

**CHARLOTTE SELECTBOARD MEETING**  
**Monday, January 22, 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); Louise McCarren

**ADMINISTRATION:** Nathaniel Bareham Town Administrator

**OTHERS:**

**In person:** Lori York, Beth Merrit, Polly Price, Natalie Kanner, Lane Morrison, Janet Morrison, Carl Herzog, Walter Gates, Jim Hyde, Susan Hyde, Margaret Woodruff, Anne Marie Andriola, Maura Wygman, Jack Pilla, Brandon Tieso

**Remote:** Moe Harvey, Alexa Lewis, Bill Regan, Brett Yates, Carrie Spear, Cheryl Mintzer, Doug Paton, Elisa Miller, Isreal Phelps, John Snow, Kim Findlay, Kyra Wegman, Larry Sommers, Liberty Darr, Peggy Sharpe, Robert Smith, Tanna Kelton

**AGENDA ITEMS:**

**6:30 PM**      **Adjustments to the Agenda**  
**6:31 PM**      **Approve Warrants to Pay Bills**  
**6:35 PM**      **Public Comment**  
**6:40 PM**      **Approve Thompson’s Point Wastewater Advisory Committee Minutes**  
**6:50 PM**      **Discussion and Approval of Thompson’s Point Wastewater Contract – Possible Executive Session 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(A)**  
**6:55 PM**      **Discussion on Personnel (Town Planner) – Possible Executive Session 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3)**  
**7:10 PM**      **Selectboard Discussion on Updates to the FY-2025 Budget**  
**7:45 PM**      **Discussion of Town Meeting Schedule and Articles**  
**8:10 PM**      **Review and Approval of Town Meeting Articles and Warning**  
**8:20 PM**      **Review and Approval of Certificate of Highway Mileage**  
**8:25 PM**      **Potential Scheduling of a Special Meeting to Finalize the FY-2025 Budget**  
**8:30 PM**      **Approve Selectboard Meeting Minutes for January 8, 2024 & January 16, 2024**  
**8:35 PM**      **Selectboard Updates**  
**8:40 PM**      **Adjournment**

**Call to Order**

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

**Adjustments to the Agenda**

James Faulkner stated that the Trails Committee requested that an Article requesting \$50,000 to replenish their Capital Reserve Fund be added to the agenda. It will be added to the agenda at 6:55 p.m.

**Approve Warrants to Pay Bills**

Warrants were signed.

**Public Comment**

James Faulkner stated that the FY25 budget has been smoother this year and he accredited Mary Mead for this. All members of the Selectboard concurred and expressed their gratitude for Mary Mead’s efforts in the budget work as well as Nathaniel Bareham.

**Approve Thompson’s Point Wastewater Advisory Committee Minutes**

Nathaniel Bareham stated that the Selectboard doesn’t need to approve these minutes as he had originally thought but the minutes will be useful information for the discussion and potential approval of the Thompson’s Point Wastewater Contract which is next on the agenda.

**Discussion and Approval of Thompson’s Point Wastewater Contract – Possible Executive Session 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(A)**

Louise McCarren joined the meeting in person.

Kelly Devine stated that it appears that the total expenses are the same as last year but it's actually an increase since last year \$39,000-\$44,000 was spent on repairs. It's fortunate that the revenue is covering this. She went on to state that she questions if there should be an increase to the rate since there are ongoing expenses.

Mary Mead stated that the budget for the operation's system is done with the committee every fall and is based on repairs needed and meters that have been read. The \$850 is a base amount that is put in the budget annually to put towards their Capital Fund.

Kelly Devine confirmed that the Capital fund is currently \$120,898.

**MOTION by Kelly Devine, seconded by Frank Tenney, to accept the contract for services by the Systems Operator for Thompson's Point Wastewater System effective through December 31, 2024. VOTE: 5 ayes, 0 nays; Motion Carried.**

**Trails Committee Request For Article (\$50,000 request for the Trails Committee Capital Reserve Fund)**

James Faulkner stated that he has no further information other than the Trails Committee requested this past Friday that Selectboard approve an Article to be added to the Australian ballot for \$50,000 for the Trails Committee Capital Reserve Fund.

James Faulkner stated that there are two options for the Selectboard which are either to accept the request and put together an article for the town residents to vote on or to decline the Article request and the Trails Committee would have to submit a petition.

Lewis Mudge stated that more details from any members that may be present on Zoom or in person from the Trails Committee would be appropriate at this time.

James Faulkner stated that there isn't anyone present at this time that can provide further information.

