

Minutes
West Rutland Selectboard Meeting
Monday, December 11th, 2023
6:00 pm

Present: John Harvey, John Center, Dick Daley and Chet Brown

Others Present: Mary Ann Goulette, Michael Skaza (Fire Chief), Tom Lacz (Assistant Fire Chief), Sheriff Fox, Representative Tom Burditt, Paul Kulig, and Mike Moser.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by John Harvey with the pledge of allegiance.

Agenda Approval: Motion made by Chet seconded by John Center to approve the agenda as presented. Motion approved.

Minutes Approval: Motion made by Chet seconded by John Center to approve the minutes of the meeting of November 13th, 2023. Motion approved.

Public Concerns: Representative Tom Burditt was present to discuss the upcoming legislative session. Two issues he hears consistently from his constituents is the economy and crime. He is vice chair of the judiciary committee and has a number of bills he is drafting to address the rise of fentanyl, conditions of release and repeat offenders. Art Peterson is attending Clarendon Selectboard tonight, he is also on board with these bills and is also addressing the housing crisis.

Discussion Items:

- a) **Sheriff Budget** – Sheriff Fox was present to discuss a 10% increase in the hourly rate for the 2024 – 2025 contract. There are several factors that have contributed to this increase including the continuously rising cost of insurance and training. Additionally, they need to remain competitive with other law enforcement agencies that are all drawing from a small pool of officers so they can continue to maintain a professional, well-trained department. The board recognized the ongoing difficulties for today's police officers and thanked the Sheriff for his service.
- b) **Fire Department** – Fire Chief Skaza presented the proposed budget showing an overall increase of 4.4%. Chief Skaza requests an increase in the stipend that the firefighters and officers receives. One point equals \$12 which translates to a \$24 for responding to a fire call. There are increases in property insurance and auto due to the new truck arriving this summer. Heating fuel and vehicle fuel also show increases. We have five more payments for the fire station bond. The Selectboard thanked Mike and Tom for their service.
- c) **Library Budget** – Paul Kulig was present to discuss this year's budget requests. They are requesting an additional \$5,000 due to inflation bringing the total annual request to \$60,000. They also need to address some stormwater and drainage issues at their

buildings. Grants are difficult for underground projects. They have some preliminary estimates and will need \$50,000. Discussion on using ARPA funds. Mary Ann will add it to the list.

- d) **Admin Budget** – Mary Ann presented the proposed budget showing a 4% budget increase for the department. All insurances are showing an increase, salaries are 3% increase. We are fortunate to have 4 employees using the buyout for health insurance. Assistant Clerk will have less hours as Deb Jasmin is fully trained.
- e) **Town Manager Report-** We will meet twice in January to review the budgets, 1% local options tax date and appropriation requests. Mary Ann is completing the VOREC grant application for the pavilion and Better Back Roads grant for culverts on Clark Hill. Otter Creek is working on the design for the pressure reducing valve. Mary Ann doesn't expect us to connect until July 1 if we can get the valve delivered and installed. Mary Ann is working on the Rutland Town portion of next year's budget. The expenses will be minimal.

Action Items:

- a) **Appoint Fire Chief Skaza and Assistant Chief Lacz** – The department voted and Mike and Tom were once again nominated for Fire Chief and Assistant Chief. Motion made by John Center seconded by Dick to appoint Michael Skaza as Fire Chief and Tom Lacz as Assistant Fire Chief for the year 2024. Motion approved unanimously.

Board Member Concerns:

Dick – Brokerage firms that offer certificates of deposits are FDIC insured.

John Center – Is there a lien in place on Main Street Cash Market from zoning? Yes.

Adjournment: Dick made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:22pm and John Center seconded. Motion approved.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Ann Goulette