

Present: Dorianne Almann, Bruce Bellville, Michael Carrier, Joe Conroy, Mike Darcy (selectmen's rep), John Hartnett, Mo Klein, James MacDonell, Lewis Major, Angela Schill (school board rep), Peter Zavorotny. TA Jill Collins, Water Superintendent Dennis Nadeau, Holly Kennedy, and one member of the public were present.

Mr. Zavorotny called the meeting to order at 6:35 pm.

Mr. Nadeau discussed Article 7, his department's request for \$83,000 to buy a backhoe loader costing \$122,000, including the addition of an attachment for breaking through stone or frozen ground. He told the committee about a break in a pipe carrying water on which department personnel spent 12 hours digging. A call to Brattleboro for help brought over their backhoe with that attachment and the job was done "in 20 minutes." Mr. Nadeau said the "Town of Brattleboro wouldn't dare be without" a backhoe. He said, "In the last two years, labor costs for water main breaks would have paid the additional \$17,000 for the attachment." It takes so long to get a hole open, especially when the ground is frozen: A 1,700 lb. piece of equipment (backhoe) vs. a 90 lb (hand-held) piece of equipment. A backhoe could dig a 5' long x 5' wide hole in 20 minutes, Mr. Nadeau said.

Mr. Nadeau talked about the merits of a John Deere vs. New Holland backhoe, saying the John Deere is a "better piece of equipment." It has "better trade in" value. The actual cost is \$163,000, although the price is considerably less due to the "great municipal discount" offered. New Holland is "good, but not as rugged." Mr. Nadeau "would like to see the town go to J Deere" despite the fact the John Deere backhoe will cost "\$19,000 more." He noted that the \$122,000 cost includes the attachment. He told the committee that the price of the equipment went up \$23,000 in the last two years.

Ms. Schill asked if a maintenance log is kept, noting that in the "last three years the town spent alot of money to repair" the existing piece of equipment. Ms. Almann asked if it was possible to buy a used backhoe.

Mr. Zavorotny outlined how the backhoe would be paid for: \$30,000 comes from the Expendable Trust with the remaining \$92,000 being split 50/50 between the town and the water department.

If the equipment was leased, Mr. Nadeau said the cost would be \$26,001 for five years. Ms. Schill asked how much interest would be saved. Mr. Nadeau replied, "\$7,000" with an interest rate of 2%.

Mr. Bellville asked if money could be taken out of the emergency reserve as the amount in this reserve is high. He continued, saying that water costs went up 15% and now the voters will be asked to buy an expensive, new piece of equipment.

Mr. Conroy mused on leasing the equipment for five years; Mr. Darcy said if the \$30,000 is used and the lease is for five years, in the first year of the lease the money is coming

from the Expendable Trust; \$6,000 would be taken out each year. Thus, the cost would be spread out. Mr. Hartnett observed that this would be "less of a hit on taxpayers."

Ms. Schill asked Mr. Nadeau if an outside service could be called in to provide the hydraulic hammer. Mr. Nadeau said that while Brattleboro was contacted and "there's nothing wrong with relying on others," he doesn't know of one available other than the equipment in Brattleboro. Ms. Schill asked if he knew how much the cost would be to rent the equipment; Mr. Nadeau did not. Ms. Schill told the committee she would feel more comfortable making a decision on the equipment if she had the bill on the cost of renting.

Mr. Hartnett made a motion to lease the backhoe, taking \$30,000 from the Expendable Trust, leaving \$122,000 to be paid over a five year period. Mr. Klein spoke up, saying he did not see "an exact figure" on the trade-in value for the old piece of equipment, John Deere vs. New Holland. Mr. Nadeau said that the John Deere cost without the trade-in would be \$147,000; New Holland would give \$25,000 as a trade-in. Mr. Carrier seconded the motion. The motion passed with seven aye's, two no's, and one abstention.

Mr. Zavorotny reminded the committee that the next meeting is February 5, 2014 upstairs in the Town Hall. The committee will meet at 6 pm in order to be able to transact business before the start of the public hearing at 6:30 pm.

Mr. Zavorotny turned the discussion to the articles.

Article 3 (general operating expenses of the Town): TA Collins said the selectmen increased the town clerk's salary and removed reimbursement of fees; this increased the budget by \$3,914. The handout the committee received reflects the increase and should be voted on again. She explained that the selectmen plan to skip over Article 3 until after Article 19 is voted on; if Article 3 fails, the budget will be reduced by the \$3,914. The new total for Article 19 is \$52,457.

Mr. Zavorotny asked for a motion to recommend the new amount for Article 3 (\$3,501,166). Mr. Conroy made the motion and was seconded by Mr. MacDonell. The motion carried with two abstentions.

Article 9: The selectmen reduced the amount to \$40,000 from \$80,000.

Article 10: Mr. MacDonell made a motion to recommend. Hearing no second to Mr. McDonell's motion, Mr. Zavorotny said "the motion is dying for lack of a second." Mr. Major made a motion to not recommend and was seconded by Ms. Schill. The vote to not recommend was 7 to 3.

Article 11: TA Collins explained that Frank estimated that \$125,000 is needed for a loader. A municipal discount applies. The lease would be \$26,062 per year. Mr. Bellville said a loader is needed more than a backhoe and thinks money should be put into the Expendable Trust. Mr. Zavorotny disagreed, saying his impression is that acquisition of the loader isn't urgent. Mr. Darcy thinks more information is needed on the specifics of the lease. The budget committee passed on Article 11.

Article 16: Mr. Darcy requested that the budget committee vote on the article. TA Collins said that the welfare office director uses the bus route "as a tool" when speaking with clients, telling them they have access to transportation in the bus. Mr. Darcy told the committee that the owner of River Valley Transport will talk to the selectmen at their February 3 meeting about his plans to advertise the service; he encouraged committee members to attend Monday night's 6:30 pm meeting. Mr. Zavorotny noted the town has been subsidizing the bus service for two years and is now being asked to do so for another year with little to show for its past investment in the service.

Mr. Zavorotny said this wrapped up the town's warrant articles and moved discussion to those of the school.

Discussion took place about the fact \$106,000 is in reserve for repairs. Mr. Zavorotny told the committee that Superintendent David Crisafulli and Business Manager Tom O'Connor had discussed possibly lowering the amount put into the reserve from \$100,000 to \$50,000. Mr. Kennedy stressed that the amount directed to the reserve could be reduced if needed.

The committee discussed the roof repairs the school needs. Mr. Zavorotny said that if the school got the \$100,000 the two remaining sections that need repairing would be repaired. A consultant was hired who functions as a go-between the school and contractors. Mr. Hartnett asked if the money the school annually returns to the town should perhaps be directed to helping to pay for roof repairs.

With no additional business to discuss, Mr. Hartnett made a motion to adjourn. He was seconded by Mr. Bellville and the meeting ended at 7:57 pm.

Respectfully Submitted

Dorianne Almann  
Recording Secretary