

1 **TOWN OF WAITSFIELD, VERMONT**

2 **Selectboard Meeting Minutes**

3 **Monday, December 2, 2024**

4 **Approved**

5
6 **Members Present:** Chach Curtis, Fred Messer, Christine Parisi, Brian Shupe, Larissa Ursprung

7 **Staff Present:** None

8 **Others Present:** Laura Arnesen (MR Recreation District), Ron Graves (Fayston SB), Tripp
9 Johnson (WFFD Fire Chief), Mike Jordan (Fayston SB), Chuck Martel (Fayston SB), Craig Snell
10 (WFFD), Sarah Stavraky (Fayston Treasurer), Madison Vasseur (Fayston TC/SB Assistant)

11
12 **I. Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm by Brian Shupe. The meeting was
13 held in person at the Waitsfield Town Office and remotely via Zoom.

14
15 **1. Review agenda for addition, removal, or adjustment of any items per 1 VSA 312(d)(3)(A).**
16 No adjustments were needed.

17
18 **2. Public Forum.**

19 Nobody present requested time to address the Board.

20
21 **II. Regular Business.**

22
23 **1. WFFD FY 2026 Budget.**

24 Tripp Johnson reported that five of the Department's volunteers had completed Firefighter One
25 training in the past year. The Department responded to 109 events in the past year, a little
26 lower than average, five of the responses were to structure fires. Currently there are 25
27 volunteers active with the Department, and two more in the process of joining up.

28 Mr. Johnson indicated that the extractor tank and pipes are in place, and that once the
29 electrical work is complete, the extractor will be operable.

30 Ms. Parisi noted that she and Mr. Graves had met with Mr. Johnson and Mr. Snell to review this
31 year's budget actuals, and explained that the current year's labor expenses are over budget.
32 The group then reviewed the proposed budget, making notes of significant increases and
33 decreases.

34 There was some discussion regarding adding insurance coverage for firefighters in order to
35 cover any personal policy deductibles if there is damage resulting due to responding to an
36 event in a personal vehicle; it was agreed that the administrative time needed may make this
37 coverage more expensive than it is worthwhile, and that there may be better approaches to
38 covering these deductibles if the situation arises.

39 Tire replacements will be continuing as required, so that line item needs to remain at \$25K. Air
40 packs, AED replacements, and replacement of older style hoses over the next two years are
41 included in the budget.

42 The labor line includes both a proposed rate increase as well as allowance for more hours,
43 which reflects what is anticipated. Mr. Johnson explained that there is more need for
44 assistance calls, and time spent on homeowner education. He also outlined that volunteers are
45 often leaving well-paying hourly jobs in order to respond to an event, and so proposed raising
46 the compensation rate to \$20/hour from the current \$17/hour. There was further discussion of
47 the need to retain firefighters, and Board members proposed that the rate be set at \$18.50 for
48 the current year with a commitment to continue with further incremental increases in
49 upcoming budgets. Mr. Johnson and Mr. Snell expressed that this would be a satisfactory
50 solution. The anticipated number of hours was included as 2700.

51 The proposed budget as edited totaled \$216,360. It was noted that last year's budget did not
52 include the Capital West contribution, and so the increase is from a budget of \$200K rather
53 than the \$190 indicated; an explanatory note will be included in the Town Report.

54 The Capital Improvement Plan was discussed, particularly the \$550K needed for an upcoming
55 truck replacement. Mr. Johnson explained that more seating capacity is needed, and that a six-
56 person cab truck would be more in the \$800K range. He proposed that purchasing a quad pack
57 pickup for \$75K would both solve the seating issue and provide additional benefits for the
58 Department. It was confirmed that trucks still need a two-year lead time for ordering and
59 delivery, and that plans should be made accordingly.

60 Mr. Johnson then addressed facility needs at the Fire Station, explaining that currently the
61 dining area is adjacent to the equipment cleaning area, a situation which creates health
62 concerns for the volunteers. He also indicated that finding another location for storage of the
63 sidewalk plow would be helpful. Septic capacity considerations were raised, and it was
64 acknowledged that this is a complicated issue; Mr. Johnson reiterated that gear
65 decontamination is critical and that younger volunteers are much more aware of the
66 consequences of exposure to chemicals involved in firefighting.

