

Cavendish Select Board Meeting, Monday, January 8th, 2024, at 6:30 pm
Location: Town Office Meeting Room: 37 High Street Cavendish, Vermont

Present: Bob Glidden (Chairman), Mike Ripley, George Timko, Shannon Devereux, Dave Norton, Rick Chambers (Town Manager), Jen Leak (Recording Secretary), Patrick Cody (OVTV) and citizens as listed on the attached sheet.

- **Call the meeting to order**

Bob Glidden, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

- **Approval of Minutes from December 11th & 21st 2023**

Dave Norton moved/Mike Ripley seconded a motion to approve the minutes from December 11th & 21st 2023 as written. All voted in favor.

- **Adjust Agenda**

There were no adjustments.

- **Hear Citizens**

Daniel Singleton was present. He asked if the Board would consider putting an article on the Town Meeting Warning to allow a marijuana dispensary in town. Rick said that he had spoken with Dan & Alison Singleton earlier today. Rick said that the Board can give approval to have a town wide vote and the voters need to decide whether to allow marijuana dispensaries or retail stores. Rick said that then the proposed owners would need to get state approval.

Mike asked if Daniel had a location planned. Daniel said that they would find another location, it would not be part of the general store. Mike asked if the town wide vote would approve anyone who wanted to open a cannabis store. Rick said that he believed so but needed to do more research.

The Select Board agreed that Daniel could submit a written request to put an article on the Town Meeting warning. Rick said that he would help Daniel write it. Daniel thanked the Board.

- **New Business**

1. **Update on GMUSD's Budget**

Lisa Sanders, Kate Lamphere and Steve Perani were present and introduced themselves as the Cavendish representatives to the Green Mountain Union School District. Lisa said that the budget issue is complicated and this year is different from previous years. She said that the State is changing how they count students to be more fair to rural districts and districts with more higher-need students and students in poverty. She said that the State wants to serve those students better and will give more money to districts which show they need it by having a higher budget this year. Lisa said that means there is an opportunity to increase the budget this year without a proportional increase in the education tax rate. She said that a budget increase of up to 10% will be allowed without triggering an in-depth examination of the budget, and the tax rate for Cavendish residents would increase by no more than 4.1% over last year's rate. Lisa said that the news has been warning there will be an 18% increase in education tax rates state-wide, and she believes that tax rates will increase as much as allowable regardless of how local school budgets are set in order to have adequate funds to cover those districts with higher needs. She said that she believed the CLA (Common Leve of Appraisal) was responsible for the predicted 18% increase, but the difference this year will be how much state monies are sent back to GMUSD due to the difference in how students are counted.

Shannon asked what would happen next year. Lisa said that this year's budget will be the base for

comparisons in future years, so a larger increase this year will be better than an increase next year.

John Arrison was present. He said that there are other components besides property taxes which pay for schools such as sales tax, meals tax and lottery revenue. He said that those revenues are variable, and the education tax rate is set in late spring after those other revenues are counted.

Lisa said that she and the other Cavendish representatives are in favor of an up to 10% increase in the GMUSD budget this year and are trying to focus those increases on direct educational opportunities. The Board thanked the representatives for coming tonight.

2. ARPA Committee Recommendations

Peter Labelle and Betty McEnaney were present. Peter said that the committee was put together by the Select Board to assist in spending the American Rescue Plan Act funds given to the Town. Peter said that the Town chose to use the “standard allowance” option which allows the money to be spent on any usual government services. He added that the money must be allocated by the end of 2024.

Peter said that the committee prepared a questionnaire to get citizen input on what type of projects people were interested in, and “improving public infrastructure” was the most favored category. He said that the committee then prepared an application and distributed it to the public. Betty said that 11 applications were received in the total amount of \$361,150.00 which did not utilize the full amount of ARPA funds. She said that one application has been put on hold at Barbara Dickey’s request due to ongoing discussions with the Episcopal diocese who owns the Gethsemane church on Depot Street.

George handed out a summary of the applications received and approved by the Committee, along with some possible recommendations for use of the remainder of the funds. He thanked the committee for a year of good work. He said that the full applications will be emailed out to the Board for review.

George Timko moved/Bob Glidden seconded a motion to thank and disband the ARPA Committee. All voted in favor.

Rick asked if the withdrawn application was on the summary sheet. Peter said that it was still on the list since it wasn’t withdrawn just on hold.

Bob Glidden moved/Mike Ripley seconded a motion to accept the list of projects at the amounts given. All voted in favor.

Mike asked if anyone had talked with the Recreation Director about Greven Field. Rick said that he has, and he needs to look closer at the Town Flood Hazard Regulations to develop a plan.

