

CHARLOTTE SELECTBOARD MEETING
Monday, February 12, 2024
Charlotte Town Hall 159 Ferry Road and via teleconference

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

ADMINISTRATION: Nathaniel Bareham Town Administrator

OTHERS:

In person: Scooter MacMillan, Brandon Tieso, Damaris Herlihy, JD Herlihy, Adam Dantzschler, Jack Pilla, Lane Morrison, Mike Dorsy, Robin Reid, Peter Joslin, Tanna Kelton, Charlie Pughe, Alexa Lewis, Jim Hyde, Gerald Bouchard, Bill Stuono, Carrie Spear, Kyra Wegman

Remote: Alex Bunten, C Sloan, Chea Evans, Doug Paton, Janet Morrison, Junior Lewis, Juliann Phelps, Lori York, Moe Harvey, Natalie Kanner, Paige Reynolds, Paul Plante, Peggy Sharpe, Susan Crockenberg, Vince Crockenberg, Susan Hyde, Susan Smith, Claudia Mucklow

AGENDA ITEMS:

- 6:30 PM** **Adjustments to the Agenda**
- 6:31 PM** **Approve Warrants to Pay Bills**
- 6:35 PM** **Selectboard's Updates**
- 6:45 PM** **Town Administrator's Updates**
- 6:50 PM** **Public Comment**
- 6:55 PM** **Discussion of Traffic Calming & Road Signs on Ferry Road**
- 7:10 PM** **Request for Proposal – Town Lands Brush Hogging**
- 7:20 PM** **Request for Proposal – Town Lands Mowing**
- 7:30 PM** **Request for Proposal – Town Cemetery Mowing**
- 7:40 PM** **Public Hearing on the Petitioned-for Charter for Town Manager**
- 8:40 PM** **Approve Meeting Minutes: - January 8th, 2024 - January 16th, 2024 -
January 22nd, 2024 - January 29th, 2024**
- 8:45 PM** **Adjournment**

Call to Order

James Faulkner called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Adjustments to the Agenda

None.

Approve Warrants to Pay Bills

Warrants were signed.

Selectboard's Updates

James Faulkner stated that on February 19, 2024, the solar panels will be installed on the Town Garage roof. This is happening sooner than expected, which is a positive development. He went

on to state that the sooner they are installed the sooner the town can begin to save money. Starting tonight the Town Administrator will have an agenda item entitled Town Administrator's Updates where Nathaniel Bareham will report on the projects he has been working on.

Town Administrator's Updates

Nathaniel Bareham stated that Karina Warshaw will be stepping down as the Emergency Management Coordinator. In the near future he will take part in a meeting with Karina Warshaw and Chris Davis to discuss the process going forward. This is a stipend position.

Public Comment

None.

Discussion of Traffic Calming & Road Signs on Ferry Road

James Faulkner stated that Jack Pilla submitted a report regarding his survey on traffic calming on Ferry Rd.

Jack Pilla stated that since the trail was created by the old Health Center and ending on Ferry Rd there has been increased pedestrian traffic. Signage is the most financially efficient way to help with safety in this area at this time. He went on to state that he submitted a survey to residents asking if they support adding signage to Ferry Rd between Greenbush Rd and the RR tracks to increase drivers awareness to pedestrians and 83 people responded. Jack Pilla reviewed his submitted report of this survey which is available in tonight's meeting packet.

Discussion was had regarding white and yellow road signs. It was clarified that the yellow road signs are recommendations and don't require a road study.

Jack Pilla stated that he proposed that the first sign, which would be the "CAUTION WATCH FOR CHILDREN, JOGGERS, BICYCLISTS, PEDESTRIANS" would go below the existing speed limit sign coming down the hill. The second sign, which is "DO NOT PASS", is proposed to be placed just below Sunset Rd since that's where motorists tend to pass. The third sign, which is "BLIND DRIVEWAY", is proposed to be placed in the area just before Lynrick Acres Rd. The fourth sign, which is "25 MPH" is proposed to be placed further down from there.