Mary Mead stated that on average the Trails Committee has asked for Capital Reserve money to be in the budget as a transfer to the Trails Committee and this separate Article is a different method of getting that done. When it's in the budget as a transfer the Selectboard would have the authority to decide how much could be transferred to the Trails Capital Reserve Fund.

Kelly Devine stated that she's not inclined to vote for this without having further information from the Trails Committee nor the time to investigate their typical requests from prior years, what the balance is of their Capital Reserve Fund currently and what Capital projects they have planned for FY25.

All members of the Selectboard concurred.

There was no motion in favor of this requested article so no action taken.

**Discussion on Personnel (Town Planner) – Possible Executive Session 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3)**

**MOTION by Frank Tenney, seconded by Kelly Devine, to enter into Executive Session under 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(3), discussion on personnel (Town Planner) with an invitation to Nathaniel Bareham, Town Administrator to attend. VOTE 5 ayes, 0 nays; Motion Carried**

Following the Executive Session discussions Louise McCarren left the meeting.

**MOTION by Frank Tenney, seconded by Kelly Devine, to exit out of executive session. VOTE 4 ayes, 0 nays, 1 absent (McCarren); Motion Carried**

**MOTION by Kelly Devine, seconded by James Faulkner, to accept a revised work agreement with Larry Lewack, Town Planner, to reduce his hours to 32 hours/week which will include one remote work day which is already existing in his current work plan and the contract will have a trial period of 90 days from execution. At which point there will be a review presented to the Selectboard by the Town Administrator as to how it is operating. The contract will terminate June 30, 2024, with an opportunity for a one year renewal at**

**the vote of Selectboard and attached to the work plan agreement will be a specific work plan on the tasks assigned to the Town Planner. VOTE: 4 ayes, 0 nays, 1 absent (McCarren); Motion Carried.**

**Selectboard Discussion on Updates to the FY-2025 Budget**

Nathaniel Bareham stated that one update is the reduction in the Town Planner's salary to reflect the reduction in hours from 40 hours to 32 hours.

Mary Mead stated that she suggested that under the Conservation Commission category, the Education & Outreach line item could be removed since the Conservation Commission has a Special Fund already with a balance of roughly \$2,500. This would be a reduction of \$600. James Faulkner concurred with the removal of this line item.

Lewis Mudge joined the meeting in person.

Nathaniel Bareham said following these two reduction updates the total expenditures comes to \$4,246,533.60 which is a 4.3% increase from last year. The dollars to raise with taxes 2,534,766.60 which is a 1.52% increase over last year.

Mary Mead stated that the revenues are higher than last year, which is contributing to the lower percentage as well as line item reductions. The biggest revenue increases are seen in the FY25 budget under the Thompson's Point category and interest.

Nathaniel Bareham stated that the largest areas of reduction in the FY25 budget are as follows: the Planning and Zoning category, Town Planner's salary line item reduction of \$13,192.40, Employee Benefits category, Health Insurance line item reduction of \$30,000, Highway category, Retreatment-Highway line item reduction of \$90,325 which will be taken out of the Reserve Fund if needed, under the Annual Requests category all line items have been zeroed out except for the Food Shelf line item which is \$1,000 and under the Town Hall category, Equipment-Town Hall line item reduction of \$11,000.

Kelly Devine stated that the Selectboard category's main reduction was the Town Administrator's salary line item reduction of \$14,252.00. She received confirmation that this reduction is due to the longevity of Dean Bloch's career as Town Administrator in comparison to a new hire's rate of pay. She also received confirmation of the Human Resources Consultant line item reduction of \$2,500.

Kelly Devine stated that the Town Clerk category has a .31% increase which is small but it's important to recognize that there is no increase in salaries this year because of the budget reductions last year and in the interest of fiscal year responsibility.

Kelly Devine received confirmation that the Treasurer category shows a 13.7% increase but this is due to the increased audit expense.

Kelly Devine stated that Elections and Town Meetings category shows a 77.35% decrease. Mary Mead stated that this is due to the Town Report line item reduction due to a decrease in printing and the Town Meeting line item reduction due to the sound system cost reduction.

Kelly Devine stated that the Planning and Zoning category shows a 16% decrease due to the decision of turning the Septic Review over to the state and the reduction in the Town Planner's hours/salary.

Kelly Devine stated that there is a 0% change with the Constable category with the Halloween Lights line item expense unchanged.

Kelly Devine stated that under Assessor category there is an 8.90% reduction.

Mary Mead stated that this needs to be changed due to the fact that there is no longer a Town Assessor as a town employee so the Wages-Assessor line item could be removed. These duties will now be done by a contracted employee. She went on to state that the Assessor duties will become something that the already contracted company NEMRC will add to their contracted

responsibilities for the town of Charlotte. The contract amount will be adjusted accordingly once it's made known, at which time this will be added to the Contract Appraiser line item. Mary

Mead stated that this is still to be determined and is therefore the one area of the budget that is not yet known.