3. Discuss LHMP (Local Hazard Mitigation Plan)

Rick said that more work needs to be done on the LHMP. He said that there is a grant opportunity coming up to look at the entire Black River drainage area for Cavendish and the surrounding towns. He said that he thought it would be a great project, and MARC will provide the matching funds. Rick said that the LHMP needs to be completed and suggested forming a committee to do that mainly via email. He said that he thought the fire chiefs and emergency coordinator should be involved. Rick said that he would reach out to the local emergency personnel if the Board agrees. The Board agreed.

- **Old Business**
 1. **Academy Building**

Rick said that property owner Reese Brown had sent him a letter which he forwarded to the Town Attorney. Rick said that the Attorney is reaching out to the Preservation Trust with some questions and

did not recommend signing the letter yet. Rick said that Reese's letter asks the Town to release their right of first refusal which he didn't believe the Board has discussed. Rick said that if the Board and the Town Attorney approved then he could sign the letter.

Reese Brown was present. He said that when he bought the building it took 6-9 months for the right of first refusal to be discussed. He said that he is trying to make the sale of the building easier by releasing the residential restriction and the right of first refusal from the Select Board, and releasing some of the historic preservation restrictions from the Preservation Trust.

George said that he thought it would be good for the Town to have a say in who buys the Academy since it is a historic building. Reese said that it will always be a historic building and the Preservation Trust will preserve that, but the Town right of first refusal discourages people from looking into buying it.

George asked if the property survey was completed. Rick said that they are working on the survey and he expected it would be done soon. He added that he thought the building would be sold with only the land under the eaves and it appeared the shed is on town land on the north side of the building.

Reese said that an agreement about parking and lot maintenance could be discussed later with the new owner.

Mike Ripley moved/Shannon Devereux seconded a motion to give the Town Manager approval to sign the agreement after the Town Attorney's approval. All voted in favor.

2. Discuss 2024 & Future Voting

Rick said that the Board discussed this at last month's meeting. He said that the State is allowing the Board to decide whether to vote via Australian ballot or floor vote for this year. Rick said that whatever the Board decides for this year, the voting would go back to floor voting for next year unless the Board puts an article on the warning and lets the voters decide to change to Australian ballot.

George said that he thought floor voting was an important part of the community and Town Meeting. Shannon said that she likes the floor vote but Australian voting gives people a greater opportunity to vote. Rick said that he agreed people get more control with a floor vote but these days people are very busy and it's difficult to get to town meeting. Dave thought it should be Australian ballot for this year. Mike said he would like to put article on warning for people to decide voting method for the future.

Dave Norton moved/Shannon Devereux seconded a motion to hold Town Meeting vote by Australian ballot this year. Bob Glidden, Mike Ripley, Shannon Devereux and Dave Norton voted yes. George Timko voted no. The motion passed.

Rick said he would put an article together for the Town Meeting Warning to have voters decide the voting method in the future.

3. VT-ALERTS Update

Rick said that he had received a draft design for disaster information fridge magnets earlier today. He said that he thought it would be good information for people to have, and the Town has some emergency management funds. Rick said the cost would be \$500 for 1,000 magnets. Rick said that he might make some changes to the design and information included.

Dave Norton moved/Shannon Devereux seconded a motion to let the Town Manager make changes as necessary and print the magnets. All voted in favor.

Rick said that he submitted the paperwork to VT-Alerts. He said that himself, both the fire chiefs and the emergency coordinator will be able to post to the VT-Alerts system. Rick said that there is a required 90 mins training session which is offered only in person now, but in a few months the training will be held

online which will be more convenient. He said that once trained they can post for any emergencies, like road closures and major fires.

Mike said that he signed up to receive the alerts, and you can choose the county you need alerts for. He said he liked that it also lets you know when the alert has been released. George commented that it will let people call the Town Office to report conditions such trees down, and Rick could post that the road is closed, and then also post when that road is open again. Rick said that was correct.

- **Managers Report**

Rick said that he would still like pictures of damaged roads from the July floods because FEMA needs them to document the damage. He said that he would like as many pictures as possible, and asked people to text them to 802-738-6445 which is an unmanned town phone.

Rick said that the roads have been pretty rough due to the recent warm temperatures. He said that the temperatures dipped which allowed the highway crew to get some repair work done so the roads were frozen and plowable for the most recent snowstorm. Rick said that two trucks are being repaired now and he hoped they would be back in service for tomorrow's storm. He said that he has posted a job opening for a highway crew member, applications are available on the Town website and can be mailed to the Town Office.

- **Other Business**

Dave Norton – Dave asked for a moment of silence for Roger Sheehan who passed away recently.

Shannon Devereux – none.

George Timko – George said that the plowing across the street wasn't completed. Rick said that the timing of this storm was longer than expected.

Mike Ripley – none.

Bob Glidden – none.

- **Adjourn**

George Timko moved/Mike Ripley seconded a motion to adjourn at 7:38 pm. All voted in favor.

Minutes Approved: _____

Date: _____