

CHARLOTTE SELECTBOARD SPECIAL MEETING
Monday, January 6, 2025
Charlotte Town Hall 159 Ferry Road and via teleconference

SELECTBOARD MEMBERS: *In person:* James Faulkner, Chair; Frank Tenney, Vice Chair; Lewis Mudge, (remote and in person); Natalie Kanner; Kelly Devine

ADMINISTRATION: Nathaniel Bareham Town Administrator

OTHERS:

In person: Julie Phelps, Maura Wygmans, Brandon Tieso, Charles Russell, Jack Pilla, Chris Boffa, Larry Sommers, Richard Hendrickson, Bill Stuono

Remote: Paul Plante, Nancy Faulkner

AGENDA ITEMS:

- 6:30 PM Approval of Consent Agenda
a) Updated Agreement with CCRPC for Planning Support Services
b) Meeting Minutes for December 16, 2024
- 6:36 PM Approval of Warrants to Pay Bills
- 6:40 PM Selectboard & Town Administrator Updates
a) Jim Faulkner – Spear Street Repair Project
b) Nate Bareham – Committee Grant & Accounting Practices
- 6:45 PM Public Comment
- 6:50 PM Committee Article Requests, and Presentations:
a) Recreation Commission
b) Trails Committee
- 7:15 PM Selectboard Budget Review with the Town Treasurer and Town Administrator
- 8:10 PM Discussion, and possible action, on the Town Planner job description and vacancy
- 8:20 PM Evaluation of a Public Officer – Possible executive session per 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3)
- 8:30 PM Adjournment

Call to Order

James Faulkner called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

Approval of Consent Agenda

James Faulkner stated that tonight's consent agenda consists of two items only.

- a) Updated Agreement with CCRPC for Planning Support Services**
- b) Meeting Minutes for December 16, 2024**

MOTION by Natalie Kanner, seconded by Frank Tenney, to approve the consent agenda for January 6, 2025, as presented. VOTE: 4 ayes, 0 nays, 1 absent (Devine); Motion Carried.

Approval of Warrants to Pay Bills

Warrants were signed.

Selectboard & Town Administrator Updates

a) Jim Faulkner – Spear Street Repair Project

James Faulkner stated that the slough portion of the Spear Street project is finished and it was done exceptionally well. Tomorrow SD Ireland will be coming in to lay the cement. Things are moving along well in general.

Kelly Devine arrived at the meeting in person at 6:37 p.m.

b) Nate Bareham – Committee Grant & Accounting Practices

Nathaniel Bareham stated that an update for the Selectboard and all committees and commission members is that there are some additional procedures for grant administration. A copy of the

form that was shared with him will be implemented rapidly. The second thing is that there was an email sent out last May to help committees and commissions to collaborate. He went on to state that this email was to make sure that we are all operating under the same pretense, such as open meeting law procedures etc. This email will be sent out again as a reminder of these things and to make sure that all are aware of the requirements of Vermont state statute as well as our local policies and procedures. Nathaniel Bareham stated that the third update is mandatory ethics training. There has been a legislative update where municipal officers are now required to take certain ethics trainings that has also been extended to quasi-judicial committees and commissions. He went on to state that he will be sending out an email to any applicable municipal officers or committee or commission members who are required to take that training. This will be kept on record in the Town Hall.

Public Comment

None

Committee Article Requests, and Presentations:

James Faulkner explained that there won't be discussion from the Selectboard regarding the presentations. This time is just to allow for the presentation of the information of the budgets and it will be discussed further at next week's regularly scheduled Selectboard meeting.

a) Recreation Commission

Julie Phelps, Maura Wygmans and Brandon Tieso reviewed the Recreation Infrastructure, Maintenance & Capital Asset Planning document that is included in tonight's meeting packet. Julie Phelps stated that the projects completed during FY24/25 were the bathhouse septic replacement at \$14,290 covered by a grant, playground wood chips at \$950 covered by beach maintenance funds, tree removal at \$4,100 covered by the Tree Warden budget, minor court repair with no cost since it was covered by the Advantage Tennis warrant and new picnic tables at \$865 covered by beach maintenance funds. She went on to state that the planned/budgeted for repairs and maintenance projects for FY25 include the rink electrical box & pedestal repairs – \$6,200 (R & I Fund), beach access stair repairs – \$10,000 (R & I Fund), bath house interior repainting – \$1,000 (beach maintenance), minor court repair – \$0 (warranty), recreation storage shed replacement – \$6,000 (R & I Fund). Julie Phelps stated that the anticipated repairs and maintenance projects include updating the skating rink lighting to LED, the beach parking lot will need to be graded and will need new gravel, the slide on the playground needs repair and the dock floats that have been found need repair.