Kelly Devine stated that the Delinquent Tax Collector category is unchanged.

Kelly Devine stated under the Employee Benefits category the Health Insurance line item is at \$220,000 and the plan is for her, Lewis Mudge, Nathaniel Bareham, and some outside contractors to work together along with feedback of town employees to come up with a \$30,000 reduction of that line item. She went on to state that with that \$30,000 decrease, the Employee Benefits category will be decreased to a 2.28% increase.

Kelly Devine stated that a goal of \$40,000 reduction was originally set for the Health Insurance line item but the decision was made to focus on a goal of \$30,000.

None of the Selectboard members stated opposition to this updated reduction goal.

Kelly Devine stated that the Highways category is unchanged. She went on to stress the importance of capital planning.

Mary Mead confirmed that there are no plans for Bridge Reconstruction for FY25.

Mary Mead stated that the Transfer Highway Reserve Fund consists of funds that are transferred at the end of the year from Junior Lewis' budget. Junior Lewis typically underspends.

Kelly Devine stated that the Stormwater Discharge category is unchanged.

Kelly Devine stated that the Town Lands category shows a 3% increase. Discussion was had regarding past discussions of reducing the asked amount from the Parks Committee category, Park Maintenance line item to \$16,000 from \$19,000 since past years they have budgeted at \$15,000.

Lewis Mudge stated that he spoke to the Committee and gave his words that he would stand by this increased amount. He went on to state that the amount they requested should be honored as they run things as efficiently as possible.

The Selectboard decided to move on with the budget review.

Discussion was had regarding the Village Wastewater System Maintenance line item amount of \$8,000 which is a reduction of \$1,900 from last fiscal year's budget.

Kelly Devine stated that she would like to make sure that the line item is set high enough to manage the commercial entities that will be using it in the near future. She went on to state that it's her understanding that there are two applications that were recently received.

Lewis Mudge stated that the only commercial entity he's aware of is Stone Throws Pizza. James Faulkner stated any expenses that come from commercial entities or other that aren't town buildings will be covered by the revenue and will be of no cost to the town.

Mary Mead stated that this line item is for the maintenance for the town buildings which include the Senior Center, the Town Hall, and the Town Library.

Nathaniel Bareham stated that the Air Release Valve was the biggest expense back in October of 2023. The rest of the line item is for the pumping of the septic and maintenance. He went on to state that the increase in the line item is to prepare for any potential additional issues. There is currently a D box in need of repair on Greenbush Rd.

Kelly Devine stated that the Town Garage category is a new category so there is no comparison of past fiscal years but there should be a decrease in the long term with the use of the solar panels. James Faulkner concurred.

Kelly Devine stated that the Library category shows a 3% decrease.

Kelly Devine stated that she has received some emails regarding the Annual Requests category and she asked to skip over this category at this time.

Kelly Devine stated that the Recreation category shows a .07 increase which is covered by their revenue.

Lewis Mudge received confirmation that the Conservation category Education and Outreach line item was cut since they have another fund that they can use for this.

Nathaniel Bareham stated that he sent an email to the Conservation Commission regarding this being a topic for this evening and that there is funding elsewhere for education and outreach.

Kelly Devine stated that the Town Hall category shows a 10% increase and she received confirmation that this is due to needing new computer equipment.

Kelly Devine stated that the Senior Center category shows a 3.2% increase.

Lori York stated that the majority of the 3.2% increase for the Senior Center is from the Selectboard approved rate increase for the Volunteer Coordinator position of \$18.50/hour for 19 hours/week. Prior to this rate increase there had been no shown interest in the position. Lori York stated that the Senior Center submitted a flat budget as they were asked to do. There has been exploration of ways to increase revenue which has included grant exploration and elimination of programs that are not covering expenses. She went on to state that they have started to charge for classes that were originally free and they received a \$3,000 grant from the town of Shelburne. They will continue to explore other grants and other fundraising opportunities. Lori York stated that there is a candidate for the Volunteer Coordinator position that has been brought forward to Nathaniel Bareham and the next step will be for the Selectboard to conduct an interview of this selected candidate.

Kelly Devine stated that the Miscellaneous category shows a 2.8% increase.

Lewis Mudge stated that the \$5,000 for the Land Trust line item appears as an increase but it's simply due to last year's decision to hold on adding to this line item. FY25 the plan is to get back on track. Frank Tenney concurred. Kelly Devine received confirmation that the Insurance line item increase is due to the Town Garage.

