

Minutes of the Special Selectboard Meeting of  
Wednesday, March 29, 2023, at 6:30 pm

This hybrid meeting was held in the Multipurpose Room in Tracy Hall.

Members present: Marcia Calloway, Chair; Mary Layton, Vice Chair; Roger Arnold; Pamela Smith; Priscilla Vincent.

Also participating: Brennan Duffy, Interim Town Manager; Christopher Kaufman, Director, Department of Public Works; Brie Swenson, Recreation Department Director; Miranda Bergmeier, Assistant to the Town Manager; Lily Trajman, Town Clerk; Cheryl Lindberg, Treasurer; Judy Powell; Omer Trajman; Stuart Richards; John Cushman; Demosthenes Sofronas; Linda Gray

1. **Welcome.** Calloway brought the meeting to order at 6:32 PM.

2. **Agenda Review.** Layton moved, seconded by Vincent, to approve the proposed agenda. Passed unanimously.

3. **Approve AP Warrant.** Smith expressed concern that a payment for the new police cruiser was included on an accounts payable warrant for checks drawn from the General Fund instead of having it appear on a separate warrant showing the check was drawn from the Police Cruiser Reserve Fund. Having separate warrants is the only way the Selectboard can be assured that payments are drawn from the fund authorized by the Selectboard. Duffy commented that it was important to approve the expenditure as written regardless, so the purchase can be consummated before the particular cruiser in question becomes no longer available.

Layton moved approval, seconded by Arnold, of Check Warrant Report #987 in the amount of \$94,396.96. Calloway, Layton, Arnold: Yes; Vincent: No; Smith: Abstain.

**Motion passed.**

Vincent moved that any subsequent warrant articles shall be broken out to show the correct fund from which it draws. Second Smith. Four: Yes; Arnold: No. **Motion passed.**

4. **Town Manager request to move monies to cover unanticipated expenses.** Duffy reported that several budget line items have been overspent, necessitated by a number of factors not originally foreseen, including in particular the more than \$70,000 in severance paid to the last Town Manager to cover his accrued vacation time, etc. In response to Arnold, Duffy assured, however, that there is no shortage of funds to meet such requirements. Calloway added that it should be understood that all expenditures involved were approved by the Board. There was discussion of whether given these facts it might not be necessary to move funds from one source to another. The Board reached consensus, as voiced explicitly by the Chair, that at least for the rest of the current fiscal year in fact, it was not necessary to make any such move, thus obviating

any potential motion in that regard.

Omer Trajman, via Zoom, observed that the Town is spending 3% of its budget on legal fees for outside counsel and said he hopes that will soon be a topic of discussion at one of the Board's meetings. Calloway replied that it will indeed be on the agenda for a meeting soon.

**5. Town Manager open position updates.** Duffy reported that the DPW has had a building and grounds position open for 7 months. The Town's management now wishes to eliminate that position while meeting the needs of the Recreation Department for mowing by covering it as part of the requirements met through the already-approved new position for an assistant to the Recreation Director while at the same time creating a new equipment operator position in DPW. Duffy expects that the necessary mowing work need not, however, be delayed until the next fiscal year begins July 1 since there are funds available for that purpose already in the DPW budget. Kaufman added via Zoom that he thinks this could be a win-win for the two departments.

Duffy said it was not necessary to approve this initiative at that time. At the meeting April 12, more questions can be answered and any concerns the union may raise can be addressed. He reported he has already informed the union that the Board would be considering these issues.

Swenson assured that the worker reporting to her for building and grounds work will do much more than just mowing, including lining the playing fields, youth sports scheduling, and supervising the skating rink. She reported this is the same model employed by Woodstock already. She said the "Aftercare" program revenues are what will enable this plan.

Regarding keeping the skating rink in shape during the season, Swenson averred not to worry, saying, "We have a very strong head hoser who's just moved to town."

Further discussion centered on the need for further information including a formal job description.

Richards via Zoom characterized as a "serious omission" that to his knowledge no action has as yet been taken to address the import of the support expressed by 681 citizens who voted for adding one more officer to the police force. He wondered aloud how that may be funded. Calloway reminded him that the Board has already addressed this issue by taking the Town's vote under advisement. Richards suggested the Town may need a special Town Meeting. "We haven't forgotten about this," Calloway replied.

Cushman via Zoom said he hopes the Board will consider how the required equipment will reflect on the Town's intent regarding the environment. He reminded that the approval of buying new equipment also sanctioned investigating electric alternatives. Metcalf via Zoom asked how the new hire will help in the winter months and whether that might require, for example, operating specialized equipment to clear sidewalks. Calloway responded that they will, indeed, need an answer to that question.

