

Stowe Selectboard, Liquor Commission & Water/Sewer Commission Meeting
Monday June 22, 2020
Virtual Meeting

Present:

Selectboard Members: William Adams, William Noyes, Morgan Nichols, Lisa Hagerty, Nick Donza
There were 25 participants on Zoom.

Call to Order

Chair Lisa Hagerty called the meeting to order at 5:33pm.

Approve the Agenda

On a motion by Mr. William Adams, seconded by Mr. William Noyes, the Board approved the agenda with the addition of Public Water System Official Contact Form to the consent agenda as item 3-B-8.

COVID-19 Update

Kyle Walker, Town of Stowe Health Officer -, gave an update on COVID-19. Chief Walker indicated that there are currently 1,163 cases in Vermont with 30 of those in Lamoille County, and 56 deaths as a result of the disease. The Governor has extended the State of Emergency until July 15, 2020, while also continuing to work on opening up the State in a slow and steady manner. This included allowing places of worship and restaurants to open up to 50% capacity inside and up to 150 people outside. Masks are still required in the presence of others, and Chief Walker indicated that the Town has been working on education and notification of that through use of message boards, posters and banners. Mr. Adams questioned what could be done about enforcing compliance of mask wearing and quarantine requirements for visitors. Chief Walker indicated that it is difficult to enforce, particularly because some visitors do not have to quarantine, some can quarantine at home, etc. At this time the focus is on education to get compliance. Reports can also be made to the Vermont Attorney General. Concern was raised about the upcoming lacrosse tournament and the visitors it might bring in, Chief Walker did agree to reach out to the organizer and make sure he is aware of the requirements and offer resources.

Consent Agenda

1. Water Allocation – 0 Luce Hill Rd (Lots 2A)
2. Water / Sewer Allocation – 504 & 512 Mountain Road
3. Water/Sewer Allocation – 3108 Mountain Road
4. Minutes of June 8, 2020
5. Dispatch Contract
6. Village Sidewalk Capital Project Closeout
7. Liquor Consent Items
8. Public Water System Official Contact Form

On a motion by Mr. Adams, seconded by Ms. Morgan Nichols, the Board approved the Selectboard Consent Agenda as presented.

FY21 Water & Sewer Operational Budget, Capital Plans & Rate Schedule Public Hearing

Town Manager Charles Safford presented the FY21 Water & Sewer Operational Budget, Capital Plans & Rate Schedule. He noted that budget included a 5% reduction in water rates and no change in sewer rates. There are no capital projects being proposed at this time. Due to COVID-19, the Town is anticipating a decrease in water/sewer usage, and have budgeted for a 30% decrease in commercial/mixed-use usage. There were no comments or questions from the public or the Selectboard.

On a motion by Mr. Noyes, seconded Mr. Adams, the Board approved the FY21 Water & Sewer budgets and rate schedule as presented.

Helen Day Art Center Ceramics Classroom Project

Helen Day Art Center (HDAC) has indicated that they would like to convert their basement storage space into a classroom space with 2 kilns. They presented plans that have been drawn up, which include a 1 hour fire safe room for the electric kilns, with venting. The design firm noted that ventilation for the classroom was also included. The Town is also requiring HDAC to obtain a permit from the Vermont Department of Fire Safety before advancing the project. HDAC will also have their own electrical meter to pay for the cost of the kiln usage.

Mr. Safford also noted that while planning this project, it came to the Town's attention that the existing electrical service for the building is inadequate and not compliant with code requirements for the building. Upgrading to an -600-amp service is required for the existing building needs and is estimated to cost \$25,000.

Friends of the Stowe Library voiced concerns about the air quality for their section of the basement particularly with dust from the ceramics and the division of the space. They requested a fresh air source for their work in the basement. It was noted that dust should not be a concern as that will be contained in the classroom and kiln room areas. Mr. Safford noted that the Town has budgeted money to assess the HVAC system for the entire building but has not been able to advance that project at this time. He also stressed that the basement is an unfinished space not designed to be occupied and to try to improve that - may be a large expense for the Town. The Board requested that the Town and HDAC work together to assess how the new ventilation will connect with the existing HVAC system to assure that air quality will not be negatively impacted, and that HDACs project will not hinder the Towns ability to upgrade the building HVAC system in the future.

Mr. Safford suggested that the Board table the discussion until the July 13th meeting when Public Works can meet with Helen Day Art Center to evolve plans to understand how this system will interact with the existing system and make sure there is no negative impact to the rest of the basement. The Board concurred that they are open to the project as long as the concerns can be addressed.