Kelly Devine stated that the Intergovernmental Taxes & Dues shows a 9% increase but this is something that the town has no control over.

Mary Mead concurred.

Kelly Devine stated that the Debt Services shows a 49.3% increase but this is due to the Town Garage.

Kelly Devine stated that the Transfer to Reserve Fund category, Transfer to Conservation line item is at \$25,000. James Faulkner confirmed that this amount is to be left in. Kelly Devine stated that she would like to talk in more detail about the Transfer-Improvement and Repair line item since there is a substantial increase.

Mary Mead stated that under the Town Appropriation Fire and Rescue category, the Fire and Rescue Appropriation line item's additional money of \$22,500 was because the Selectboard approved the request from the CVFRS to do so in order to reduce their operating budget amount.

Kelly Devine stated that she would now like to review the list under the Transfer to Reserve Fund category, Transfer-Improve Repair line item beginning with the Senior Center requests. Lane Morrison stated that the quote just came in for the oil tank of \$3,200 which will be above ground and it shouldn't be more than that amount unless they discover contaminants in the soil. Kelly Devine asked about revenues.

Lane Morrison stated that their revenues are up \$6,000 from prior years. There is further efforts being made to increase revenue even further and they will report back in 5 months as they know more.

Carl Herzog, treasurer for the Friends of the Senior Center, stated that they spent \$21,300 on the carpet, \$4,000 on the computer, \$3,700 on drapes, \$2,600 on electrical fixtures and \$4,600 on painting. There is no specific list or project expense sum that the Friends of the Senior Center can provide at this time for FY24-25. He went on to state that the Friends of the Senior Center completes enhancements, they don't cover the property costs.

Kelly Devine asked if they could assist with the cost of the tank removal since the town is looking at such a tight budget this year.

Carl Herzog stated that perhaps they could but he feels the Friends of the Senior Center have been generous in helping out and with the revenue the Senior Center is almost exactly as it was last year with a level budget.

Kelly Devine stated that it seems that if the Friends of the Senior Center have \$150,000 and the town could use the assistance they could help out by making it clear as to what they would be willing to do to help reduce the costs of the maintenance of the Senior Center building for the coming year.

Carl Herzog stated that the current plan is to remove the tank when needed but it's not necessary to remove it currently as it's operational.

Discussion was had regarding the oil tank removal and replacement and if funding should be left in place in the FY25 budget in preparation for the need.

Carl Herzog confirmed that the \$150,000 that the Friends of the Senior Center has isn't liquid as it's tied up in stocks.

Lewis Mudge stated that the oil tank expense was reduced from \$10,000 to \$5,000 and the roof was reduced from \$20,000 to \$15,000 and it should remain as is.

Frank Tenney and James Faulkner concurred with Lewis Mudge, that the numbers in the budget under the Transfer to Reserve Fund category Senior Center requests should remain as is.

Kelly Devine asked when the Friends of The Senior Center decides what it will spend on the Senior Center for the year.

Lane Morrison stated that it's a 501(c)(3), and it's money that they raise annually. Money is allocated as needs arise and is based on priority. As for the roof replacement, the Friends of the Senior Center have agreed to give \$20,000 toward the Senior Center roof. He went on to state that the Friends of the Senior Center gave \$43,000 last year. The way they operate is by helping as needs arise, not in budgeting a set amount per year.

Maura Wygman stated that in the budget under expense, the Transfer to Reserve Funds category, Transfer to Recreation Reserve Fund line item shows zero and the Recreation Commission is requesting that that amount be corrected and set at \$30,000. In 2018 there was an article vote to fund the Recreation Commission Reserve Fund and it was granted by the tax payer. She went on to state that the Recreation Commission has documented in their budget that they generated \$92,850 and after subtracting their expenses they have a surplus of \$31,885 in revenue and therefore would like that money to go back into the Recreation Reserve Fund. There are many planned projects coming up that would warrant the use of Capital Reserve Funds such as adding accessibility to the beach. Maura Wygman stated that there is a need for a ramp that will cost \$18,000 all on its own. Other upcoming projects include upgrades to the bathhouses, improvements to the tennis courts, little league field improvements, increasing the pickleball courts and improving the soccer fields as well.

James Faulkner stated that it is late in the budget season to be asking for this money for the Recreation Capital Reserve Fund. He stated that he doesn't understand why the Selectboard is just hearing of this request now.

Maura Wygman stated that the need for making the beach more accessible has been well known for a couple years now.