Discussion was had regarding the past Recreation Director, Nicole Conley's plan to replace one light per year at the skating rink due to the expense.

Julie Phelps stated that there has been one light replaced so far. The cost for each light is \$600. There are five lights left needing to be repaired.

Julie Phelps stated that other anticipated repairs and maintenance projects include replacing rusted grills, improving court perimeter drainage, baseball field repairs, replacing disc golf tees and bathhouse roof repairs.

Kelly Devine asked if the Recreation Commission has a plan built into the budget that shows the lifespan of things and likely timelines for replacement.

Julie Phelps stated that what they're trying to do is prioritize needs of the town beach and accomplish them accordingly. The Charlotte Recreation & the Recreation Commission would like the town's support to embark on a long-term capital project which would be to build an ADA accessible bathhouse & pavilion at the Charlotte Town Beach. The estimated cost to renovate/replace the bathhouse and pavilion is roughly \$750,000. She went on to state that currently there is no place to take shelter during inclement weather. The plan involves generating the required 50% match funds so that they can apply for the ANR Land and Water Conservation Fund grant. Town support is needed for this multi-year comprehensive plan to renovate the bathhouse. This match is envisioned to be accomplished through multiple avenues of fundraising such as a fundraising drive and through fundraisers like the soccer jamboree etc. The Recreation Department and Recreation Commission would like to put out an article to the town for funding through the Capital Fund as well.

Discussion was had regarding the recreation funds that are generated through fundraising and in general all goes to Mary Mead and the funds get put into the Capital Reserve Fund. A specific amount of money could be earmarked for this project.

Laura Wygmans stated that she is a licensed Architect in the state of VT and she runs a design build company with her husband. In her professional opinion the bathhouse is declining and in need of renovations. It doesn't meet ADA accessibility standards or the needs of the diverse

population of Charlotte residents which includes mobility impaired folks and gender diverse folks. She went on to review from the Recreation Infrastructure, Maintenance & Capital Asset Planning document all of the shortcomings that make the bathhouse not ADA accessible. The Recreation Department and Recreation Commission are asking the Selectboard to approve an Article dedicating \$40,000 to the Recreation Capital Fund for an ADA Accessible Bathhouse & Pavilion. Maura Wygmans went on to state that the Recreation Department generated roughly \$44,000 in revenue and this was done each year, the past three years. Funds could be raised for the matching grant in three to five years if the annually dispersed funds from the Capital Reserve Funds of \$40,000 was achieved along with fundraising.

Frank Tenney stated that an article can't be approved by a Selectboard for multiple years. It's for one year only. Mary Mead concurred.

Brandon Tieso stated that the neighboring town of Shelburne has a town beach with a bathhouse that is beautiful and it cost them \$750,000 and took them eight years to complete. He reviewed the draft concept budget in the Recreation Infrastructure, Maintenance & Capital Asset Planning document that showed soft costs/engineering fees to be \$40,000, building costs to be \$625,000, landscaping to be \$25,000 and with a 10% contingency amount of \$60,000 giving a grand total estimate of \$750,000.

Lewis Mudge arrived at the meeting in person at 6:56 p.m.

Brandon Tieson went on to state that the Recreation Commission requests additional funding to complete the seasonal beach access ramp to be located north of Holmes bridge. This ramp improves access to the water for various recreational activities and visitors. The estimated cost is \$20,000 and would come from the Recreation Capital Improvement Fund.

Maura Wygmans read the article. Discussion was had regarding optimal language for the article. Maura Wygman stated that the example of the pavilion in Shelburne is simply a covered 16' by 16' area in front of the bathhouse. The Shelburne folks call their pavilion the front porch of the bathhouse.

Discussion was had regarding potential layouts for the bathhouse. The Shelburne town beach bathhouse was defined as a good example of what the Recreation Commission is envisioning. Photos were provided.

