

**TOWN OF CHARLESTOWN  
SELECTBOARD MEETING  
JANUARY 7, 2009**

Selectboard Present: Brenda Ferland, Jon LeClair, Steven Neill

Staff Present: David Edkins – Administrative Assistant  
Keith Weed – Highway Superintendent  
Edward Smith – Police Chief

**CALL TO ORDER & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Brenda Ferland called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. She advised that the meeting is tape recorded and asked anyone wishing to speak to identify themselves for the record.

**BUILDING STUDY COMMITTEE – Police Station Proposal:** Hunter Grillone, Chair, said the Building Study Committee was formed about three years ago. Their mission at that time was to look at the needs of the Town for the Fire, Police and Ambulance departments at the present time and to project the needs for 15-to-25 years in the future. This past March the voters voted down this proposal. Since then the committee and other interested parties held many meetings and worked with Chief Smith on what kind of a building and at what cost they thought the voters would approve. They came up with a not to exceed figure of \$850,000. Since then Preferred Building Systems (PBS) in Claremont came to them and offered to do some plans free of charge. They have reworked plans numerous times and detailed them for the needs of the Police Department. The plans presented are based on a 4800 square foot building with a price tag of approximately \$600,000 (\$527,867 for Direct Costs, \$44,600 for Indirect Costs). Alternate costs are: 1) Brick façade-south elevation \$15,000; and 2) Airlock at front entrance \$12,000; the committee will work hard to get them. This building is a bare-bones project with no frills; it is based on needs only. The scope of work and cost guidelines were provided by Blanc & Bailey. It is expected that this building will need no major maintenance for 15-to-20 years. The committee intends to do their best and work with anyone they need to to get the public involved. We need this building and so does the Police Department.

Mrs. Ferland opened the discussion for public comment. Mr. Poisson mentioned there was another building proposal for a lesser amount. Mr. Grillone was aware of the proposal from Norm Beaudry for the cost of \$400,000; it was a modular building. Not all buildings are created equal. Mr. Blanc said this building did not include the ability to drive under the building (Sally Port) or other features that the Police Department needs. This building will go out for bid and anybody can bid on it. It can be built with boxes or stick frame but will be based on the spec list.

Mrs. Ferland wanted to correct something mentioned at another meeting about the Selectboard not keeping up the maintenance on the town's buildings. She feels the Selectboards, past and present, have done everything they can to keep the buildings up-

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to-code and to put projects forward. Unfortunately some items have been voted down by the taxpayers for a variety of reasons. As a result they are now looking to put a band-aid on the Ambulance building and Fire Station; it will eventually cost more for renovations than if the work was done now. Mrs. Ferland will support this project as it will meet the needs of the Police Department. She wants to get all the employees into safe working conditions.

Mr. Edkins asked the Selectboard to consider whether or not they will put some money from the Fund Balance into this project to reduce the financing. The Warrant Articles need to be finalized and some decisions are needed regarding how they will be funded. The fire truck might be financed through a 10-year lease-purchase agreement. In either case if some money is put toward these projects up-front from the Fund Balance it will reduce the annual payments. He noted that on a 20-year Bond for \$600,000 at 6-1/2% interest the annual payment would be \$68,900. If they were to put \$100,000 from the Fund Balance toward it the annual payment would be \$60,000; those payments go down progressively each year thereafter. This would result in an estimated increase in the tax rate of 25cents per thousand; a \$200,000 home would be \$50 higher. If they were to go with \$500,000 with a \$60,000 annual payment the impact on the tax rate would be 21 cents per thousand. Those interest rates are high; the bond bank always quotes high. A recent sale in December resulted in an interest rate of 5.07%. Rural Development currently has an interest rate of 4.75% but being federal money it will have some strings attached to it. Relative to local financing the Connecticut River Bank quoted an interest rate of 5.2% for a 20-year loan. The Fund Balance is approximately \$855,000 after putting some money toward the tax rate. If \$120,000 is used toward a project; it would leave \$735,000 or 8% retainage as recommended by the Department of Revenue Administration (DRA). Mr. LeClair's priority is the Police building over the fire truck and he would be willing to put some Fund Balance dollars toward that. Mr. Neill felt a fire truck and this building are needed; there isn't enough money to go around but he would agree to use \$100,000 of the Fund Balance toward one project. He believes this building can be brought in considerably less; he isn't sure the insulated concrete foundation is the way to go as it is expensive. Mr. Blanc said they looked at making this building as "green" as possible.