Conversation was had in attempt to clarify if Nicole Conley had requested this \$30,000 during her presentation to the Selectboard. Discussion continued regarding what has been done at the beach and what the town has paid toward projects at the beach.

Lewis Mudge stated that there was discussion regarding the \$20,000 toward the bathhouse project.

Maura Wygman stressed the importance of the historic \$30,000 being transferred to the Recreation Capital Reserve Fund which has taken place every year since the taxpayer vote in 2018 with the exception of last year.

Kelly Devine stated that although the Recreation Department makes a wonderful revenue there is no surplus following the expense of the salaries and benefits.

Maura Wygman stated that she spoke with Nicole Conley during a Recreation Commission meeting this evening and it's Nicole Conley's hopes that the \$30,000 transfer to the Recreation Capital Reserve Fund would be reinstated for FY25. She went on to state that at the very least this \$30,000 Capital Reserve Fund transfer should be added as an Article to vote by Australian ballot.

Lewis Mudge stated that just as the Trails Commission request was denied this would be denied as well since there was no prior request submitted to the Selectboard but there is still time for the Recreation Commission to submit a petition to get the Article on the ballot.

Further discussion was had by the Selectboard confirming that the Recreation Department is doing great with their revenue and covering their operating expenses but this doesn't include the cost of the Director's salary or the Director's Assistant's salary and benefits which can't be separated out.

Mary Mead stated that there is a little under \$41,000 in the Recreation Capital Reserve Fund now and it seems that the grants could be attained with this amount of money.

Kelly Devine stated that the process the Selectboard is looking for regarding approving an Article would be submittance of documented information regarding the Capital projects and estimated costs weeks in advance to the completion of the town budget so that an appropriate decision could be made by the Selectboard of whether or not to endorse the Article with the taxpayers best interest in mind.

Lewis Mudge concurred and reiterated this also stating that there is still time to follow the process and submit an appeal prior to the deadline date.

Mary Mead confirmed that the deadline for such an appeal would be January 29, 2024.

#### **Discussion of Town Meeting Schedule and Articles**

James Faulkner stated after receiving a lot of town resident's feedback it has been decided to consider conducting Australian ballot for the town budget vote.

Kelly Devine stated that many town residents felt that Town Meeting date being on a Saturday and the last day of the school vacation break would deprive them of the ability to vote on the town budget.

James Faulkner stated that there are others that value the in person Town Meeting and the state of Vermont is working on figuring out how to potentially make the Charlotte Town Meeting a hybrid meeting.

Kelly Devine stated that it's important to note that Burlington does a wastewater analysis for the presence of the COVID-19 virus and it's at a level that is almost as high as the peak in April of 2020.

James Faulkner stated that the Town Meeting was scheduled to take place in person and Act 1 (H.42) states that this is the last year that municipalities will be allowed to have Town Meeting voting completed by Australian ballot.

Further discussion was had regarding the pros and cons to in person Town Meeting to vote on the budget vs Australian ballot. Discussion was also had on what could be voted on at Town Meeting and what could be put on the Australian ballot.

Mary Mead stated that 800-900 more votes are obtained on average with Australian ballot vote in comparison to an in person Town Meeting vote. All members of the Selectboard concurred that this is a significant number.

Frank Tenney stated that with in person Town Meeting there is the ability to adjust the budget line items and this can't be done with Australian ballot.

Lane Morrison stated that he's in favor of in person Town Meeting this year and then possibly returning to a charter vote where there is an in person Town Meeting followed by an Australian vote 30-45 days later.

Kyra Wegman stated that she's in favor of a return of a charter for a hybrid Town Meeting so that in person Town Meeting continues to be part of the process.

Mary Mead stated that in the past when there was a hybrid Town Meeting it didn't work because less and less people voted via Australian Ballot in April following the in person Town Meeting in March. It may be that many thought that the budget past at the in person Town Meeting and therefore didn't realize that they needed vote later during the Australian ballot vote. She went on to state that during the five year period that this hybrid model was used, voting reduced to around 200 voters.

James Faulkner stated that what's important is allowing more taxpayers to vote.

Anne Marie Andriola stated that she's strongly in favor of Australian ballot as it captures more of the tax payors votes.

Kelly Devine stressed that it is important that the tax payer understands that this is the last year that the state will allow an Australian ballot instead of an in person Town Meeting. Following the end of the Act 1 (H.42) the town will have to have an in person Town Meeting to discuss the change to Australian ballot going forward. Mary Mead concurred.

Brandon Teiso stated that he's in favor of in person Town Meeting day to allow for an engaged community.

John Snow stated that the one time that the Charlotte residents got to vote on in person Town meeting day or Australian ballot the majority vote was in favor of Australian ballot. It did end up going to a hybrid charter. He went on to state that in person is valuable but what's most important is that people get the opportunity to vote and that's best done through Australian ballot.