Broadband Innovation Grant

The Lamoille County Planning Commission (LCPC) has received a Broadband Innovation Grant from the Department of Public Service to help communities conduct feasibility studies and create business plans relating to deployment of broadband in rural, unserved or underserved areas. Lea Kilvadyova of LCPC spoke to the project, explaining that a municipal corporation would be formed including voting representatives from all participating towns, and that the corporation would be responsible for determining how to design, build & operate broadband infrastructure in underserved areas if it is advanced. It was noted that Stowe has many places where high speed internet is already available, but there are some remote areas that still do not have it. She noted there are several ways that the municipal corporation can be structured, including a partnership with private providers, and ways it can be funded, including loans, promissory notes and grants. Mr. Safford cautioned that there is inherent risk with municipal corporations such as this that are not a monopoly like electric, water and sewer. The corporation would have to invest in infrastructure potentially with long-term debt service obligations and others may compete for the market share. Also, technology can change. Any study should be careful not just to look at the opportunities, but also the risk so people can make an informed decision. Larry Lackey of the Stowe Electric Commission voiced his support of the study, noting that participating in the study does not obligate the Town financially or for further participation in the program.

On a motion by Ms. Nichols, seconded by Mr. Noyes, the Board requested inclusion in the feasibility study with the understanding that there is no financial cost to the Town of Stowe and that the Town is not obligated to participation in any recommendations that may result from the feasibility study.

Temporary Bridge Location – Nebraska Valley Road Bridge #48

Following the Public Informational Meeting for the scoping study for the Nebraska Valley Road Bridge #48, Public Works investigated the existing conditions at the desired locations for a temporary bridge to maintain traffic during construction. Public Works Director Harry Shepard advised that there are not existing overhead utilities that would require relocation for the bridge to be build on the north side of the existing bridge. It is also the least impactful for the approaches to the bridge and avoids an archeologically sensitive area on the south side of the bridge. Mr. Shepard recommended locating the temporary bridge to the north side of the existing bridge.

On a motion by Mr. Adams, seconded by Mr. Nick Donza, the Board approved alignment of the Temporary Bridge for maintenance of traffic during construction for Bridge #48 to be on the north side of the existing bridge.

Tax Collection Policy – No Postmarks

The Town of Stowe and other communities have historically accepted postmarks as evidence of timely payment for municipal taxes. However, with the use of electronic postage and private postage machines, this has become difficult to verify and many municipalities have moved away from accepting postmarks as proof of timely payment. The Town Treasurer has requested this change to assure the policy is fair and equitable, by making sure the money is in hand on the due date. Staff will be embarking on an education campaign including notice on tax bills, in local papers and online to alert taxpayers to this change in the policy.

The Board was in agreement in support of this change to the Tax Collection Policy no longer accepting postmarks.

Face Covering Resolution Extension

On May 26, 2020 the Stowe Selectboard passed a Face Covering Resolution requiring face masks in public buildings for 30 days, to expire on June 25, 2020. At this time the Selectboard would like to extend the requirement date.

On a motion by Mr. Adams, seconded by Mr. Noyes, the Board adopted the Selectboard Face Covering Resolution expending it until the Selectboard rescinds it.

Manager's Report

Mr. Safford noted that the State is expected to get the Town the educational tax rates in time to hold a special meeting of the Selectboard on July 8th at 7:30am to set the tax rates for FY21.

Mr. Safford explained that Morgan Stanley will no longer be servicing the Stowe Retirement Plan as of 9/30/20, and financial is researching other options to bring to the Board in the future.

Mr. Safford included the Stowe Water Department Consumer Confident Report for 2019 for reference, the Town of Stowe water quality meets all standards.

Selectboard Meeting 6/22/20

Mr. Safford noted that as instructed by the Selectboard, Parks and Recreation has contracted with Northstar Fireworks to launch high projectile fireworks for the Stowe Community on July 4th. Fireworks will be launched from the Mayo Fields. There will be no activities, concessions or bathrooms. There is concern that because Stowe is one of only two towns in the State offering fireworks that there could be a larger than average turnout. Due to public health concerns and public safety, the Public Safety Chiefs are recommending not allowing parking on the Events Field and to encourage people to watch them from their homes or private property. Pedestrians will still be able to use the field due to the difficulty of trying to keep people off of them, but they will be encouraged to socially distance and wear mask when in the presence of others. Parking will be allowed along the roads, as long it doesn't impede the ability of emergency vehicles to pass through. The Town will work on messaging in the paper, online and through Stowe Area Association and Stowe Vibrancy on getting the word out that there will be no public gathering or services. The challenge will be getting people who don't read local news media to understand that there will be limited parking, no bathrooms, etc. so they don't make the trip.

The Board discussed the unallocated capital reserves, noting that the unallocated reserves are building up. -Mr. Safford noted that there is likely to be a substantial decline in local option taxes over the next fiscal year, so the unallocated reserves will be needed to fund existing projects. At this point there is not a lot of capacity for new projects. Mr. Safford indicated that he plans on reviewing in further detail the capital reserve fund at the Selectboard's 7/13/20 meeting.

Mr. Donza requested that the Town look into having a crosswalk located near the Cady Hill Trail parking lot on Mountain Road. Mr. Safford noted that this location is within the State highway and would require permission of the State along with site line and warrant study. Mr. Donza said in lieu of crosswalk perhaps a ramp on the sidewalk so that cyclist don't have to jump the curb. Mr. Safford indicated staff will further explore the idea.

There being no further business, Chair Hagerty adjourned the meeting at 8:13pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Abigail Earle.