67 **MOTION:** *Mr. Martel made a motion to adopt the Fire Department budget in the amount of*
68 *\$216,360. The motion was seconded by Mr. Shupe, and passed unanimously.*

69 **2. Fayston Winter Road agreement.**

70 Road Department budget numbers were reviewed, and it was discussed and agreed that it
71 would be both more straightforward as well as equitable to simplify this agreement by
72 incorporating a percentage increase each year, at either 3% or the rate of inflation, with a more
73 detailed review of numbers approximately every five years. Last year's agreement was for
74 Waitsfield to compensate Fayston in the amount of \$11,800.

75
76 **MOTION:** *A motion to agree upon a \$12,500 payment from Waitsfield to Fayston for the 2025*
77 *calendar year passed unanimously.*

78
79 **3. ARPA funds update.**

80 This topic was postponed.

81

82 **4. Mad River Rec District update.**

83 Ms. Arnesen provided a budget report, and indicated that the Rec District is proposing a level
84 funded budget for the upcoming year. She noted that it is anticipated that Moretown will join
85 the District as a partial member, and that the MOU will be adjusted accordingly if Moretown
86 approves joining at March's Town Meeting.

87
88 Ms. Arnesen reviewed some budget details, noted that an extension had been granted on the
89 finalization of the CRV work and completion of deliverables, and provided an update on some
90 of the District's projects and programs.

91
92 **5. Covered Bridge.**

93 It was reported that work on the bridge will commence on December 16, and that Miles
94 Jenness (VT Heavy Timber) will be providing an updated itemized outline of costs, which are
95 now anticipated to be approximately \$16K. Mr. Shupe will need this itemization in order to
96 proceed with insurance coverage logistics. The additional work outlined by Mr. Jenness to
97 address longstanding defects on the bridge is anticipated to cost approximately \$13K; it was
98 confirmed that there is at least \$10K in appropriate reserve funds to cover most of this
99 expense, and that having all the work completed at once is the most cost-effective strategy.

100
101 **MOTION:** *Mr. Curtis made a motion to approve the additional work outlined by VT Heavy*
102 *Timber, at a cost not to exceed \$14K. The motion was seconded by Ms. Ursprung, and passed*
103 *unanimously.*

104
105 It was agreed that further discussion of construction of a portal entrance to prevent similar
106 damage from occurring in the future will take place at an upcoming Board meeting, and Mr.
107 Messer reiterated his proposal that a related ordinance be drafted and adopted so that fines
108 may be imposed if similar damage is experienced moving forward.

109
110 **6. Selectboard Roundtable.**

111 Mr. Shupe explained that Sam Robinson (MRVPD) had drafted a letter for the MRV towns'
112 Selectboards to sign regarding the closure of the Health Center; this will be sent to all pertinent
113 parties once the signatures are in place.

114
115 Meetings with FEMA regarding the damage from the July 2024 flooding are continuing; it has
116 been requested that work on the Meadow Road bridge be covered, as it suffered significant
117 degradation due to the heavy truck traffic experienced during flood repair work.

118
119 The MRVPD will be discussing the upcoming year's Work Plan and Budget at their December
120 meeting.

121
122 **7. Consent Agenda.**

123 **APPROVAL:** *The Consent Agenda was approved with no objections or concerns raised.*

- 124
125
 - Bills Payable and Treasurer's Warrants

126
127 **8. Executive Session.**

128 **MOTION:** *A motion to find that premature general knowledge of confidential attorney- client*
129 *communications made for the purpose of providing professional legal services to the public body*
130 *would clearly place the public body or a person involved at a substantial disadvantage passed*
131 *unanimously.*

132 **MOTION:** *A motion to enter Executive Session pursuant 1 V.S.A. § 313 (a) (3) [Personnel] passed*
133 *unanimously.*

134 The meeting entered Executive Session at 8:05 pm and returned to open session at 8:30 pm.

135

136 **III. Other Business**

137 **1. Correspondence/reports received** were reviewed.

138 **IV. Adjourn**

139 The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

140 Respectfully submitted,

141 Carol Chamberlin, Recording Secretary