler have looked into police logs extensively.
 - Alex Bresnick says that he reviews logs, that deputies report their hours and actions taken (shares patrol logs from 12/9-12/31 for \$2,800 with audience). He says Marty and himself were surprised at what their patrols were reporting and felt that they weren't getting their money's worth.
 - Todd Lawrence asks if there is a possibility of discussing patrol responsibilities in the contract instead of cutting the budget and risking safety.
 - Alex Bresnick says he raised that question, what is it that the town wants from them, can they specify that in contract?
 - Marty Nadler says they will have to discuss with the Sheriff's office and see if particulars can be implemented in the Sheriff office patrol schedule.
 - Dixie Zens says he believes patrolling and speed traps have been in the middle of the day where mornings and evenings are probably the time that actually need to be managed.
 - Feedback welcomed from public (areas of concern)?
 - Resident shares an example of how he used to be able to call the office and ask for specific coverage or response, which isn't the case anymore. He says it's not worth it if patrols aren't specific to the town's needs.
 - Alex Bresnick cites the rising taxes, and that this is an area of easy management.
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- Resident brings up ARPA meetings, his concern if that committee is trying to narrow down projects, and that Selectboard gets final say on approved projects. But town residents should have more say because few people are attending special committee meeting. Recommends town meeting or ballot questions.
 - Dixie Zens says he was hopeful that more people would show up for meetings, despite warnings and advertising, residents still aren't attending.
 - Alex Bresnick says that they've also had discussions and special opportunities at selectboard meetings, so residents' ideas can be heard, and that they've been continually trying to find ways to drive engagement.
 - Resident asks how many registered voters are in the town of Sunderland?
 - Susan Whitney responds 850.
 - Resident asks how many attend Town Meeting?
 - All respond about 50, resident responds that if people wanted to give input, they would attend.

- Resident says he comes to special ARPA meetings when he is available and he says that committee talked about energy survey of residents, in addition to ARPA survey.
- Marty Nadler says it's under discussion and in development, to be sent out in conjunction with an energy survey, but it's not finalized.
- Alex Bresnick says a strong draft exists, with specific categories of expense (e.g. infrastructure, recreation)
- Bruce Mattison brings up what resident said about town meeting, that if more residents come to town meeting, maybe they should go to Australian ballot with informational meeting, so that all residents can access the process.
- Bruce Mattison responds to the police comment, saying that the town used to have a speed monitor that got smashed, but that maybe that would be a solution. Todd Lawrence says he thinks that would qualify for ARPA funding.

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

- Dixie Zens introduces Sam Woods, technician that has been working on technology update as well as working on hybrid camera system being installed for live selectboard and planning board meetings.
- Sam Woods says that the proposal (RFP) that the town put out was for a system that could broadcast via zoom or other live platform. The system he recommended is a small camera system that connects to zoom or other live platform, on a laptop, and then recurring meetings can be scheduled and a link can be put on the website for live broadcasts of meetings.
- Dixie Zens asks if he has preferences between zoom and microsoft.
- Sam says zoom is predominant and what most people are used to. It is a matter of preference and the camera is a live cam that connects directly to the computer, ideally mounting in a strategic location in the room, and then starts at the beginning of the meeting.
- Dixie Zens asks if it's just one camera, Sam Wood responds that based on RFP, he would suspect only one camera is needed, it's a wide field view, and will capture the board and majority of the audience. Camera can also be rotated with "joystick" keypad. This is the most low cost, effective solution.
- Dixie Zens asks if a microphone is built in. Sam Wood responds that yes, and if the camera mics aren't sufficient they can get additional ones, like GNAT uses.
- Alex Bresnick asks if the best spot for camera is in the back of the room.
- Sam Wood responds that he isn't sure yet, that the RFP mentioned using a Monitor as well, maybe for media presentations. Some of the other towns have display of what camera is seeing while it's happening (Manchester, VT does this)

