

**Special Joint Meeting of the Waterbury Select Board
& Edward Farrar Utility District Commissioners
March 30th, 2020
28 North Main Street**

Present (either by telephone or in person): C. Viens, K. Martin, M. Bard, M. Frier and N. Fish, Select Board; P. H. Flanders, N. Sherman, R. Finucane, C. Parks, and L. Sayah, Commissioners; W. Shepeluk, Municipal Manager; and C. Lawrence, Town Clerk.

Public: Grant Eckfeldt.

The joint meeting was called to order at 7:00pm.

APPROVE AGENDA

On behalf of the Select Board, M. Bard made a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by K. Martin and passed unanimously. On behalf of the Commissioners, L. Sayah made a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by C. Parks and passed unanimously.

PUBLIC

There was no public comment.

MANAGER'S UPDATE ON RESPONSE TO COVID-19

The Manager had previously distributed a memo titled 'COVID-19: Status Report'. The memo detailed actions taken by the elected boards to date (see attached). Some staff has been laid off and others are working reduced hours. The Manager also asked hourly employees to consider a 5 percent reduction in pay by working 38 hours per week. Five people are fully laid off at the moment. S. Lotspeich, as previously approved by the Select Board, will be acting Zoning Administrator as permits must be acted on in a timely manner. The Highway Department employees have had their time cut in half. They will likely be eligible for partial unemployment benefits. W. Shepeluk explained the schedule of Highway worker coverage. Salaried employees must be paid for 40 hours per week. The salaried employees have been asked to consider a 5% reduction in their pay rate.

C. Viens asked about the staggered work force in the Highway Department and whether or not they would continue to provide good services. He asked how the schedule will be coordinated. W. Shepeluk responded that the Highway Supervisor will be working reduced hours but will change her shifts so that she can manage what is happening. The Public Works Director will also assist in their supervision. C. Viens asked if there has been any further discussion about paving projects or expenditures on equipment and products. W. Shepeluk has asked supervisors to look at their budgets to see what projects might be delayed but it may be a good time to do certain other projects. W. Shepeluk reviewed the status of trucks that were slated for purchase. Several vehicles have been ordered or are under contract. There is a one-ton truck in the budget that most likely will not be purchased. M. Bard stated there are hard choices to be made as the world is in a crisis situation.

M. Frier asked what Town revenues might be affected, other than property taxes. W. Shepeluk responded that taxes will be largest hit. There will be a drop off of water and sewer revenues as well. W. Shepeluk stated it is hard to estimate what the delinquencies will be in property tax collections, and explained that the actions he has taken are to curb expenses and protect assets.

W. Shepeluk stated that one helpful circumstance is that the voters, at Town meeting, authorized the Board to authorize a tax rate not to exceed 55 cents. When the rate is actually set in June, the Board can decide to set a tax rate less than 55 cents to have less burden on taxpayers. The Town can withstand a deficit better than businesses can withstand loss of business.

M. Bard asked if there might be consideration to not charging interest on late tax payments. W. Shepeluk explained that at Town Meeting, the voters voted to charge penalties and interest. There would have to be a Special Town Meeting to overturn that decision.

W. Shepeluk stated that the EFUD Commissioners voted to waive water base charges for residential and commercial properties, forfeiting approximately \$119,000 in revenues. He recommended that the Commissioners vote to create a \$40.80 water base charge for public institutions and a \$46.20 sewer base charge for public institutions and to convert all federal, state and local government buildings and all public school buildings from 'commercial' status to the new 'public institution' status to reduce this forfeiture.

W. Shepeluk gave an explanation regarding borrowing. EFUD can lend the Town money to pay off current notes. M. Bard made a motion to authorize the interest rate on the loan from all Reserve funds to the Capital Fund to be lowered from 4% to 1.85% effective April 1, 2020. The motion was seconded by M. Frier and passed unanimously.

Future Select Board meetings will be called as necessary.

W. Shepeluk explained that there is no longer publication of the Waterbury Record. He asked the Boards to consider an advertising donation to the Front Porch Forum as they are a large source of information. There is a group working on a potential online paper through journalism students at the University of Vermont. K. Martin has been in contact with one of the publishers of the Valley Reporter to determine if there is potential to expand coverage to Waterbury. M. Bard made a motion to change the Waterbury paper of record to the Times Argus. The motion was seconded by N. Fish and passed unanimously.

There being no further business, the joint meeting adjourned at 8:00pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carla Lawrence, Town Clerk

Approved on: April 6, 2020