

CHARLOTTE SELECTBOARD SPECIAL MEETING
January 16, 2024
Charlotte Town Hall and via teleconference

SELECTBOARD MEMBERS: James Faulkner, Chair; Frank Tenney, Vice Chair; Louise McCarren; Lewis Mudge; Kelly Devine

ADMINISTRATION: Nate Bareham

OTHERS: Charles Russell, Lane Morrison, Patrice Machavern, Nicole Conley, Margaret Woodruff, Peggy Sharpe, Jessie Bradley, Lori York, Liberty Darr

AGENDA ITEMS

7:00 PM Adjustments to the Agenda

7:01 PM Presentation of Committee Budget Requests

7:25 PM Presentation and Discussion of Improvement & Repair Fund Requests

7:30 PM Presentation of Updates to FY-2025 Budget

8:30 PM Selectboard Discussion of FY-2025 Budget

8:45 PM Discussion on Personnel – Possible Executive Session 17 V.S.A. §§ 313 (a)(1)(A), (a)(3)

8:46 PM Selectboard Updates

8:50 PM Adjournment

James Faulkner Called the meeting to order at 7:30pm.

Adjustments to the Agenda

None.

Presentation of Committee Budget Requests

Maggie Citeralla, Chair of the Conservation Commission, presented an updated proposed budget. The total is \$1,850. More outreach is planned for this year. Expert speakers will be invited to do walks and talks in Town.

Kate Kelly from the Lewis Creek Association briefed the Selectboard on water testing and invasive species removal. This proposed budget is level funded at \$2,700.

Kate Lampton, for the Conservation Fund, presented. An additional \$25,000 is requested for the fund. A number of smaller amounts will be requested rather than a large amount in a single year moving forward. When upcoming projects are estimated to cost around \$355,000, having the Town provide smaller incremental grants is more sustainable. The current balance of the fund is estimated to be between \$200,000 and \$250,000.

Presentation and Discussion of Improvement & Repair Fund Requests

Two major updates are a request for an additional \$10,000 for an oil tank replacement at the Senior Center, and a \$3,000 grant from Shelburne that the Senior Center received to offset their program expense costs. The oil tank is currently underground and needs to be installed above ground. Nate Bareham reviewed adjustments to the budget line by line.

Budget adjustments for various projects were made. The increase requested for highway treatment was removed, reducing it to a 0% change. The capital infrastructure costs were removed. A \$3,000 increase in park maintenance on the townlands was reduced to \$1,600. Hardware from each department's budget was placed under the tech group's budget, with an estimated cost of \$15,900. The total improvement and repair funds were set at \$67,000, with options to allocate \$25,000 for the Senior Center roof and \$10,000 for the placement of an oil tank.

Lane Morrison said funding is needed to repair the roof and the oil tank at the Senior Center. There will be \$10,000 set aside for the tank, and \$5,000 for the roof, using funds already allocated in the Capital Reserve Fund. The state of other assets in Town was discussed, such as the library and fire department. Establishing a committee to oversee these assets was suggested.

The idea of setting aside a percentage of the Town's asset value each year for maintenance was proposed.

Presentation of Updates to FY-2025 Budget

Patrice Machavern provided updates and the appropriation request for FY 25 for CVFRS. The total request is \$989,087.

Nicole Conley shared quotes for Recreation Department projects estimated at \$10,000 and \$15,000. Utilizing funds from the Recreation Capital Fund for these projects was discussed. Discussions took place on repairs and potential grants for projects such as septic tank and stair replacements. Big picture thinking will include a Bath House upgrade, Nicole said. The beach is a source of significant revenue. About 77% of Recreation Department expenses are covered by their revenues, Nate said.

Selectboard Discussion of FY-2025 Budget

Town Revenue and Expenses were reviewed by analyzing a graph created by Nate. Margaret Woodruff said the library has received grant funding in the past and anticipate applying for more grants to offset costs.