James Faulkner stated that Jack Pilla would need to submit these locations in writing with a map showing specifically where the proposed locations are for the requested signage.

Kelly Devine stated that she would like Nathaniel Bareham to look into what the Selectboard is capable of implementing without a traffic study so the board can be informed for this request as well as other locations in the town that are in need of traffic calming measures.

Damaris Herlihy stated that you cannot get to the center of town safely from the boardwalk trail. A speed study that was done a few years ago showed that every 1.5 hours a motorist traveled down Ferry Rd at a speed of 70 MPH and over. She went on to state that with the boardwalk there now and increased pedestrian traffic she's in favor of reducing the speed to 25 MPH in that area.

James Faulkner stated that the town has a speed cart that could be placed at the location for starters.

Damaris Herlihy stated that she spoke with the Chittenden County Sheriff and he was very kind and asked for specific locations to monitor and timing as well as what types of vehicles to be on the look out for. She plans to collaborate with neighbors and provide this information to Nathaniel Bareham who will communicate with the Chittenden County Sheriff.

Mike Dorsey stated that he lives off from Ferry Rd and the motorists speeds are worse than what the survey portrays. Reviewing the steps taken for Bean Rd may be of helpful guidance with this process.

Charles Russell stated that the Bean Rd study was done and recommended steps were taken with the use of a grant and there should be something in the town files regarding this information.

J.D. Herlihy stated that there are past traffic studies and he wonders if they could still be in the time frame of usefulness for this process that would eliminate the need for further studies to accomplish this.

Nathaniel Bareham confirmed that he will look into the timeline requirements of traffic studies.

Jack Pilla stated that the cost of the four signs and hardware excluding the posts comes to an estimated \$369.64.

James Faulkner stated the size of the signs and posts would be determined by Junior Lewis. This will be discussed again at the next Selectboard meeting on February 26, 2024.

Request for Proposal

James Faulkner stated that the process for the RFPs has been modified with the use of mapping software which has been completed by Nathaniel Bareham.

Nathaniel Bareham stated that he used software to modify and update the RFP process for town lands by using more up to date and accurate maps.

Request for Proposal – Town Lands Brush Hogging

Nathaniel Bareham presented the maps and stated that there were new areas that he would like to see added in efforts to better brush hog areas in certain locations on the north end of Lanes Lane, the north end of Thompson's Point Rd and the east side of Flat Rock Rd

Adam Dantzscher stated he has done the brush hogging for the town of Charlotte for 6 years. He went on to state that he recommends doing the areas in blue at least every 3 years as there is new growth that occurs. The areas that are blue and double lined on the map is what Junior Lewis does and it's recommended to have this done twice a year due to the heavy growth and the amount of poison parsnip that is growing heavily in that area. Adam Dantzscher stated that it's in the town's best interest to keep the fields used for haying as large as possible by brush hogging. The red outlined areas have historically been brush hogged and will continue to be brush hogged. There are areas that are highlighted in yellow that may need attention as well, such as the baseball fields and the trails.

Nathaneil Bareham stated that the Town Garage will be an hourly rate since the grounds are still under construction and therefore a set rate can't yet be determined. This will be finalized and presented for vote at the next Selectboard meeting.

Request for Proposal – Town Lands Mowing

Nathaniel Bareham stated that it was recommended by Sue Smith that the pruning at the Town Beach be removed and she would be willing to do this task. He went on to state that Patrice Machavern requested that language be added to the mowing RFPs that would include movement of chairs and picnic tables during mowing and replacement to original locations.

Lewis Mudge arrived at the meeting in person.

Nathaniel Bareham stated that there was an additional request by Bill Regan stating that the Trails Committee would like mowing along the east side of the ice rink so the trail that is there can be accessed.

Request for Proposal – Town Cemetery Mowing

Nathaniel Bareham stated that the RFP for the cemetery mowing is unchanged.

Nathaniel Bareham reviewed all of the town lands with the use of the updated map software. Action on these town lands RFPs will take place at the next Selectboard meeting.