Kelly Devine received confirmation that the Selectboard can actually grant these funds to the Recreation Department from the Capital Reserve Funds. It doesn't have to go out for a town wide vote.

Natalie Kanner received confirmation that the Recreation Department is still \$40,000 to \$50,000 short for their 50% matched funds.

b) Trails Committee

Members of the Trails Committee, Jack Pilla, Richard Hendrickson, Chris Boffa and Larry Sommers presented and shared slides of the Article Funding to Support Development of the Charlotte Town Link Trail, 2025 document. This is in tonight's meeting packet.

Jack Pilla gave a review of the background of the development of the Charlotte Town Link Trail and how it was added to the town plan back in the 1990s. The goal of the Town Link Trail is to connect the town trails in order to create a trail network connecting the Town Beach, West Charlotte, Mt Philo State Park and East Charlotte. Currently the Trails Committee is working on the Route 1/Phase 1.

Richard Hendrickson reviewed all portions of the trail that have been completed. The trails consist of different types; gravel, dirt and mowed grass. It will take time to get all the trails to the envisioned specification. A map within the shared Article Funding to Support Development of the Charlotte Town Link Trail, 2025 document was reviewed showing the area of trail that will be completed with the funding from the Article if approved and with the Trails Reserve Funds. The Article is requesting \$62,000 and \$33,046 would be used from the Trails Reserve Fund for the completion of this section of trail which comes to a grand total of \$95,046. This would leave about \$20,000 in the Trails reserve Fund for other trail improvements.

Jack Pilla stated that they applied for a \$40,000 state grant to do trail maintenance work to the trails. If the funds are granted it wont be until July.

Chris Boffa stated that a plan for building this section of trail has been made with the use of VTrans guidelines for gravel type and depths, signage and safety protocol. Hugh Lewis Junior was involved in this planning as well and they have implemented his input into the final planning. All of his concerns were addressed accordingly. He agreed that the estimated costs for this project were on target. Chris Boffa went on to state that the plan includes the trail stopping and starting outside of the RR crossing right of way. Currently there is a standard RR crossing

that people have been going across at that section of Ferry Rd on bike and foot for years. This project brings the trail outside the right of way and the construction includes placement of bollards and signage in order to give all the highest degree of safety. Pedestrians would cross the RR tracks the way they have always done.

James Faulkner stated that once the trail is placed at the location of crossing the RR tracks the town of Charlotte becomes liable. He went on to stress that a professional engineer needs to be involved in this process due to this fact.

Chris Boffa stated that an engineer is included in the budget for this project. He highlighted, that the plan for this section of trail is to end and begin outside of the railroad right of way.

Jack Pilla stated that the budget includes funds for an engineer under the category of design work and plans for RFP.

Jack Pilla stated that the ask for \$10,000 is to be part of the annual operating budget to do trail maintenance. This is an amount that will be asked for annually to keep on top of the trails conditions as more trails are built.

Discussion was had regarding the Trails budget in general, the popularity of the trails and the large amount of work done by volunteers historically.

Kelly Devine stated that it's important for town residents to remember there is a cost to all the wonderful things we want for this town and when these things get approved they need to also keep in mind that it effects the town budget. If they vote in favor of all these articles that have a direct impact on the budget they need to also vote in favor of the town budget.

Frank Tenney stated that several committees are all increasing there budgets this coming fiscal year. Not many are level funded.

Kelly Devine stated that the town is facing a 22% increase in the cost of health insurance.

Selectboard Budget Review with the Town Treasurer and Town Administrator

The Budget Report document was reviewed and is included in tonight's meeting packet.

Mary Mead stated that and there are just a few changes to the revenue side of the town budget since the last review with the Selectboard.

Mary Mead stated that under the category, Planning and Zoning the line item, P&Z Grants has been zeroed out since it seems that the grant was never written.

Nathaniel Bareham stated that the intent is to apply for this Grant in March but it is unknown if it will be approved.

Mary Mead stated that the Recreation revenue was increased from \$49,490 to \$65,870 with the return of the Drivers Education Instructor.

Mary Mead stated that it is still unknown as to what will be made from village wastewater use. This fiscal year the town has already collected \$3,000 but that is just in connection fees and it's hard to predict how many connections will come in during the next fiscal year. She went on to state that leaving the amount at \$3,000 is appropriate for the Village Wastewater Fees line item.

