

Monday, December 18, 2023 6:30 PM

Working Session

Dalton Select Board Meeting

Call to order at 6:31 PM by Jo Beth Dudley. Select Board members Jo Beth Dudley, Carol Sheltry and Thomas Dubreuil (Tom) were present. Town Admin, Jeanette Charon present and note taking.

Public attendees: Robin Pilotte, Vic St. Cyr, Terry Parks, Cathleen Fountain, Robert Wentworth, Ron Sheltry, Emily Thompson, and others who chose not to sign-in or could not be identified.

Jo Beth motioned to go into non-public for a personnel issue at 6:31pm. Tom provided a second with approval via roll call.

Jo Beth motioned to return to public session at 6:47pm. Tom provided a second with approval via roll call.

The Select Board reviewed budgets submitted by the library, cemetery, conservation commission, volunteer fire department, highway department, town clerk and financial administration.

Bob Wentworth was present to review the Highway Department budget in detail. All line items appeared to be in line with current expenditures except for payroll. Part of 2023 was without a third highway operator and the budget is almost expended. Jo Beth suggested the 2024 budget for payroll be increased to cover overtime. Bob agreed to the change. We saved money this year by hauling our own gravel and sand. Next year we will be without the dump truck so we will likely pay more to include delivery.

The town received money from the state for bridge work the end of 2022. Bob plans to resurface the bridge on Faraway Road summer of 2024. Additional funds were received this year for bridge work as well.

A change in the role of the Road Agent was discussed with Bob during the meeting, as a continuation to the original conversation earlier in the year. The role would become more of a management role with less hands-on work in the field, plowing, etc. A Highway Garage Manager could be hired to then manage the highway and road operations. It is something to continue thinking about. We will need to check the RSA's as approval will likely be required via a vote in Town Meeting.

Lastly, Bob was asked about his thought on a retirement plan. This was discussed earlier in the year with positive feedback. The town has problems maintaining a decent workforce without this benefit since nearly all other towns in the state offer some type of retirement benefit to their employees. Bob believes now may be the time to jump on the wagon; the town just needs to do it.

Fire Chief, Ron Sheltry, was present to review the EMS and Volunteer Fire Department budgets. The VFD is keeping their 2024 proposed budget fairly consistent with 2023 with the exception of some additional funding for gear maintenance, which is due. The department has done a good job with replacing gear on a rotation schedule to minimize high-cost impacts to the town. Uniforms are required to be replaced per federal regulations. Tom asked if uniforms could be refurbished instead of replaced. Ron stated they could not. If gear is damaged, it can usually be repaired, but once the lifespan of the gear has passed, it must be replaced. We partnered with Whitefield a few years ago and purchased washing and drying machines for gear maintenance which has really helped with keeping the gear useful for its full lifespan.

The town received a check for the VFD's participation in the tanker rollover that happened in November. Jeanette will process the receipt.

The town's Emergency Operations Plan is due for renewal. We have an invoice for \$2100, which will need to be added to the 2024 budget.

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Ron expects the 2024 Ambulance Fee to increase for 2024. He thinks it'll increase to \$20k or so. He will let Jeanette know once he finds out.

Ron anticipates needing a new truck in a few years. He is hoping to work with Jeanette to find some grant that will help defray the cost for the town. This is anticipated in 3 years or so, but Ron wants to get ahead of it so we have it when it's needed.

Ron notified the board that Health Officers must be certified now with continued training every year.

Lastly, the town needs to purchase a new EMS Cardiac Monitor in the next year or so with an anticipated cost of \$20-\$30k. Jeanette will see if there are any grants available.

Terry Parks was present to review the Cemetery budget. In all the years she has been the Cemetery Sexton, she has never been asked to submit a budget to the Board. St. John's River Cemetery needs additional plots mapped and numbered. This work is very time consuming and Terry would like to have a surveyor do the work. An estimated \$6,000 was added to the budget for this work; quotes will be forthcoming. Fence and gate work approved a few years ago was never completed. Jo Beth would like that to be included in the 2024 budget since our budgets are not forward rolling.

Cathleen Fountain was available to review the library budget. The library maintained last year's budget for 2024. Doris has made some changes with new shelving and book racks. Additional space for the library would be helpful as it's currently overflowing with books, with some still in the Old Town Hall Building. This wasn't discussed previously when the Building Maintenance Committee met to discuss the uses of the building. It is something that will be taken into consideration.

Jo Beth asked Cathleen about elections and Cathleen stated they go fairly well. Jo Beth asked about electronic ballots or ballot counting machines. Cathleen didn't think we were big enough for equipment like that. An analysis would need to be done on cost and benefit. It could surely help with reconciling the elections, but at what cost?

Remaining budgets for Town Clerk and Elections as well as Financial Administration were reviewed at the previous working session. Jeanette will fill in the information from tonight's meeting and send it to the Select Board members for their individual review.

Casella has contacted the town asking for a date they can come in and present the current status of the proposed GSL project. The Board agreed they could present at the working session schedule for January 15, 2023 at 6:30pm. This will not be an open session with public comment. A public meeting can be scheduled in the future, perhaps when review of permitting has been completed by the state.

The Board signed two letters related to the cancellation of a prior credit card account, and required by the bank to close out this obsolete account.

Jo Beth motioned to go into non-public session for 2 separate legal issues at 8:17pm. Carol provided a second with approval via roll call.

Jo Beth motioned to return to public session at 8:31pm. Tom provided a second with approval via roll call.

Carol motioned to seal the minutes of non-public sessions 2 and 3. Tom provided a second with approval via roll call.

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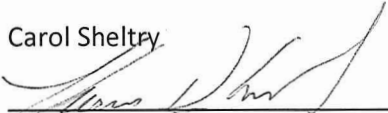
Tom motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:32pm. Carol provided a second with approval via roll call.

Minutes Respectfully submitted by Jeanette Charon.

Minutes Approved On: 12/26/2023 (date)

Jo Beth Dudley

Jo Beth Dudley

Carol Sheltry


Thomas Dubreuil