Approve Meeting Minutes: - January 8th, 2024 - January 16th, 2024 - January 22nd, 2024, January 29th, 2024

MOTION by Kelly Devine, seconded by Frank Tenney, to approve the Selectboard meeting minutes for January 08th, 16th, 22nd, and 29th, 2024. VOTE: 5 ayes, 0 nays; Motion Carried.

MOTION by Kelly Devine, seconded by James Faulkner, to take a ten minute recess at this time and to reconvene at 7:37pm. VOTE: 5 ayes, 0 nays; Motion Carried.

MOTION by Frank Tenney, seconded by Lewis Mudge, to come out of recess. VOTE: 5 ayes, 0 nays; Motion Carried.

Public Hearing on the Petitioned-for Charter for Town Manager

James Faulkner stated that this is the third time that the town has had an opportunity to come together to discuss this topic of Town Manager. With the petition for Town Manager the Selectboard was prompted to look for ways to become more efficient which included adding duties to the Town Administrator's job description. He went on to state that the timing of this was difficult with Dean Bloch retiring as Charlotte's Town Administrator and Nathaniel Bareham being a new hire. The Selectboard made sure to take some time to be sure that Nathaniel Bareham was capable of handling these potential increased duties and they were happy to find that he indeed is capable. James Faulkner stated that there is a list that has been put together to add to the Town Administrator duties which will require an update to the Town Administrator's job description. A great example of Nathaniel Bareham's capability and motivation most recently is the updated RFPS for the town lands that he has done to make the RFP process more efficient. He went on to state that another example of Nathaniel Bareham capabilities has been seen with the work he has done on the town budget, collaborating with Mary Mead to find areas to save money and this included the challenge area of the employee benefits expenses.

Lewis Mudge concurred with James Faulkner and added by stating the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Vermont presentation for employees was facilitated by Nathaniel Bareham and that had never taken place prior.

James Faulkner stated that there has been discussion regarding CVFRS transitioning to a regional group and Nathaniel Bareham has already taken the initiative of meeting with the Town Manager in Shelburne to start talking about this process.

James Faulkner stated that Mary Mead did an excellent job in assisting the Selectboard with the budget process this year and it's extremely appreciated by all. He went on to state that the

Selectboard is confident that Nathaniel Bareham is capable of completing the updated job description to include additional responsibilities.

Louise McCarren also concurred with James Faulkner and Lewis Mudge, stating Nathaniel Bareham and Mary Mead work and collaborate well together.

Kelly Devine stated that she is hopeful that further areas will be identified that will fit into the scope of the Town Administrator's job description vs the Selectboard.

Frank Tenney cautioned on not overloading the Town Administrator.

Kelly Devine stated that concurrently the Selectboard needs to be looking at the other town employee's job descriptions to assure their time is well used and that they are supporting the Town Administrator adequately.

Frank Tenney stated that with these changes in the Town Administrator's job description there will also be a correlated need for policies and ordinances to be amended in order to transfer the authority over to the Town Administrator.

Kelly Devine concurred stating it will be work but not necessarily a lot of work.

Tanna Kelton stated that Claudia Mucklow wrote a post in Front Porch Forum where she had researched towns of similar sizes to Charlotte to see if they had a Town Administrator or a Town Manger. From this information she gathered it was the larger towns that had Town Managers and many of these towns had Town Manager Assistants and some had Town Administrators as well. Tanna Kelton went on to state that Charlotte is a small town and doesn't require a Town Manager. A Town Manager would result in a huge expense to the town.

Robin Reid stated that she's not in favor of a Town Manager.

Bill Stuono stated that he is not in favor of a Town Manager and he is just now reading the Charter for Town Manager policy and passionately feels that this should be made more readily available for town residents to broaden their understanding of the Town Manager role. It should be published in all the papers. He went on to state that with no official formal process if someone were to disagree with a Town Manager's decision their voice wouldn't be heard. He went on to state that a Town Manager Assistant would most definitely be needed which is another stress on the budget. An important consideration is should the Town Manager be a town resident as that's a typical requirement. It's not uncommon for a Town Manager and residents and or the Town Manager and the Selectboard to not get along.