Discussion was had regarding the Town's Revenue Budget under the category, Senior Center the line item Senior Center Miscellaneous is zeroed out. The Friends of the Senior Center is not donating those funds this year. The reason is unknown.

Nathaniel Bareham stated that he will check in with the Friends of the Senior Center this Wednesday to find out why.

Mary Mead reviewed the Town's Expense Budget. She stated that under the category Selectboard the line item, Legal Fees is \$35,000 and this sum seems too low. The legal fees for FY24/25 were at \$52,000 in October.

Kelly Devine stated that the high legal expenses are from the Spear Street construction, the Union negotiations and the fact that there have been more initiative petitions.

Nathaniel Bareham stated that the majority of the legal fees that the town is seeing right now is from the tax appeal and the town is currently in the middle of this. Union negotiations will likely conclude prior to the next fiscal year.

Discussion was had regarding an appropriate amount for the line item, Legal Fees for FY26.

Kelly Devine stated that the line item, Legal Fees should be budgeted for \$75,000 based on the recommendation of the Town Clerk.

All concurred.

Mary Mead stated that the line item Human Resources Consultant should be removed.

Kelly Devine concurred.

Kelly Devine stated that she would like to see the COLA added in just for a placeholder. Mary Mead stated that she will have the 3% adjustment made for the wages by the next Selectboard meeting.

Mary Mead stated that under the category, Planning and Zoning the line item, Intern Stipend, which should be removed since it's never been used and there is no Town Planner to supervise them. She went on to state that the Town Planner is still an expense line item since the decision has not been made yet on what to do about this absent role.

Mary Mead stated that under the category, Assessor the line item, Contract Appraiser is set at \$34,800 which is the same as last year's contract with NEMRC for the Assessor work. The line item, Lister Card Online Service is still unknown. The line item, Computer Software is \$235. The line item, Marshall Swift Service Contract is \$795.

Kelly Devine stated that in regard to the category Employee Benefits, she has concerns that the taxpayer doesn't understand the true cost of running the Town Library and it would make sense to take the expense of the Town Library employee's benefits and put them in the Town Library budget to provide this clarity.

Mary Mead stated that the tax payer has voted in favor of the Town Library budget repeatedly and that has always included their staff salaries and they are obviously getting the same benefits as the other town employees. She does not and will not separate them out. Just the same all that information will be provided as it has been.

Mary Mead stated that the changes to town employees' salaries due to COLA will be child contribution tax, which is small, SS, retirement and the MEDI expense. The health insurance is looking at the actual plans that the employees have chosen.

Nathaniel Bareham stated that the US Bureau of Labor Statistics provides information on COLA and we look at two sources, the Northeast Region and the New England Region. It looks like it is 3.2% at this time.

Discussion was had regarding the current employee's benefits based on their health plan choices and premiums associated with the health plan for January 2025 to June 2025.

Nathaniel Bareham stated that depending on the Union negotiations it is possible that changes to health plan contributions may go into effect by the start of next fiscal year.

Mary Mead stated that under the category, Town Lands there is a new line item, Town Garage Mowing, which is budgeted for \$1,800.

Nathaniel Bareham stated that the Tree Wardens are recommending the line item, Tree Care Treatments be zeroed out but they are recommending that additional money be put into the Tree Fund to cover the cost of any trees that may need to be removed.

Mary Mead stated that under the category Town Garage the line item, utilities needs to be adjusted since the bill for November/December has been received and there was a substantial difference. The monthly bills had been around \$35 but this last bill was about \$300.

Mary Mead stated that the Town Hall, Town Garage and Senior Center utility line items will need to be looked at and will be adjusted for the next Selectboard meeting.

Mary Mead stated that under the category Recreation there is a line item, Beach Attendants and there has been discussion of simply making this one line item for all beach attendants and she is fine with this change.

Mary Mead stated that the Recreation Department is requesting that a Beach Manager position be filled for 30 hours per week at \$20/ hour for a total of 17 weeks. She feels this is unnecessary since the Beach Manager is part of the Recreation Director's job description.