- Alex Bresnick says the ability for residents or absent selectboard members to be able to call in would be a nice feature.
- Sam Wood says in conversation with Susan Whitney, they discussed the benefit of a side wall so that the board and audience aren't having to turn around to see the monitor.
- Alex Brsnick asks about putting it on a rolling display. Sam Woods says an AV cart is possible, but not included with quote. He says the difference in cost between cart and wall mount are basically the same and so that can be decided.
- Dixie Zens mentioned the one in Arlington, that it isn't ideal for viewing tv and board members.
- Alex Bresnick says that an AV cart would be useful for moving it out of the space during voting day, etc.
- Bruce Mattison says Zoning Admin has a lot of use for it, too.
- Marty Nadler asks about if cart and wall mount allow for different heights, some carts are adjustable. Camera system is designed for a large conference room so hopefully the whole audience is captured.
- Resident asks about the cost of zoom. Sam Wood says zoom is free for up to 40 minute meetings and then there are subscriptions.
- Alex Bresnicks asks if they have a membership. Susan Whitney says it's been canceled.
- Resident asks if the monitor would allow documents to be shared. Alex Bresnick says that through screen share they could share agenda, special documents, etc.
- Andrew McKeever asks about ease of use, so that selectboard can just turn it on, start the program, and it runsd itself. Or will someone need to be monitoring the camera and audio.
- Sam Wood says that the camera is meant to be easy to use, you should be able to open up computer and turn camera on, and with recurring meetings scheduled you can just start meeting. The only challenge might be moderation of guest speakers.
- Further discussion about making public meetings, with or without passwords, could limit people trying to cause disruption.
- Dixie Zens asks if you could shut someone off who might be on and being inappropriate. Alex Bresnick adds that the board could mute everyone, except presenters.
- Bruce Mattison asks about ability to move it to school for town meeting.
- Dixie Zens asks about putting monitor on cart. Sam Wood adds the plan would be to mount camera onto monitor.
- Resident, Tammie Reilly of GNAT, brings up how GNAT is working with all towns to provide government transparency and archiving. Wants to ensure that they are

part of the discussion as the board moves forward with hybrid meeting install, to ensure that recordings are easy and accessible for people.

- Alex Bresnick says that when making request for budget allocation from GNAT, a question had come up about whether GNAT would be able to do what board is trying to do, or if they can take a different role to avoid duplication, would GNAT want to change how they are involved?
- Tammie Reilly says their role is changing but the most important thing is that they remain an independent third party organization, to ensure that there is always record of meetings.
- Alex Bresnick asks if GNAT would be willing to host a feed that the board is recording.
- Tammie Reilly says that it makes sense to stream and archive the hybrid meeting, that once the system is up and running. GNAT can come in and do some testing and figure out how to coordinate their work.
- Dixie Zens says their help is welcome. Would she envision still recording live while their zoom meeting is being streamed. She says that it depends on technology and staffing.
- Sam Wood asks if GNAT would be able to broadcast footage from camera currently recording to zoom? Tammie Reilly says yes she thinks so.
- Sam Wood says if that is the case then eliminate installation of new camera and just use the live footage already being recorded to broadcast through zoom and monitor.
- Tammie Reilly says she suggests that they try both ways so that they can better assess what works. She highly recommends a mobile unit for the tv. And that audio is critical.
- Dixie Zens says a goal is to record more than just the selectboard meetings.
- Tammie Reilly says that if they install the camera then GNAT could broadcast all the meetings, as well as advertisement and promotion which would help with engagement. She recommends using the school monthly newsletter to advertise meetings, if school is willing.
- Bruce Mattison says that works well with folks with school aged children, but will still miss folks who don't.
- Alex Bresnick says one thing he likes about the hybrid system is that it lets people who don't want to come be at a meeting in person, they can still communicate by typing in the chat.
- Tammie Reilly says they will definitely need someone to moderate the zoom.
- Sam Wood asks for clarification of next steps.
- Alex Bresnick says using a cart instead of wall mount, an additional audio feed for the desk, and the camera and computer stated in the RFP.

