

**Town of Charlotte
Selectboard
Meeting Conducted At Town Hall and via Teleconference
February 26, 2022**

APPROVED

Selectboard—*in person*: James Faulkner (Chair), Frank Tenney (Vice Chair), Louise McCarren; *remote*: Matthew Krasnow, Lewis Mudge

Staff: Dean Bloch, Town Administrator (in person); Danielle Atherton, Recording Secretary (remote).

OTHERS (all remote): Mike Yantachka, Susan Hyde, Fritz Tegatz, Caitlin Herr, Devin St. George, Patrice Machavern, Jonathan Silverman, Nicole Conley, Susan Smith, Jules Polk

Posted Agenda:

Public Information Hearing for Australian Ballot Articles to be Voted at the Annual Meeting; the following articles are to be voted:

Article 1: Will the voters of the Town vote, pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 4773, to have Property Taxes payable on or before November 15, 2022 and to have payments made to the Town Treasurer as receiver of taxes?

Article 2: Will the Town vote pursuant to 32 VSA § 3840 to exempt property owned by Charlotte Volunteer Fire & Rescue Services, Inc. from education and municipal property taxes for a period of five years commencing with fiscal year 2022-23?

Article 3: Will the voters of the Town approve the Selectboard's budget of \$2,616,067 for the fiscal year July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023 of which an anticipated sum of \$1,104,610 will be raised by property taxes and an anticipated sum of \$1,511,457 will be raised by non-tax revenues?

Article 4: Will the voters of the Town approve an allocation of \$890,526 to Charlotte Volunteer Fire and Rescue Services, Inc. for the fiscal year July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023, to be raised by property taxes?

Article 5: Will the voters of the Town approve an allocation to the Charlotte Library for the fiscal year July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023 of \$283,515, to be raised by property taxes?

Article 6: Will the voters of the Town approve raising a sum of \$50,000 by property taxes for the fiscal year July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023 for the purpose of funding a feasibility study for the Charlotte Community Center project?

Article 7: To elect Town Officers.

CALL TO ORDER: James Faulkner called the meeting to order at 9:01am.

James Faulkner explained that none of the articles can be amended. The intent of the meeting is for informational purposes.

Article 1: Will the voters of the Town vote, pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 4773, to have Property Taxes payable on or before November 15, 2022 and to have payments made to the Town Treasurer as receiver of taxes?

Dean Bloch explained residents may pay throughout the year, however November 15 is the actual due date.

Article 2: Will the Town vote pursuant to 32 VSA § 3840 to exempt property owned by Charlotte Volunteer Fire & Rescue Services, Inc. from education and municipal property taxes for a period of five years commencing with fiscal year 2022-23?

Dean Bloch explained this has been approved in the past, as well as other non-profit organizations.

Article 3: Will the voters of the Town approve the Selectboard's budget of \$2,616,067 for the fiscal year July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023 of which an anticipated sum of \$1,104,610 will be raised by property taxes and an anticipated sum of \$1,511,457 will be raised by non-tax revenues?

Dean Bloch explained this item can't be modified today, however at a regular town meeting people could request an increase/decrease. Mike Yantachka asked for clarification on what qualifies as non-tax revenues. Dean Bloch answered it is in the Town Report on Page 11. He shared the document which included Thompson's Point rent, PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) from the State, Railroad Tax, Town Clerk Recording Fees, Planning and Zoning Fees, Senior Center Rentals and Income, Beach Fees, Recreational Programs, as well as additional fees and grants.

Article 4: Will the voters of the Town approve an allocation of \$890,526 to Charlotte Volunteer Fire and Rescue Services, Inc. for the fiscal year July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023, to be raised by property taxes?

Fritz Tegatz introduced Caitlin Herr, the Chief of Rescue, to begin the presentation. Caitlin Herr shared statistics for 2021.

EMS:

- 534 calls in 2021
- 4 Full time staff
- 26 Per-diem staff
- 7 Volunteers

EMS Certifications:

- EMR has 70-80 hours Initial Training with 16 hours of Continuing Education (biannually)
- EMT has 110 hours Initial Training with 40 hours of Continuing Education (biannually)
- AEMT has 140 hours Initial Training with 50 hours of Continuing Education (biannually)
- Paramedic has a 2 year Associate's degree with 60-80 hours of Continuing Education (biannually)

Caitlin Herr explained the levels of care provided, and the importance of having these available instead of waiting to get to the hospital, which greatly improves patient outcomes. The response time for leaving the station is 90 seconds on average and the median arrival time on the scene is 5 minutes. The majority of the calls are Medical, then Trauma, MVA (Motor Vehicle Accidents), Other, Fire and Intercepts. Charlotte has the most rescue calls, followed by Vergennes, Shelburne and Hinesburg. She explained CVFRS is a Paramedic Level Service, which is the only one on the west side of the County. They provide 24/7 ALS coverage, which over 70% of the transported patients received in 2021. They have an AEMT with firefighter certification on most day shifts. Full time staff will cover 75% of weekly shifts reducing the reliance on part-time per diems.

FIRE:

Devin St. George the Town Chief of Fire Operations explained the services provided by the Fire Department.