Natalie Kanner stated that she would be curious to know what the Recreation Department was looking for with the Beach Manager Position that is different than what Zach Kanner provides in his role as a Beach Attendant.

Further discussion was had regarding the rationale for the Recreation Department's request for a Beach Manager. Nathaniel Bareham will speak with the Recreation Director regarding this for clarification.

Mary Mead stated that the new slide for the beach could come out of the Recreation Capital Fund.

Mary Mead stated that the Recreation Program Expense has increased from \$27,800 to \$44,000 with the addition of the Drivers' Education Teacher.

Mary Mead stated that under the category Conservation she recommends zeroing out the \$300 expense listed under the line item, Education & Outreach since they have their Special Fund, with a current balance of \$1,711 that can be used for this.

James Faulkner and Lewis Mudge concurred that the \$300 should be taken out of the expenses.

Mary Mead stated that there is a new line item under the category Town Hall and that is the line item, Snow Removal which is \$900.

Nathaniel Bareham stated that it is known that it will cost \$10,000 for necessary computer replacements and he is waiting for a final number from Tech Group for the cost of replacing the server. He will provide this information at the next Selectboard meeting.

Mary Mead stated that under the category, Senior Center, the line item for Trash Removal needs to be increased since CVFRS is once again billing for trash removal at \$160/month. This is something that was ceased during the pandemic. She recommends increasing this amount from \$600 to \$2,520.

Discussion was had regarding seeing this on the revenue side of CVFRS' budget.

Mary Mead stated that she will look into the line item, Energy since the amount could potentially be reduced since the solar panels are bringing in a savings. She will look into this and have the information at the next Selectboard meeting.

Mary Mead stated that under the category Miscellaneous the line item, Trails Committee was originally \$12,500 and she recommends returning the amount to \$1,500. Trails maintenance usually comes out of the Trails Special fund and not this line item.

Discussion was had regarding the Trails Committee and how they historically completed trail maintenance to the trails by using the funds out of their reserve.

Frank Tenney stated that he feels that the \$10,000 should be added to the \$40,000 Article or the Trails Committee should be using a portion of the \$40,000, if they are granted this request with the town vote for the trail maintenance.

All agreed that the change from \$1,500 to \$10,000 was a drastic change and not the right area in the budget for this figure.

Mary Mead stated that the official amount for County Tax is unknown at this time but it will be somewhere around \$45,000.

Mary Mead stated under the category, Transfer to Reserve Fund the Selectboard could decide to transfer whatever amount seems appropriate to the Trails Fund and not put out an article.

Mary Mead stated that the Trails Committee averages around \$5,000 to \$9,000 in donation per year.

Kelly Devine and Natalie Kanner stated that a certain amount of money should be in the budget to take care of the town's trails. All concurred.

Mary Mead stated that in the past, year after year, \$5,000 was transferred to Trails. At this point in time \$10,000 is in the budget for line item Transfer to Trails under the category, Transfer to Reserve Fund.

Mary Mead stated that under the category, Transfer to Reserve Fund, the line item Transfer to Tree Fund is \$2,910. Mary Mead is recommending the amount of \$5,000 to \$8,000 be transferred to the Tree Fund. James Faulkner and Frank Tenney concurred that \$8,000 was an appropriate amount.

Mary Mead stated that if the Selectboard decides to grant the Fire & Rescue what they asked for it would be a transfer to Fire & Rescue Capital of \$15,000 and that would make their appropriation amount \$1,020,246.00. The appropriation is basically a donation each month and it is up to the Selectboard what that amount is.

Mary Mead stated that the category, Repair and Improvement Fund has a balance of \$73,663.

The amount earmarked to date for the Senior Center Roof is \$44,563. There seems to be \$10,000 for the Beach Stairs and \$5,000 for the Museum Roof.

All concurred that the \$5,000 for the Museum Roof was to be covered by a donation.

Mary Mead stated that there is \$54,563 that is spoken for of the Repair and Improvement Fund and \$17,000 remaining that can be designated for another project.

Discussion was had regarding the \$6,100 that was approved to come out of these funds for the electrical repairs at the town skating rink.

Mary Mead stated that this makes \$60,663 that is spoken for and \$13,000 remaining. She went on to state that she doesn't recommend transferring \$80,000 to the Improvement and Repair Fund and she doesn't recommend putting \$60,000 in for the Senior Center Roof. They have the Friends of the Senior Center that can assist them.