Alexa Lewis asked if absentee ballots would make a difference in the numbers of voters with a hybrid situation of the past and potentially of the future. Mary Mead stated that absentee ballots were available in the past situation.

Maura Wygman stated at a minimum she is requesting that the Selectboard put forth an Article which allows for the town residents to vote on moving Town Meeting day to a weekday evening.

Another Article could also be put forth on Town Meeting day that allows the town residents to vote on their choice of an in person Town Meeting or Australian ballot going forward. She went on to suggest that in the scenario of a hybrid Town Meeting maybe there could be multiple meetings next January called Town Meeting in January that would allow as many town residents as possible, to give their input on the budget and an Australian ballot could follow.

Frank Tenney stated that there have been multiple meetings that have given the town residents this opportunity this budget planning season.

Discussion was had regarding how to get town residents input on Australian ballot.



Mary Mead stated that Act 1 (H.42) doesn't allow for an Article vote on Australian ballot. In order to vote on Australian ballot, it must be done on the floor/in person.

Charles Russell stated that the Selectboard could put forth an Article to have a charter that would allow an Australian ballot vote. Another possibility would be to have an advisory motion that's Australian ballot.

Discussion was had amongst Selectboard members as to their stance on in person Town Meeting day or an Australian ballot vote.

Frank Tenney and Lewis Mudge concurred that the decision was made by town vote to have Town Meeting day on a Saturday and the Selectboard set a date for this year and therefore it should be completed as planned.

James Faulkner and Kelly Devine concurred that they're in favor of an Australian ballot because it allows for more town residents to vote as has been historically proven. In addition, this year's date for Town Meeting day falls on a Saturday of the town's school vacation which impacts the number of votes even more.

Louise McCarren was unable to state her opinion at this time due to audio issues on Zoom and her availability.

Louise McCarren left the meeting at this time.

**MOTION by Kelly Devine, seconded by James Faulkner, in pursuant to Vermont state statute known as Act 1 Clause B, the Selectboard decides to move voting for the upcoming Town Meeting day to Australian Ballot at an election to be held on March 5, 2024, at the Town Hall. VOTE: 2 ayes, 2 nays, 1 absent (McCarren); Motion Failed.**

#### **Review and Approval of Town Meeting Articles and Warning**

Kelly Devine stated that she looked at the CVFRS 990 and noted that there is a considerable sum in the investments and she wonders what the current amount is and what it's allocated for.

John Snow stated that the two things that constitute the net assets of the corporation are the undepreciated amount of the building, land and vehicles which is a little less than \$2 million dollars and the corpus of a trust of which CVFRS Inc. is the sole beneficiary. The corpus of that trust is approximately \$1.7 million dollars. He went on to state that CVFRS has no discretion over the undepreciated assets and how they get used. There are no plans to sell the building or the land. John Snow stated that the assets that are the corpus of the trust CVFRS doesn't control, they're under the discretion of a trustee. CVFRS receives distribution of the trust after the discretion of the Trustee and that distribution becomes part of Special Funds which covers expenses that arise within CVFRS which are of capital expenditures. He went on to state that the use of these funds are done on a project by project basis.

Kelly Devine stated that she wonders if an ambulance could be purchased with these funds.

John Snow stated that there is nothing legally precluding the purchase of an ambulance with those funds but there has historically never been anything purchased with funds distributed by the trust at the level of expense that an ambulance would be. It would take many years of distributions from the fund to pay for an ambulance and it's not practical.

Kelly Devine questioned whether or not CVFRS could use the distribution of the funds for an ambulance over a 10 year period.

John Snow stated that it is a general principal that the fundamental operations of Fire & Rescue should be covered by the operating resources, primarily the tax payer's support. The capital enhancements are covered by Special Funds when they're available.

John Snow stated that all assets purchased with tax payer funds are clearly identified as assets of the town by CVFRS.

Kelly Devine asked for the basis of CVFRS' belief of necessary replacement of ambulances every 10 years.

John Snow stated that CVFRS has researched what other departments do and have taken into account their own experience with maintaining an old piece of equipment. They also follow the

National and Regional guidance for the useful life of an ambulance. He went on to state that the average urban ambulance lifespan is 4-7 years and rural ambulance is 7-10 years. This will all be presented at the informational meeting for this Article.

John Snow gave clarification that there was no vote by the town to make CVFRS a municipal department. There was a joint exploration by the Selectboard and CVFRS to see if it could be achieved and if it was in the best interest of the town and the people served by CVFRS. John Snow stated, in response to Kelly Devine's question, that the donor's intent of the trust fund is for the trust fund to stay with CVFRS or to the successor organization of CVFRS if that were to occur in the future.