- Fire Protection
- Ice and Water Rescue
- Rope Rescue
- Heavy Rescue-MVA (Motor Vehicle Accident) extrication
- Backcountry Rescue
- Hazardous Materials Response
- “Good Intent” responses

Devin St. George explained the majority of the calls are Alarm Activations, then MVA, Rescue & EMS, Fires, Hazard, and Other. Mutual Aid (assisting other towns) was provided 40 times in 2021, and it was received 32 times. Firefighters completed 1,425 hours of training in 2021. He addressed the various Community Outreaches the Fire Department has done, but noted many were canceled due to Covid-19.

BUDGET:

Patrice Machavern, the Business Manager, was introduced to explain the budget. She explained the main drivers are:

- Increase in Benefits for 3 additional full-time personnel
- Increase in Patient Billing Revenue
- Increase in Ambulance Assessment Fee and Patient Billing Service Fee directly related to increase in revenue.
- Provides EAP (Employee Assistance Program) to all compensated employees and volunteers

She explained 75% of the funding is provided by the Town of Charlotte, followed by Patient Billing, Capital Reserve and Intercept. The Operating Expenses breakdown is:

- 72.5% Personnel
- 7.3% Insurances
- 6.5% Equipment & Supplies
- 3.5% Apparatus
- 2.8% Other
- 2.3% Contracted Services
- 2.2% Utilities
- 1.8% Facility

The Town Appropriations are approximately \$0.095 on tax rate; 5.4% of total residential tax bill. The Capital Reserve is approximately \$0.007 on tax rate. Patrice Machavern explained the Capital Reserve Fund funds equipment and capital improvements needed for fire and rescue services to the Town.

- \$99,153.00 is Debt Service for bond payments & interest FY23
- \$10,000 is for 3 sets of bunker gear
- \$30,000 is for Heavy Lift Airbags

Matt Krasnow asked what the total budget is for Fire and Rescue, not just the tax impact. Patrice Machavern referred to the Annual Report, page 24. The operating expense will be \$1,069,586. The request from the Town is \$895,026, which is separate from the Capital Reserve Funds. Matt Krasnow would like to see the cumulative expenditures for CVFRS in a graph form, including Grants. Patrice Machavern agreed and she will provide it for the next Town Meeting.

Matt Krasnow questioned when it comes to patient billing, if the resident can't pay, is there still a forgiveness? Patrice Machavern answered every time there is a transport, the patient's insurance is billed. If there is a remaining balance owed, and they are unable to pay, it is not sent to Collections. If the resident is outside of the Charlotte zip code, it is referred to Collections.

Article 5: Will the voters of the Town approve an allocation to the Charlotte Library for the fiscal year July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023 of \$283,515, to be raised by property taxes?

Jonathan Silverman, Library Chair, presented the Charlotte Library budget information. He explained there are currently 31,000 items in circulation, over 5,000 program attendees, and 82% of Charlotters have a library card. He described the salary adjustments from 2021 and the level-funded operating costs for 3+ years, which were approved in November 2021. Matt Krasnow clarified that libraries have statutory authority in the State of Vermont over setting the pay rate for their employees. The Selectboard can only make recommendations, the approval is done by the Library Board of Trustees. In addition, the Library Board of Trustees can override suggestions made by the Selectboard. Jonathan Silverman confirmed both to be true.

Article 6: Will the voters of the Town approve raising a sum of \$50,000 by property taxes for the fiscal year July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023 for the purpose of funding a feasibility study for the Charlotte Community Center project?

Nicole Conley, a representative for the Charlotte Community Center Committee, gave a presentation. She explained the town has grown considerably over the past 10 years and a dedicated space is needed to bring community together. The Community Center would allow town meetings, elections, rental space, community events, rec sport and enrichment programs, as well as fitness and wellness components. The Community Center was separated into four sub-committees, as follows.

- Engagement & Fundraising-Conducted town-wide survey; Investigated preliminary funding options.
- Site Review-Site selection process, evaluated 3 sites using key metrics and criteria; Preliminary evaluations of parking and storm water calculations.

- Programming-Developed 3 concept plans that include various programming options from minimum to maximum.
- Operations-Estimating building operation costs, membership, fees and potential revenue from outside sources.

Nicole Conley described the proposed facility and the interior layout including the Admin Area/Operations, Visitor Area/Lobby, Multi-Purpose Courts, Studio and Specialty Space and Infrastructure Areas. She explained the feasibility study would seek to retain an architect led consulting team that has experience with developing Community centers. The components of the study would include:

- Prepare a detailed business model development.
- Identify the financial viability of such a center.
- Determine viability of private fundraising.
- Continuation of community engagement.
- Develop a final proposed space needs summary, including the viability up of to 3 sites with cost estimates.
- Determine the most cost-effective way to implement a phased solution.

Susan Smith asked what are the locations being considered? Nicole Conley answered that one location behind the Town Hall on Greenbush Road; and the feasibility study could open up other potential locations.

Matt Krasnow wanted to add the feasibility study will open up the fundraising aspect which could reduce the amount needed by the taxpayers. He also discussed a business analysis. If the taxpayers are against the tax burden, the center could be funded by out-of-town people. There is a large community that could help pay to support this idea through fees. Nicole Conley agreed the feasibility study will address these concerns.

Jules Polk wasn't sure if this is a commercial venture or a 501(c)3, and as a taxpayer this concerned Jules. Nicole Conley responded this would be town owned and run and does not foresee it to be a business venture. Matt Krasnow clarified it would be no different from the Library and the Senior Center.

Article 7: To elect Town Officers.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:28am.