

Minutes of the Select Board
Monday October 21, 2024
28 North Main Street and via zoom

Attendance: Kane Sweeney, Tom Leitz, Karen Petrovic, Dan Sweet, Roger Clapp, Ian Shea, Mike Bard, Gary Dillon

Public Attendance: Chris Viens, Sandy Sabin, ORCA Media, Katie Mandych, Jonathan Griffin, Lisa Walton, Evan Hoffman

ZOOM: ORCA Media, Valerie Rogers, Evan Hoffman, Ingrid Jonas, Pegeen Mulhern, Amy Marshall-Carney

R. Clapp called the meeting to order at 7:00pm

Approve Agenda: K. Sweeney moved to approve the agenda as written. I. Shea seconded the motion. A vote was held and passed unanimously.

Consent Agenda: I. Shea moved to approve the consent agenda as written. K. Sweeney seconded the motion. A vote was held and passed unanimously.

Public: no comments

Town of Waterbury Reappraisal Proposal – Dan Sweet: D. Sweet introduced himself as the Town Assessor. He brought the Board up to date on his proposal to reappraise the Town of Waterbury Grand List. It will be a full year finalizing on April 1, 2026; last one was 2014. Currently working on sale review and market analysis. Home inspections will be next, taking considerable time to complete. D. Sweet hopes to get into 50% of the homes. Sales to assessment ratios are roughly half, should anticipate post appraisal values to be double what they are currently. D. Sweet has asked for two part time assistants. D. Sweet has spoken to T. Vickery informally; there is no formal agreement for him to assist in this process. Beyond that the Listers could be involved in home inspections.

Mike Bard joined the meeting.

There doesn't appear to be a major disparity between residential and commercial sales so no anticipation of a gap in the two property types. Will Waterbury have a neighborhood approach to the reassessment? D. Sweet was able to explain Waterbury has been utilizing this approach already and gave the flood plain properties as an example. A single-family home and a neighboring Air BnB will both be treated as single family homes with no distinguishing difference based on use. From a municipal standpoint, the property value will be doubled and the tax rate will be cut in half because this exercise is not designed to raise more tax money; it is to level the taxable value with the real estate value. T. Leitz stated he would like the Board to consider raising the Lister stipend in 2025 to account for the additional work they may be called upon to perform. There is \$200,000 in reserve for reappraisal in the budget.

Since COVID we have been running in the 8-10 active listings. Waterbury is slowly creeping into the 20 active listings.

Emergency Shelter: R. Clapp was approached by ANR regarding the Worcester Range but unfortunately the department did not have anyone available to attend this evening. This topic was put in the place of that discussion.

BGS is stating they would like to connect with the community about the use of the former Armory

Building being used as a shelter. The State is going to attempt to open a shelter with State Employees on November 1st. The current plan is to operate for 10 families only until December when the hotel program will reopen and the families will return to previous arrangements. Staff here learned of this development because of a reported call to a local non-profit that was asked if they could operate the shelter. November 28th is the preliminary hearing for E-Court to consider the court case regarding the change of use.

Discussion of Municipal Police: This was a request from a public session about a month ago after a number of low-level crimes in the community. T. Leitz has been considering the feasibility of local force. The Town does have a out clause with the State Police contract. There is also a possibility to add an officer to the State contract. Lt. Howard has stated recruitment remains dismal; every town is short officers beyond where they believed they'd ever be. Richmond previously had a PD and they are no longer in the business; they have contracted with Hinesburg. T. Leitz has reached out to Berlin, Montpelier and Stowe. Montpelier and Stowe don't have the manpower but Berlin would consider a conversation. T. Leitz spoke to the challenges and also the benefits of a regional department with a neighboring community. T. Leitz stated he is willing to do the research to begin a sole department but warns it's a substantial investment to purchase the equipment and resources for the first year with no coverage because any officers would be at the academy. Waterbury should be considering perhaps .25 on the local tax rate for a local police department. Staff opinion is that the Town is being served relatively well for the contract we are currently under taking into consideration leave time and officer hours. The Town has signed another contract with the VT State Police for an additional three years. K. Sweeney wanted to reiterate that the local business owners who requested this be placed on the agenda understand the options are limited based on staff restraints. M. Bard stated he would not be opposed to increasing the VT coverage if and when that becomes feasible.

I. Jonas has recently been hired as an advisor to the Mayor of Burlington to assist in rewriting their public safety plan. I. Jonas stated she does believe the affordable housing crisis is lending to many of the crime issues as well as the opiate epidemic. I. Jonas is not aware of a specific community that utilized volunteer efforts to police a community but she stated Burlington does have non uniform employees providing non crime intervention. Styles such as a robust "Public Health" style team to deal with some of the other community issues such as homelessness and drug use. The Vermont Criminal Justice Department should be consulted regarding a more academic police academy opposed to the style of training currently required to become a police officer at this time.

Mini Pumper FD: G. Dillon stated when the Town and Village merged it created a quandary of equipment that overlap in the need to replace them. The biggest problem with the current mini pumper is that GM is no longer making parts for it. Waterbury is not unique to this issue as many other communities have the same issue with no electronic parts available. There is a mini pumper coming in that is another DEMO. It will be available in February or March. The cost of this truck is \$320,000. The dealer is willing to hold this DEMO acknowledging voter approval at Town Meeting 2025. **K. Sweeney moved to approve signing the documentation for a purchase agreement of a new mini pumper truck, contingent on voter approval. Seconded by M. Bard with a friendly amendment to contract with Desorcie Emergency Products, K. Sweeney accepted the friendly amendment. A vote was held on the amended motion and passed unanimously.**

Housing Update: R. Clapp learned from J. Camaratta that Wyndam & Windsor Housing Trust which works with a not-for-profit to leverage municipal funding to receive grants and private donations. With

that money they have worked on creating 25-26 units in local communities. It was suggested to use the 2024 revenue gained from Short Term Rentals as the seed money for the Waterbury Housing Trust Fund. K. Sweeney would like to see the revenue also include that from large tourist-based revenue towards the trust. 2023 rooms tax generated \$97,000 in tax revenue so the projection of \$92,000 for 2024 seems like a high estimate for short term rental only. J. Camaratta will be asked to attend the first November meeting for additional information.

Rental Registry Outreach: Staff has been working to get the software up and live by December 1st. This piece of the software is a simple questionnaire. Staff intends to do a direct mailing to all the property owners in Waterbury. T. Leitz would like to pair the mailing with information about reappraisal. K. Sweeney suggested a keyword in the TextMyGov software as well.

Next Meeting Agenda:

Joint Town/EFUD meeting at 5:30

Health insurance

Town/EFUD cross charges

T. Leitz annual review

Employee Breakfast

Housing Trust Fund – Joe Camaratta

ANR Worcester Management Plan

Armory Shelter Update

Outreach Plan for Woody Avenue

Natural Disaster Preparedness Committee Handbook 11/18

Policy for completing use of fields

Executive Session: K. Sweeney moved to find premature public knowledge of an internal matter would place the town at a substantial disadvantage. The motion was seconded by I. Shea a vote was held and passed unanimously. K. Sweeney moved to enter into executive session. M. Bard seconded the motion, a vote was held and passed unanimously.

Adjourn: Having taken no action K. Sweeney made a motion to adjourn. I. Shea seconded the motion; a vote was held and passed unanimously.