6. Finalize Budget items for Fiscal Year 2024-2025

- Dixie Zens discusses modifying the budget, asks Susan Whitney if there is anything that the board has missed, she responds that she gave suggestions after the last meeting re: general fund, highway fund, proposed police budget cut.
- Alex Bresnick asks if any members talked to the Arlington selectboard re: the increase in allocation to the fire department (~10-15%).
- Dixie Zens responds that yes, they asked the Arlington selectboard if Sunderland was being billed based on population. Response was that cost was divided by population, and that Sunderland represents 27% of the service area, and so pay 27% of the budget.
- Bruce Mattison asks about highway miscellaneous for \$250, and general miscellaneous \$100, if they should increase those amounts?
- Dixie Zens asks what that is typically used for, Susan Whitney responds that it covers expenses that don't fit into other categories.
- Dixie Zens asks Bruce Mattison what the budget allocation would be for and he said things like the occasional moral booster (a meal).
- Alex Bresnick asks if they should include a new category for that.
- Bruce Mattison brings up the dinner Andrew McKeever has mentioned for town, this is not a current line item and there is no surplus to cover it.
- Andrew McKeever responds that it could be paid for with ARPA funds.
- Dixie Zens asks if it is a one time expense for dinner, and then additional events would be at the cost of the state.
- Bruce Mattison said that the energy meeting in Manchester was paid for by grants, if they can't find the funds through a grant then there is no way to pay for dinner through general fund.
- Marty Nadler responds that it's under consideration by the ARPA committee.
- Andrew McKeever clarifies if the plan is still to transfer ARPA funds to general budget.
- Susan Whitney says that if they are planning to take it out of the general fund, and the event is next spring, then they need to make a line item now.
- Dixie Zens asks again for any changes or mistakes, Susan Whitney prompts them to check on the list that they have passed so far.
- Bruce Mattison brings up increasing budget for "employee appreciation", asks Rick Goodard in the audience if he has any experience with this at Bromley.
- Rick Goodard asks about the amount of employees, says \$300-350 might be a good amount.
- Dixie Zens asks the rest of the audience for recommendations.
- Alex Bresnick recommends \$200 for general fund and \$200 for highway for employee appreciation, makes a motion:

Mover: Alex Bresnick

2nd: Andrew McKeever
Result: Passed

- Marty Nadler motions to adopt the budget as amended

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

- Bruce Mattison asks about completing the town reports, Dixie Zens says that he will be doing it.

7. ARPA Funds

- Marty Nadler says the committee has met twice, have come up with criteria for making recommendations. In the process of going through suggested items, then making preliminary decisions. Working on the survey.
- Dixie Zens said he attended a BCRC meeting in Shaftbury talking about their ARPA funds, they worked to get the town involved including, survey, door-to-door, mailings. They are going to build a community center.
- Marty Nadler said one idea at the forefront is building a facility/structure to shelter heavy equipment. Prompted Marc Johnston, in audience, for estimate of needs.
- Marc Johnston says they are working with someone for a quote, will have answer by next week. Proposing a pole barn next to salt shed, and a 20' addition to back of garage with a new door on the side. Rough prices were estimated at about \$75K.
- Resident has questions for Marc Johnston, about if there is any room past the salt shed for infrastructure. Marc Johnston responds that they are too close to the road, don't have enough road for set-back.
- Discussion about bringing plows inside with plows in preparation for snow storms, that new truck will have candy cane quick hitch that allows them to have more room inside the garage.
- Bruce Mattison asks Marty Nadler if they should include one of the speed signs in the ARPA funding. Asks Marc Johnston if they actually help manage speed.
- Marc Johnston responded that he didn't think the police used the data the town gave them, as the fastest speeds were in the middle of the night.
- Bruce Mattison asks about deciding how the town should ultimately decide ARPA use. Selectboard vs putting it up to vote.
- Marty Nadler responds that it may be that once they winnow down the list, they might be able to pay for everything on the list.