Lewis Mudge received confirmation that it's difficult to remove a Town Manager from his/her role.

Bill Stuono stated that another important consideration is that if a Town Manager were to be voted in Nathaniel Bareham's position would be eliminated and replaced with a new position of Town Manager. This would require that the job be posted to the general public. He went on to state that the Legislature will likely have issue with a citizen's petitioned Charter that doesn't have Selectboard approval. Bill Stuono urged all to consider giving Nathaniel Bareham a chance to settle into his role before considering any changes since he has only been in his role as Town Administrator for three months.

Damaris Herlihy stated that she's not in favor of a Town Manager in the small town of Charlotte. Currently the Town Administrator functions as an extension of the Selectboard with lots of support and collaboration of each other. She went on to state that following reading the Charter it seems as though there would be far more control by one person vs the collaboration of the six. As a town resident working with all five members of the Selectboard and the Town Administrator as well is most advantageous and beneficial by means of being heard and getting things accomplished.

Kyra Wegman stated that she doesn't want to change the town's system of government and therefore is not in favor of a Town Manager.

Chea Evans stated that she is speaking neutrally in efforts to inform the public, when the Legislature considers Town Charters anyone that wants to give testimony will have a chance to be heard but typically the legislative body will honor what the voters have decided upon. A Town Manager job description exists in state statute. She went on to state that the Charter process is quick and uncomplicated.

Alex Bunten stated that he isn't in favor of the change to a Town Manager for the reasons that have been stated already by others this evening.

Charlie Pughe stated that Nathaniel Bareham is going to do great in his role as Town Administrator and along with a capable Selectboard the town will be in good hands. He went on to urge the towns people to elect members for the Selectboard that are going to be most successful in what they do.

Claudia Mucklow stated that she did research and it's premature to have a Town Manager in the town of Charlotte.

Emily Raab stated that she wonders where the money would come from to hire a Town Manager.

Lewis Mudge stated that a Town Manager is going to get paid more than a Town Administrator and often do bring in more staff. The past comparison that was done between the Town Administrator salary and the Town Manager was done with a senior Town Administrator's salary and we now have a new less experienced Town Administrator with a consequent smaller salary. He went on to state that VLCT reported that most Town Managers bring in more staff on average. It seems irresponsible to consider this when the task of reducing town employee benefit expenses is on the horizon.

Kelly Devine stated that it's important to note that there are projects on the Selectboard agenda which includes getting an inventory of all the town assets both the lands and the buildings. With this list the plan is to work with Nathaniel Bareham to construct a Capital plan so that the budget can allow for plans to improve and or repair those town buildings and lands. She went on to state that she and Lewis Mudge are tasked with updating employee benefits. This will include streamlining benefits but also adding wellness features. The regionalization of the CVFRS is a big topic. If the voters approve the Town Manager roles it will need to go through a process of legislature and following this the Selectboard will complete the planning to move forward but it will delay other works on the Selectboard's agenda.

Lewis Mudge and Kelly Devine concurred the process of hiring a Town Manager would be time consuming.

Emily Raab stated that she is not in favor of a Town Manager.

Peggy Sharpe stated that she would like to clarify that the Selectboard would have the authority over any additional hires to assist a Town Manager. The Town Manager wouldn't have the sole authority to hire several new support staff positions and it's important to note that.

Lewis Mudge stated that VLCT did say administrator support staff are common in tandem with a Town Manager position and although the Selectboard would have the final say he himself would be in favor of enabling the Town Manager to do his job as he is with all roles.

Lane Morrison stated that he feels with the proposed Charter Nathaniel Bareham would grow into a Town Manager role vs hiring someone new and if there is a need for additional staff due to more work that would happen regardless of a Town Manager title or a Town Administrator title.