Cost comparisons across various departments, with a focus on personnel and benefit expenses were reviewed. Figures are subject to change. A complete report to be presented in a future meeting will be prepared. Health and HRA Benefits can be separate items for each department in the budget, Nate said. Kelly Devine mentioned the \$40,000 of anticipated benefit savings that she and Lewis Mudge had been working on and where that will be reflected was indicated. Revising the policy on the Health Reimbursement Account (HRA) was discussed.

Kelly asked why the Senior Center doesn't generate revenue like the Recreation Department has done. Implementing a membership fee for non-residents was suggested. The Senior Center primarily serves residents from surrounding towns. Kelly said 60% of Senior Center patrons are from surrounding towns. These folks are not taxpayers, but the \$3,000 annual grant from Shelburne is much appreciated, she said. Louise emphasized the Senior Center is a community resource.

Lane said the original charter stated the Senior Center was for Charlotte and surrounding communities. He said membership data indicates that 30% are from Charlotte and 30% are from Shelburne, and the remainder are from surrounding towns. He is opposed to implementing a fee. Jessie Bradley is also opposed to charging a fee. She said many Wake Robin residents paid taxes in Charlotte for decades. Exploring grant opportunities was suggested by Lane. There is financial support received for the Senior Center from a 501 c 3 in the amount of about \$20,000 annually. The anticipated budget for the upcoming year was discussed. Lori York said the Senior Center provides social services and is not transactional. Volunteers from Age Well, AARP, and more, are partners, which creates a situation where the Senior Center cannot charge for the programming. Volunteers from surrounding towns, who run important programming, are dedicated to the Senior Center. Charging fees is not a clear cut solution, especially for those folks dropping on once a month for a hot meal. Kelly asked why non-profits are not charged to run programming inside the Senior Center. Lori said they are not charged by any facility or church statewide. Alternative revenue generation strategies will be explored. Lewis asked for documentation on what the 501(c)(3) has contributed to the Senior Center. Nate asked if the 501(c)(3) could share their Form 990s. Lane said he would check with the Treasurer and get those documents for the Selectboard.

The Town's practice of making donations was discussed. Donations stopped due to budget constraints and lack of transparency in the process. A formalized process for requesting donations has been implemented. Nate explained the line items carried forward.

Kelly said she would like to see the CVFRS Budget voted on by Australian Ballot. She explained that if Town Employee Benefit Packages are being scrutinized, so should the other big ticket items in the budget such as CVFRS, The Senior Center, and The Library. Frank Tenney said the budget needs to be voted on as a whole. CVFRS cannot be voted on separately, he said.

The Town Meeting date scheduled during school vacation might not have a great turnout, Kelly said. Hearing from the voters on the budget is paramount. The Selectboard should find a way to have this vote with a large Town Meeting Day vote, she said. She asked to have the CVFRS budget voted on separately and to have the legality of it investigated.

Peggy Sharpe asked about donations for the Food Shelf. She requested \$1,000. Lewis asked that it be added to the budget. Kelly asked for a formal email to be sent to Nate from Peggy for this request.

The budget was agreed upon and a vote will take place at a future meeting after numbers are solidified.

Discussion on Personnel – Possible Executive Session 17 V.S.A. §§ 313 (a)(1)(A), (a)(3)

MOTION by James Faulkner, seconded by Kelly Devine, to enter into Executive Session 17 V.S.A. §§ 313 (a)(1)(A), (a)(3), to include Nate Bareham. VOTE: 4 ayes, 0 nays, 1 absent (Louise McCarren); Motion Carried.

MOTION by Frank Tenney, seconded by Kelly Devine, to exit Executive Session 17 V.S.A. §§ 313 (a)(1)(A), (a)(3). VOTE: 4 ayes, 0 nays, 1 absent (Louise McCarren); Motion Carried.

MOTION by James Faulkner, seconded by Kelly Devine, to accept John Kerr's resignation. VOTE: 4 ayes, 0 nays, 1 absent (Louise McCarren); Motion Carried.

Adjournment

MOTION by Kelly Devine, seconded by Lewis Mudge, to adjourn at 10 pm. VOTE: 5 ayes, 0 nays; Motion Carried.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Lynn Monty, Minute Taker.