Extensive discussion was had amongst the Selectboard and Mary Mead regarding the Improvement and Repair Fund until an amount of \$40,000 was agreed upon to transfer to the Improvement and Repair Fund with \$20,000 allocated for the Senior Center roof and \$20,000 for Emergency Repairs.

Discussion was had regarding granting CVFRS all that they are asking for financially or not. It was decided that the town budget needs its updates and then this question can be looked at again and discussed in the next couple of meetings.

Nathaniel Bareham stated that under the expense budget category Miscellaneous the line item Traffic Enforcement is \$35,000. The town has historically contracted traffic enforcement services for 8-9 hours a week. In July the Selectboard expressed interest as a whole in having more hours in the contract since there was such positive feedback. In the Town's Revenues budget under the category Court Fines and under the line item Court Fines-highways, FY24 there was \$9,915.13 and FY25 the town is on track with estimated \$10,000.

Kelly Devine and Lewis Mudge concurred that it's not in the budget to increase the hours of the contract this year.

Discussion, and possible action, on the Town Planner job description and vacancy

Kelly Devine stated that she is in favor of a small committee being established that would clarify the needs for this position such as the ability to do grant writing, policy and planning work.

It would make sense to be open minded to a Town Administrator Assistant vs a Town Planner.

James Faulkner stated that he feels this is straight forward and he's not in favor of forming a small committee as these small committees take up time. The position needs to include; town planning, assisting Nathaniel Bareham and grant writing. He went on to state that he knows of a candidate that is capable.

Nathaniel Bareham stated that his intent is to reach out to members of the DRB, PC, as well as the Town Hall staff, in order to come up with what is truly needed for this role.

James Faulkner stated as long as it can get done in a timely fashion.

Bill Stuono stated that Charlotte doesn't have the traditional needs for a Town Planner, with very little commercial space and no water and sewer. In Williston they have a special dedicated Conservation Planner. There are towns similar to the size and needs of Charlotte that have one person in their Planning and Zoning department. He went on to state that in Westford one person runs that department and they have part time office hours. The town of Ferrisburgh has two employees total. He urged the Selectboard to keep in mind the joint meeting that is coming up with CCRPC, the DRB and the PC. This is a great topic for this meeting so these groups can sort out what the Planning and Zoning department needs. Bill Stuono went on to state that Rebecca Kaplan's role may need to change and it's possible that the two full time employees are enough for the P & Z department. If Nathaniel Bareham needs help than a part time Administrative Assistant should be hired.

Discussion was had regarding a possible plan going forward.

Kelly Devine stated that she would work with Nathaniel Bareham and Frank Tenney on this.

Nathaniel Bareham stated that January is a very busy month for him.

Further discussion was had regarding how to collect the information for the job description and who could facilitate this gathering of information.

Charles Russell stated that it seems as though it's not cost effective to be paying \$60/hour to the CCRPC vs having someone in house that could do this work. It's important to figure out what is needed by Nathaniel Bareham, the PC and the DRB. He went on to state that the plan before Larry Lewack left was to have a consultant help out with the town plan and a grant was supposed to cover the expense. It's unknown if this is still the plan.

Discussion was had.

Frank Tenney and Natalie Kanner will collaborate and gather information from the Conservation Commission, the PC and the DRB. They will do this and consult with Nathaniel Bareham to

create a job description to be completed by January 27, 2025, which is the second regularly scheduled Selectboard meeting in the month of January.

Evaluation of a Public Officer – Possible executive session per 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3)

MOTION by Kelly Devine, seconded by Natalie Kanner, to enter into executive session for the evaluation of a public officer pursuant to 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3). I further invite Nathaniel Bareham, Town Administrator into this session. VOTE: 5 ayes, 0 nays; Motion Carried.

MOTION by Frank Tenney, seconded by Kelly Devine, to exit out of executive session. VOTE: 5 ayes, 0 nays; Motion Carried.

Kelly Devine stated that no action was taken.

Adjournment

MOTION by James Faulkner, seconded by Lewis Mudge, to adjourn. VOTE: 5 ayes, 0 nays; Motion Carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:07 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Brooke Milo, Minute Taker.
Edits by Nathaniel Bareham.