- Alex Bresnick asks audience member (Rick) if he has a recommendation on how they should make the decision. Would it be fair if the selectboard took the list made by the ARPA committee, to make an ultimate decision.
- Rick responds that it is the job of the committee and selectboard to make some choices, and then let the townspeople make the final decision.
- Alex Bresnick asks what if the townspeople say no?
- Rick responds it's just like passing a budget, if they vote down the budget then you don't have a budget.
- Marty Nadler says it's different, as these projects won't be paid for my resident taxes.
- Dixie Zens says that it would have to be in 2025 election.
- Susan Whitney says that pushing it to the next year isn't a problem, as there will be the pilot resolution by VLCT, and article 4 that takes resulting surplus and making a separate fund. That fund cant be created until after July1st, so funds would be available until the next cycle anyway.
- Alex Bresnick says that the list they have been working on, would be hard to put up to a vote. Would we be asking people to accept a "spending medley". There are a few items that will cost \$100k, so it will be impractical to put on a ballot.
- Andrew McKeever asks about an opinion survey.
- Bruce Mattison says that separating them by large sums, or groups of small sums could work.
- Alex Bresnick says that they've been waiting to use this money and the purchasing power has been reduced significantly, and that will continue to happen.
- Bruce Mattison says that it's collecting interest and that he disagrees.
- Todd Lawrence says that if they opt for voting then that would have to be next year, when funds need to be obligated in 2024. That VLTC recommends moving ARPA to the general fund in this budget cycle.
- Susan Whitney responds that it's a two step process: tonight the board can vote to move ARPA into a sinking fund in the general fund.
- Marty Nadler asks if funds are moved, will they be available July 1, 2024. Susan Whitney says that yes, once the article goes on warning, then they create a special use fund. Then money can be moved and the board can take their time to allocate funds.
- Dixie Zens reads the resolution for American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), signed into law March 11, 2021. Sunderland received \$285,246.15 to support the response to recovery of COVID-19.
- Selectboard is allocating \$65,000 to the general fund and \$200,000 highway fund for the purpose of "municipal workforce retention". Passed and adopted by the Selectboard of the Town of SUnderland.

- Dixie Zens motions to accept allocations.

Mover: Dixie Zens
 2nd: Bruce Mattison
 Result: Passed

- Susan Whitney clarifies that that is phase one. Phase two is to make a warning of the article to move the surplus.
- Marty Nadler motions to update language to that of VLCT for reserve fund

Mover: Marty Nadler
 2nd: Bruce Mattison
 Result: Passed

- Resident asks what if the town votes down the ARPA allocations, Susan Whitney says that the surplus will then just sit in the general fund, and reduce taxes. Dixie Zens then read the article for particulars.
- Susan Whitney asks if there are additional parts that need to be added to the warning. Bruce Mattison adds the possibility of making town meeting an informational meeting with an australian ballot for all the other public questions that need a vote.
- Andrew McKeever offers having an informational meeting on a saturday, instead of the traditional monday night.
- Discussion about voting numbers depending on primary vs election year. Trying to figure out how to include most voters in discussion and voting.
- Alex Bresnick asks clarifying question whether people speaking at town meeting are residents, Susan Whitney says speakers can ask moderators for specific permission if they are not (e.g a special interest group asking for funding allocation)
- Alex Bresnick says that by using Australian ballot they are reducing amount of engagement by voters just filling in a bubble, rather than receiving information at town meeting, which has historical significance.
- Bruce Mattison says that an information meeting might have more attendance and then could have more votes, which increases democracy.
- Dixie Zens asks about moving town meeting to saturday entirely, Susan Whitney says that it just has to be a certain amount of time within the day of voting.
- Bruce Mattison makes a motion to warn an article switching to australian ballot for public questions (e.g appropriations or articles), (this would be up for vote in 2024, for voting in 2025)

Mover: Bruce Mattison
 2nd: Andrew McKeever
 Result: 1 yay, 3 nays.

- Alex Bresnick asks if this is fair, as it is to benefit voters who can't make it to town meeting (e.g. can't drive at night), who won't be there to give input and vote!

- Bruce Mattison says that residents will make this consideration and support voters who can't be there.
- Alex Bresnick says that they should try to increase attendance and involvement instead.
- Question about voting on appropriations of \$1000 or more, Susan Whitney clarifies that organizations can make a request for the same appropriation amount as made historically, but if they are requesting more they need to make an appeal that becomes a question to be voted on at town meeting.
- Todd Lawrence asks if public outreach and an effort to support modes of transportation to support attendance at town meeting is a better option than changing this special and historic event in Vermont.
- Dixie Zens asks about moving town meeting to a saturday, Susan WHitney says she would need to research moving it.
- Marty Nadler asks about making a motion in the case that town meeting could be moved.
- Resident offers bringing Australian ballot up at town meeting for discussion.

8. Road Liaison Report-none

- 1. Discuss grants from the State for Storm Water and Road repair Through BCRC

9. Energy Committee-none

10. BCRC, SWIP-none

11. Old Business-

- 1. Review “Welcome to Sunderland” Signage

- Dixie Zens made certificates for each student who took part in sign design contest. Says he will sponsor a \$10 gift certificate to the bookstore for each participant.
- Alex Bresnick asks for clarification about sign design.
- Dixie Zens says that there are some ideas that have been coalesced from the students' creations.
- Marty Nadler reminds the board that there is a resident who has offered to make signs at cost.
- Alex Bresnick recommends hanging pictures rendered by students to be hung up for town meeting day.