Nathaniel Bareham stated that following tonight's adjustments the overall budget increase is 4.18% and the dollars to raise in taxes is \$2,529,466 which is an increase of 1.31% from last year.

Kelly Devine requested more time to review the budget so that she can have all of the budget updates clear and in front of her.

The Selectboard decided that it's feasible to take more time to review the budget and to meet next week Monday January 29, 2024, at 7pm, at which time the Selectboard will vote on whether or not to approve the FY25 town budget to be presented to the public for vote on Town Meeting day, March 02, 2024.

Nathaniel Bareham stated that he can find out the Assessor amount from NMRC by the end of this week.

Frank Tenney stated that the reason the Informational Meeting is scheduled on Monday February 26, 2024, is to allow for those that are completing the absentee ballots to be fully informed and to have the time to submit their votes prior to the Town Meeting date of Saturday, March 02, 2024.

## **DRAFT WARNING TOWN OF CHARLOTTE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 2024**

### **ARTICLES TO BE VOTED FROM THE FLOOR**

#### **Article 1: To hear the reports of the Town officers and to act upon the same.**

Charles Russell stated that this is everything except the budget and includes any reports from the different committees.

#### **Article 2: Shall the voters authorize the payment of property taxes, with the payment due on or before Friday, November 15, 2024, and to have payments made to the Town Treasurer as provided in 32 VSA § 4773(b)?**

Nathaniel Bareham stated that this date was confirmed by Mary Mead.

#### **Article 3: Shall the voters approve total fund expenditures, as set forth in the Selectboard's budget, of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for the fiscal year July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025, of which an anticipated sum of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ will be raised by taxes and an anticipated sum of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ will be raised by non-tax revenues.**

All concurred that this can't be voted on until the Selectboard votes on the approval of the FY25 town budget.

#### **Article 4: Shall the voters of the Town approve raising the sum of \$50,000 by property taxes, in addition to those monies raised pursuant to Article 3, to be allocated to the Trails Reserve Fund?**

Nathaniel Bareham stated that he had drafted the wording of this Article after hearing of the request from the Trails Committee late Friday in preparation of potential Selectboard approval this evening. As it is the Selectboard didn't approve this Article.

Bill Reagan stated that the Trails Committee has been assessing this Article since last fall at the start of the budget season.

James Faulkner as the liaison to the Trails Committee, stated that the Trails Committee asked when a good time would be to ask for more money this past fall but there was no further information provided such as how much was to be requested or what it would be used for until

late Friday of last week, when a sum of \$50,000 was requested. There was no explanation on the plans for the use of the money with this request. He went on to state that he gave advice last Friday to act quickly with a petition in order to get an Article approved.

Bill Regan stated that it was just recently that the Trails Committee was informed with complete clarity that an Article vote was necessary to have the money added to the Trails Capital Reserve Fund. The amount was then decided upon once this was understood. He went on to state that the requested \$50,000 is to replenish the Trails Capital Reserve Fund which has roughly \$49,000 in it currently. The last time the Trails Committee asked for money in an Article was in 2020. Bill Regan stated that a past Selectboard member had suggested that it would be most effective and efficient to have money continually put into an account so that trails could be built as easements became available and as projects got developed and approved. If this Article was approved the Trails Committee would continue building the trail that ends on Ferry Rd and would continue west crossing the railroad tracks as the next big segment on the way to the town beach. He went on to state that the overall picture of this is the trail from Mt Philo to the village centers to the town beach which was all endorsed by the 2019 Town Plan.

Kelly Devine stated that it is her goal to come up with a more reliable capital planning process for the town so that a specific number could be agreed upon to fund over a 5-10 year period for all the different groups of the town.

Jack Pilla stated that there have been a total of 3 other Articles in the past put forward by the Trails Committee that the town residents have voted on and approved for this very specific trail that goes from Mt Philo to the town beach. This \$50,000 is specifically for completing this trail to the town beach. This Article would be the way to give the town resident's the choice on funding and completing this trail.

Discussion was had by the Selectboard and it was unanimous amongst all to remove the Article except for James Faulkner who abstained due to being the Liaison to the Trails Committee.

**Article 5: To transact any other business proper to come before said meeting.**

Lewis Mudge stated that Charles Russell will be monitoring.

**ARTICLES TO BE VOTED BY AUSTRALIAN BALLOT**

**Article 6: To elect Town Officials:**

All concurred.

**Article 7: To elect Champlain Valley School District Officials:**

All concurred.

