

Starksboro Selectboard special meeting

January 18, 2024

Unapproved

Board members present: Koran Cousino, Eric Cota, Carin McCarthy, John Painter

Others present: Rebecca Elder, Nancy Boss, Amy McCormick, Susan Klaiber, Robert Turner

Koran Cousino called the meeting to order at 6:25 p.m.

Changes to agenda: none

Public comment: Susan Klaiber requested that the board consider an article for town meeting to present to the voters the Fire Station #2 project and request funding for the renovation of the schoolhouse and to construct the fire station building in South Starksboro. She believes it is time for the voters to have the opportunity to consider the request. She sent an email with information to support the request.

Road Foreman's Report

The board reviewed the financing information from Community Bank for a 5-year loan for the town highway truck, extended warranty, and outfitting for a total of \$218,243, with interest at 4.99% and annual payments of \$43,648.60.

Motion: Eric Cota moved to approve the financing proposal for \$218,243 as presented. Carin McCarthy seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

The road foreman requested the board consider adding a policy change to allow for accumulation of comp time for highway employees. Other towns use a modified comp time method. Eric described the process Bristol uses. The board agreed to consider this at a future date. Research is needed and guidance from our auditor.

The board reviewed the highway equipment and paving fund schedules. Robert presented the current schedule and described some options for spreading costs over years, which could include an increased amount designated for the reserve fund annually. Josh stated that some of the equipment replacement timing can be adjusted – the single-axle could be pushed out two more years. Robert will rework the projections and bring back to the group at the next meeting.

FY24-25 Budget Discussion

The budget worksheet has been updated. The group reviewed the budget expenses for the general fund and highway. Discussion covered the major drivers for increased expenditures in the current year and projections for the next year.

Contracted services – Expense needs to be moved for the grader lease payment.

Tax rate changes are unknown. The reappraisal will result in changes to the CLA. Starksboro has been paying more because our CLA was low. The changes won't affect the municipal rate much but the education tax rate will change significantly. The rate will go down but the value of homes will go up, which may result in close to an equal change.

The State Aid to Highway revenue will be higher for the next year.

The FY22 audit is nearly complete. The report will be delivered at the next board meeting on 1/25. That will help inform the current status and if there will be any surplus from the FY23 budget that could be applied.

Budget discussion will continue at the next meeting on 1/25. The budget and town meeting warning must be finalized by 1/30/24 at 4pm.

Equity and Inclusion statement

Due to limited time for this topic the board decided to table the discussion to a later date after the budget is finalized and town meeting is over.

Executive Session

Motion: Carin McCarthy moved to enter executive session per 1 VSA §313(a)(1) to discuss confidential attorney-client communication made for the purpose of providing professional legal services to the body after having determined that premature general public knowledge would clearly place the municipality at a substantial disadvantage; and per 1 VSA §313(a)(3) regarding personnel. Eric Cota seconded. Nancy Boss and Rebecca Elder were invited into the session.

Motion approved unanimously.

Motion: Eric Cota moved to exit executive session at 8:45 pm. Carin McCarthy seconded.

Motion approved unanimously.

Actions as a result of executive session:

1. Request library trustees to attend Feb. 20 Selectboard meeting
2. Waived DRB hearing fee for Jennifer Austgen's application

Motion to adjourn at 8:50 p.m. – Eric Cota moved, Carin McCarthy seconded.

Motion approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Elder, Town Administrator

Next regular meeting: Jan. 25, 2024 at 6:15 pm