- 3. ATV Winter Access on Kelly Stand Rd

- Bruce Mattison asks Dixie Zens what exactly the residents want. Dixie Zens responds that they just don't want to get arrested when passing on ATVs in the winter.
- VLCT says that the board would have to write a special permit for residents to pass on their ATVs in the winter when they can't pass with trucks.
- Bruce Mattison asks Marc Johnston if it's a Class II road, resident in the audience says the law is for Class IV roads, because VAST and VASA don't want snowmobiles or ATVs on the trails.
- Marc Johnston says the road is not actually closed, just not managed.
- Bruce Mattison says that more needs to be looked into.
- Resident makes a point that VAST wants to keep residents off but VAST isn't giving anything back to town (e.g. dollars to gas stations or stores in town). Recommends the selectboard passing bylaw that residents can use the road but non residents cannot.
- Alex Bresnick voices his idea of writing specific permits just for camp owners so they can access the road.
- Residents say that doesn't make sense because all of the residents in town pay taxes to maintain that road, and have the right to access the road.

12. New Business-

– 1. Discuss the Community Visit to welcome the town's residents to solicit ideas for future plans for the Town of Sunderland.

- Andrew McKeever says that he communicated with Vermont Council on Rural Development (VCRD) about doing meetings this spring. Consensus of the board was to wait until 2025, but do they want to change their mind?
- VCRD asked if Sunderland could work to try for it this year.
- Two officials from VCRD offered a visit at the next meeting to explain the details about what the town would be getting involved with.
- Andrew McKeever asks the board how they feel: Bruce Mattison says wait, Dixie Zens says go forward, Alex Brsnick says no strong opinion, Marty Nadler also says either way, except the funds are needed to initial dinners which aren't in the budget.
- Andrew McKeever says that if they are to do it this year the board would have to come to a decision about how to fund the community dinner.
- Resident asks for clarification.
- Andrew McKeever says Community Visit by VCRD is a three meeting sequence where town organizes a community dinner to talk about the future direction of town. Population just crossed over 1,000 residents, some new, many 5 generations, an opportunity for neighbors to meet and discuss the town.

- Committees are formed out of first meeting, 3-4 specific areas are focused on.
- Resident asks what the funding is for, Andrew McKeever says its for advertising the event and the first community meeting.
- Bruce Mattison says that there are a lot of things that need to be covered by town meeting, that it seems responsible to push this visit from officials. Dixie Zens agrees.
- Alex Bresnick asks for clarification on where funding would come from, new fund allocations or ARPA, Dixie Zens says ARPA.
- Board decides to push off visit from officials to after town meeting, then decide about proceeding this year or next.

13. Review of Correspondence/Signing of Warrants-

- Excess weight permit from Newport Sand, Gravel and Concrete
- Alex Bresnick moves that they sign it

Mover: Alex Bresnick

2nd: Marty Nadler

Result: Passed

- Board signs new warnings with updates articles

Mover: Bruce Mattison

2nd: Andrew McKeever

Result: Passed

- Town Council office is raising their rate \$225 to \$250 per hour on April 1, 2024.
- Vermont Land Trust says Hill Farm has historical and irrevocable conservation value.
- Zoom meeting to discuss water quality plans for Deerfield and Connecticut River. 1/24 at 6pm. Floodplain restoration.
- Letter from Comcast- federally funded affordable connection for low income households, up to \$30/month credit for internet and mobile services.
- Notice of 2023 Equalization Studies/Property Value Review to ensure stable coefficient of dispersion and common level of appraisal (CLA). Currently at 74%, will cause taxes to increase. July 1, 2024 appraisals will begin.
- Andrew McKeever asks if they should have someone come in and explain the nuance of this process and impacts of new appraisals.

14. Executive session, if needed.

15. Next Regular Business Meeting for the Sunderland Selectboard will be February 12, 2024

16. Adjourn at 9:31 pm.

Mover: Alex Bresnick

2nd: Marty Nadler

Result: Passed