**Article 8: Shall the voters authorize the Town to submit to the General Assembly of the State of Vermont a proposal to adopt a municipal charter which contains the following sections:**

**Section 1: Corporate Existence**

**Section 2: General Provisions**

**Section 3: Town Manager/Road Commissioner**

**Section 4: Separability**

**Section 5: Amendment**

**Section 6: Effective Date**

**The official copy of the Charter proposal, in its entirety, is on file and available for public inspection at the Charlotte Town Clerk's Office, 159 Ferry Road in said Town, during regular office hours, Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Copies thereof are available to members of the public upon request.**

Lewis Mudge stated that the language of this could be very confusing to the voter.

Kelly Devine stated that this is to amend a state law and needs to have the language as such.

Frank Tenney stated that the way this is written the voter could misunderstand and take this to mean that the Town Manager is going to take over the Road Commissioners duties which is not the case.

Nathaniel Bareham stated that the copy of the Charter will be available in each voting booth.

Charles Russell stated that voters should be informed when voting and if they have read through the Charter they will know what they're voting on. He went on to state if someone wants the language changed they'd need to talk to the state legislature but with that being said the legislature allows for further language to be added to the existing language. If the Selectboard wants to add additional language that helps to clarify what the vote is for they can do so. Following further discussion, the Selectboard decided to leave the language to stand alone as is.

**Article 9: Shall the voters authorize the Town to issue general obligation bonds or notes in an amount not to exceed Three Hundred Sixty-Five Thousand Dollars and 00/100 (\$365,000.00) to purchase a new ambulance to be financed over a period not to exceed 10 years?**

Kelly Devine stated that she's not in favor of approving this Article. The CVFRS budget isn't separated out from the rest of the town budget so there's no way for the tax payer to vote in a manner that will allow for an understanding of their support of the CVFRS budget or not. She went on to state that it's appropriate to wait until next year in her opinion on this Article for a new ambulance. The CVFRS is the single largest budget item already without the bond for a new ambulance.

John Snow stated that not allowing this Article to go before the voter is irresponsible. The ambulance is going to be a 30 month lead time and it's going to be a 13 year old piece of equipment. It's up to the tax payer to decide if they want the services of CVFRS. The staffing of CVFRS is at the minimum amount required by law and by their regulators to maintain the ambulance 24/7 365 days/year. If the Selectboard doesn't want to support that then they're making the statement that they want CVFRS to provide less services and that should be made clear.

Charles Russell stated that this payment won't take place for 2-3 years and therefore won't be in this year's budget at all.

John Snow stated that CVFRS was told by the manufacturer that the ambulance won't be ready for roughly 30 months. There used to be a different Capital Funding structure. The ambulance that's being replaced doesn't show an interest bond carrying cost because it was prefunded. He went on to state that under the new regime of bond funding of Capital Expenditures one item would be going on while the other item is going off. The ambulance that this will be replacing was prefunded through a long term Capital Funding plan that the town use to support. John Snow stated that the first payment for this new ambulance will be roughly 2-3 years from now and it will be approximately \$40,000-\$45,000 depending on interest rates at the time. It will be in close proximity to the time when the primary ambulance comes off from bond funding. James Faulkner stated he was in favor of leaving the Article on for the tax payer to decide. He received confirmation from John Snow that there is no required deposit at this time for the bond and there will be no cost to the town for a couple years since the terms of the proposal states payment upon delivery of the ambulance.

Kelly Devine stated that this would be a 10 year commitment to the town when the town is not sure as to where it wants to go with this organization.

Lewis Mudge and Frank Tenney both concurred with James Faulkner, that the Article should stay on to allow the voters to decide.

**Review and Approval of Certificate of Highway Mileage**

Frank Tenney stated that it hasn't changed much.

**MOTION by Frank Tenney, seconded by Lewis Mudge, to approve the Certificate of Highway Mileage year ending February 22, 2024. VOTE: 3 ayes, 0 nays, 2 absent (McCarren and Devine); Motion Carried.**

**Potential Scheduling of a Special Meeting to Finalize the FY-2025 Budget**

Discussion was had again as discussed earlier in the meeting that there will be a Special Selectboard meeting next week Monday, January 29, 2024, at 7pm via Zoom to allow for additional time to review the budget with all the updates as requested by Kelly Devine.

**Approve Selectboard Meeting Minutes for January 8, 2024 & January 16, 2024**

James Faulkner stated that the Minutes will be voted on at a later date due to the late hour of the

meeting.

**Selectboard Updates**

None

**Adjournment**

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

The meeting was adjourned at 10:11 p.m.

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