Duffy said that although their efforts to recruit candidates for a well-compensated permanent Zoning Administrator/Planning Director position have been authorized for some time, no qualified applicants have emerged. For the immediately foreseeable future, therefore, they intend to continue the relevant contract with Two Rivers. Unfortunately, however, the Planning Commission's rewriting of the land use and zoning guidelines have stalled as a result of this vacancy and therefore they are wondering if support for those efforts could be contracted out as well.

There has been a similar lack of success in hiring a permanent Finance Director and Duffy reported that the current interim incumbent has notified that she will not seek to extend that contract past its expiration at the end of April.

These positions have been extensively advertised on Indeed and the Listserv as well as in the Valley News and at VLCT. Given the paucity of results, however, there was general discussion of how best to pursue successful recruiting, including the potential need to increase the advertised compensation as well as the need to replace the current incumbent post haste. Another possibility discussed was changing the requirements to better suit a senior accountant with perhaps less direct managerial experience than has thus far been contemplated. Smith moved, seconded by Layton, to authorize the Interim Town Manager to work with Robert Half on all of the services they provide to try to identify someone that could fill in as our Finance Director and come to the Board with a proposal for its April 12 meeting. **Passed unanimously.**

There was discussion of how the role of the Assistant to the Town Manager's role may be expanded to focus more on human resources and grantsmanship as well as how best to accommodate any need for additional office space as an additional assistant is brought on as has also been authorized. This position will serve needs of the DPW as well as the Town Manager, but will report only to the latter. Bergmeier said she appreciates the Board's attention to these matters. Lily Trajman reminded the Board that several entities currently make use of the conference room, including for election-related activities, and asked that that be taken into account in any reallocation of space.

Arnold moved, seconded by Layton, to authorize the Interim Town Manager to continue to advertise to fill the open positions as discussed over the remainder of the current

fiscal year. **Approved unanimously.**

Arnold moved, seconded by Layton, to authorize the interim Town Manager to advertise for the FY24 position of Administrative Assistant for Town Administration and Public Works immediately. **Approved unanimously.**

Arnold moved to authorize the Interim Town Manager to promote the current Assistant to the Town Manager to Assistant Town Manager [note that the presence or absence of “the” in these titles is more significant than it might appear, conferring greater authority to the bearer without it], with the grade and step of 16L, effective April 1. Layton, Arnold, Calloway, Vincent: Yes; Smith: Abstain. **Motion Passed.**

**6. Review of COLA Bonus inconsistencies.** There was Board consensus that the uncertainties around how the COLA bonus incentives passed in 2022 have been implemented require attention, particularly since, as Duffy pointed out, recently no one has been receiving these. Arnold moved, seconded by Layton, to clarify the Selectboard’s motion of July 13, 2022 to define eligible employees for the purposes of the FY2023 COLA bonus payments as those employees eligible for annual COLA increases and to approve the prior payments that may have included additional employees in error. **Passed unanimously.**

Richards commented that two employees who happen to be union members and have gone well beyond the strict requirements of their jobs during the recent labor shortage are particularly deserving. Duffy responded that a problem has been that the union said they could not accept the payments, and not because that was the Town’s intent. Richards countered that he had heard it was because of “strings attached.” Powell, also via Zoom, as president of the union local, stated agreement with Richards and specified that the issue was related to terms the last Town Manager attempted to impose concerning any exceptions that might be made in disciplinary cases.

Sofronas commented that in 34 years at the Post Office and 26 years in the Army, he observed that both gave COLA to all employees regardless of union status. Metcalf spoke in agreement. Arnold pointed out, however, that the issue at hand was not about COLAs, per se, but rather about bonuses that might be given in addition.

Smith moved, seconded by Vincent, that any employees who may have received such bonuses in error in the past will be allowed to keep them. **Passed unanimously.**

**7. SB Planning Schematic and Calloway cover memo.** It was agreed, at the Chair’s request, that Arnold, Layton, and Bergmeier will work on further developing personnel policies and report on progress at the second meeting in April.

**8. IREC report dated February 2023, submitted to the SB in the 03/22/2023 packet.** The Intermunicipal Regional Energy Coordinator (IREC) program, which is hosted by the Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) and was formed in 2020, has submitted a report for the Town's consideration. Gray mentioned that Jeffrey Grout, the new Coordinator, has made it clear he's very much available to help with any energy-related grant applications.

**9. Future Agenda Items.** Issues to be addressed at the April 12 and 26 meetings include the Town Manager search, school board payments, and an application for a potential retail cannabis establishment, as well as extending an invitation to meet with the IREC.

**Adjournment.** Vincent moved, seconded by Smith, to adjourn the meeting. **Passed unanimously at 10:17 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Ralph C. Hybels, Minutes Taker

Approved by the Selectboard on April 12, 2023

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Marcia Calloway, Selectboard Chair