If this were to be voted in then it would be roughly 6 months down the road and Nathaniel Bareham could be the person to take on this role with all of his experience he's attaining now as

Town Administrator. He went on to state that VLCT stated that the median pay for a Town Manager is \$98,000 and therefore bringing in a less experienced Town Manager is going to be less than the median. Currently the Town Administrator salary is set at \$80,000 so the transition to a Town Manager would be as small as a 10% increase. Lane Morrison stated that regionalizing Fire and Rescue or the west or east villages would call for more work to be done and therefore more hires but that's independent of the decision between a Town Manager or a Town Administrator. A Town Manager is not a barrier to the Selectboard. All Selectboards are required to have public comment. He went on to state that the VLCT report shows that there are 40 Town Managers in the state of Vermont and 18 of them have a smaller population than the town of Charlotte. There are 25 Town Administrators in the state of Vermont and only 3 have a population larger than Charlotte.

Peter Joslin stated that he is in favor of a transition to a Town Manager in order to be ready for the future. The Charlotte Town Plan has three chapters that were amended in 2019 and will be amended again by 2027 with the big village planning that is in process currently. He went on to state that chapter one of the Town Plan concludes with an implementation table that consists of roughly 73 actionable strategies to reach the stated goals of Charlotte tomorrow. The Selectboard is responsible for roughly 34 of these strategies or they share it with another entity. Peter Joslin went on to state that this implementation table should be a reference point for the town in order to gauge how the town is making progress toward the future. Charlotte has many policy issues and the way to accomplish these actionable strategies is by hiring a Town Manager to free up the Selectboard so they can address these issues.

Brandon Tieso stated that he has spoken to many other town residents and the consensus has been against a transition to a Town Manager due to not seeing the need for such. The future that Charlotte needs is maintaining the character of the town with its current form of government. Vince Crockenberg stated that he's in favor of a Town Manager government which will provide a balance for the town of Charlotte. He feels this way largely because of his experiences working within the town on long range planning and development. He went on to state that an illustration of the need for this town government change is the west village wastewater planning which began in 2004. There were 2 citizen advisory task forces and he served on the first task force. The 2019 committee members report being unaware of the information or location of the 2 citizen task force reports. A Town Manager would enable reorganization of the town government to allow for the time for the day to day matters that come before the Selectboard and could also allow the time and resources to move forward on crucially important community wide matters in an efficient and effective way.

Charles Russell stated that he's in favor of a Town Manager for many reasons. A Town Manager would make it feasible for a young working individual to be a part of the Selectboard as it would make for a decreased time commitment. He went on to state that last year there were 39 Selectboard meetings which equates to 3¼ meetings per month. The Town Manager would be doing a lot of the work that is done during these Selectboard meetings. Charles Russell stated that some of the issues require a Town Administrator to work with the Selectboard and then again attend the Selectboard meeting to help facilitate completion of a task because the Selectboard needs to discuss the issue as a whole and vote. Therefore, the town is paying the Town Administrator for more time than is needed on issues in general. He went on to state that he does appreciate the efforts the Selectboard has put into looking at adding to the Town Administrator's responsibilities to free up more of the Selectboard's time.

Kelly Devine stated that many are speaking for the Selectboard members by stating being a member of the Selectboard is too much of a time commitment. Despite working a very busy full time job she doesn't feel working on the Selectboard is too much. She would like the town to give the Selectboard some time to work on the big projects that they're currently working on. She went on to state that a Town Manager may be appropriate down the road but now is not the time. Due to significantly changing the position's duties from a Town Administrator to a Town Manager the process of new hire would have to be taken, which would take time away from the projects at hand.

Frank Tenney concurred with Kelly Devine stating that he feels both working full time and being a Selectboard member is not too much. Evidence of this is the fact that he attends on his own volition most of the PC and DRB meetings, attending roughly 80% of the meetings in general. He went on to state that he feels the town is not ready for a Town Manager at this point in time.

Adjournment

MOTION by James Faulkner, seconded by Louis Mudge, to adjourn. VOTE: 4 ayes, 0 nays 1 absent (McCarren); Motion Carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:51 p.m.

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