Mr. Neill questioned some of the construction items; is it necessary to finish all the downstairs up-front. The Selectboard can make this happen in a few years by putting it into the Capital Outlay budget. He is not against doing this project. Conversation on the street is if they can get this under \$500,000 it might pass with no problem. We cannot go another year without getting something approved. The saving for not finishing the basement is estimated at \$60,000 to \$80,000. Mr. Blanc explained there are certain items that cannot be cut. There are items like the generator that might be eligible for grants but it will take some time to get reimbursed. They have trimmed-and-trimmed already. It makes sense to spend a little extra to tighten up the building especially because they do not know where heating oil prices will go. The power companies have good rebates for "green" buildings right now. PBS was willing to go with all the commercial specs. Mrs. Ferland wanted to be sure there is no misinformation to the public on pricing or how it will be financed. Mr. Blanc believes that what is there is what Chief Smith needs to

operate and live with. The new generator might also serve to back-up the Fire Station as theirs is really old and doesn't work all the time. Mr. Edkins said Rural Development has funds that might be used to cover the generator and communications equipment. The Warrant Article has to contain the gross budget for the building even though it will allow the Selectboard time to seek State/Federal funds to defray the cost before the Bond is finalized. There was a majority agreement that this is the time to build it, interest rates are down, contractors are looking for work and materials costs have stabilized. Chief Smith briefly explained his needs. Mr. Blanc stated that the committee is committed to helping market this building.

**Mr. LeClair moved to appropriate the sum of \$595,000 with \$100,000 coming out of the Fund Balance leaving \$495,000 to be bonded. Mrs. Ferland seconded the motion. With Mr. LeClair and Mrs. Ferland in favor, the motion was approved. Mr. Neill abstained.**

**GARY FOX – Connecticut River Transit:** Gary Fox, Connecticut River Transit, and Barbara Brill, Community Alliance, were present. Mr. Fox advised that they both run public transit busses and collaborate on some services. There are 30 Vermont towns where they provide service; each is asked for a contribution. They are funded through state and federal grants; Vermont residents contribute some through State taxes. All the funds are required to be matched either 50% or 20% depending on what they are paying for. At the municipal parking areas, they partner with the town to maintain and set it up the Park-and Ride areas. The specific one they will talk about tonight is set up and maintained by the Vermont Agency of Transportation. They try to have fair share allocations and spread costs out so no one bears too much of the burden. They service the 30 towns in Vermont in the same way that Community Alliance services Charlestown. All riders and employers make contributions that allow the service to continue without anyone taking on too much of a cost. Sometimes the Park-and-Ride areas fill-up. At times they try to expand those areas. Because some of these areas are half full with New Hampshire license plates the VAT feels that CRT should be looking for some funding from the NH towns as well. The Exit 8 parking lot is serviced by a shuttle. Community Alliance is funded through Claremont and they shuttle riders; this provides benefits to Vermont and Claremont. CRT would like to support the proposal that Community Alliance has in to provide bus service to Charlestown. They work together to shuttle people over to meet the bus in the parking lot rather than have the additional cars in the park-and-ride areas. There are 28 Charlestown residents who use the commuter service from exit 7; about 110 people a week. Fees are based on donations.

Barbara Brill explained that Community Alliance presented two proposals to Charlestown. Reference was made to their letter of November 25, 2008. Proposal #1 is for \$21,800 to establish regular daily service from Charlestown to Claremont Monday through Friday. This service would allow them to link to the CRT and would also provide multiple regular bus trips back and forth to Claremont. This would include the long distance medical volunteer transportation component that the American Red Cross established in Charlestown. Proposal #2 is for \$4,300 to continue to offer the "On-Demand Ride Program" that requires a 24 hour notice. They have identified areas where

large parking lots are available (Park-and-Rides) where people can leave their cars and then be shuttled over to exit 8 where there would also be links to the Upper Valley. Both proposals include the Red Cross service funding as well. They will submit their proposal to the Department of Transportation based on the proposal the Selectboard chooses.

There has been an increase in their rider-ship in the last six months. River Valley Community College has indicated their financial support as it will benefit some of their students. Mrs. Ferland felt some elderly citizens who no longer drive might hesitate to call the 24-hour service as they might not feel up to the trip the next day but the bus service would enable them to go on the day they feel up to it. She supports a regular service in Charlestown. Mr. Fox noted that statistics indicate that a regular schedule is used more than the 24-hour notice. Ms. Brill said they will have to work out a schedule and number of trips that would meet the bulk of people's needs. There is a lot more work to be done but they would like to know if the funding is available. It will run all day; link with Claremont and the CRT. The DOT funding would not come in until July 1<sup>st</sup> so there would be time to work with the town.

**NON-PUBLIC SESSION:**

**Mr. LeClair moved to enter into a Non-Public Session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3 II to discuss (a) Personnel issues and (c) Reputations. Mr. Neill seconded the motion and, on a roll call vote with all in favor, the motion was approved. The time was 8:20 pm.**

The regular meeting resumed at 9:08 PM.

**MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING(S):**

**Steve Neill moved to approve the Minutes of the regular Selectboard meeting of December 17, 2008, as printed. Jon LeClair seconded the motion. With all in favor, the Minutes were approved.**

**Steve Neill moved to approve the Minutes of the Non-Public Session of December 17, 2008, as printed. Jon LeClair seconded the motion. With all in favor, the Minutes were approved.**

**Steve Neill moved to approve the Minutes of the Year End Workshop meeting of December 30, 2008, as printed. Jon LeClair seconded the motion. With all in favor, the Minutes were approved.**

**SELECTBOARD COMMENT:**

**Letter to New Legislators:** Mrs. Ferland suggested that the Board write a letter to the Town's two new state legislators encouraging them to keep the Town's interests in mind when exercising their new duties and not simply vote along party lines. We should especially urge them to avoid the pressure of passing along state responsibilities and costs to local municipalities and taxpayers in light of the state's current fiscal problems.

**2008 Audit Report:** Mrs. Ferland noted that the 2008 Audit Report made several recommendations for improving the Town's financial management systems. Mr. Edkins responded that some of these recommendations have been implemented and the other will be in the near future.

**DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORTS:**

**Police Department:** Police Chief Ed Smith has been working on end of the year reports. He was made aware of the fact that if he is looking for office furniture he should go to Sullivan-Palatek. He went there today and was told to submit a list; he did submit a list for miscellaneous items including file cabinets. Tomorrow he was invited to go back to tag the items.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**2009 Annual Town Meeting Warrant:**

Article 10: Southern Vermont Recreation Center in Springfield, Vermont - \$5,000. The Selectboard does not support this appropriation and will not put the Article on the Warrant unless a valid petition is submitted.

Article 11: Community Alliance of Human Services' Public Transportation Services – The Selectboard agreed to include Proposal #1 for \$21,800 and to support the appropriation

Article 13: Charlestown Branch of the Fall Mountain Food Shelf - \$6,000. The Selectboard does recommend this appropriation.

Article 15 and Article 16: Conservation Commission Requests. The Selectboard agreed to include the two Articles on the Warrant.

There is a now a new statute that would provide for an Article to provide that the vote tallies appear on Warrant Article recommendations. There was a consensus to not include this as they felt a Board should speak as one.

**Fire Truck:** There was a consensus to include the Fire Truck on the Warrant as a ten year lease-purchase agreement. Mr. Edkins will check on the requirement of a down payment of \$120,000 this year; he will confirm the numbers tomorrow.

**Fire Department Building:** There was a consensus of the Selectboard to hold off on this since the Police Department building and fire truck are big ticket items.

**Transfer Station Reuse Center:** Mr. Edkins is now receiving regular complaints about the Reuse Center being out of service. Mr. Neill felt there should be a news article in the Our Town relative to the fact that they are working toward finding a solution.

**Highway Advisory Board:** The HAB met last night and asked Mr. Edkins to bring a few items to the Selectboard attention. 1) The sand pile at the Highway Garage does not have any salt in it; it is hard as a rock so people cannot get any salt out of it. 2) There are

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a number of stretches of roads that are not getting an adequate amount of sand and salt on them. Mr. Neill explained that Keith Weed is sanding and salting the hills and intersections and letting some of the other pieces go a little to save the product.

**Ice Storm:** The Federal Government has declared this a disaster area as a result of the ice storm. The Town will be entitled to some reimbursement. There is a meeting next week that Mr. Edkins will attend.

**Federal Stimulus Package:** There is a meeting in Concord on Friday that Mr. Edkins plans to attend. The Department of Environmental Services is holding the meeting to explain how they expect to deal with the Federal Stimulus Package which is expected to contain a significant amount of money for ready to go infrastructure projects. The Town might be able to get some free money from this. The project that comes to mind is South West, West and North West Streets. They are looking for shovel ready projects. Engineering will be required to get this project ready to go. There are other projects: the Old Claremont Road, Almar Street, and the Fling Road Bridge. Mr. Edkins will try to come up with some numbers on these.

**FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION – Payroll, Purchase Orders, Vouchers, Warrants, Abatements, Etc:** The **Payroll, Vouchers, Warrants** and **Abatements** were approved and signed.

**Purchase Orders:** The following Purchase Orders were approved and signed by the Selectboard: 1) Highway – rock salt - \$2,605.27; and 2) Highway – Donovan Spring - \$800.00.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**Steve Neill moved to adjourn the meeting. Jon LeClair seconded the motion and, on a roll call vote with all in favor, the motion was approved.** The time was 9:46 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
David M. Edkins, Administrative Assistant

Approved,

Brenda L. Ferland, Chair

Jon B. LeClair

Steven A. Neill

(**Note:** These are unapproved Minutes. Corrections, if necessary, may be found in the Minutes of the January 21, 2009, Selectboard meeting.)