

**Minutes of West Fairlee 2010 Proposed Budget Informational Meeting  
February 18, 2010**

**Present from the Selectboard:** Bonnie Cray, Beverly Ash and Doug Sonsalla

**Visitors:** Andy Petersen, Roger Bailey, Jim McDade, Jon Molesworth, Delsie Hoyt, Rhonda Cook, Doris Honig, Buzz Austin, Butch Moore, Don Phoenix, Gay-C Gahagan (Journal Opinion), Chris Aquino, John Bourgeois, Charlene Bourgeois, Nate Pero, Sherry Pero, Elise Cushman, Dave Cushman II

**The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm at the Community Building multi-purpose room.**

*Review Proposed Budget – Revenues*

Cray thanked the delinquent tax collector, Rhonda Cook, for all of her hard work. Sonsalla mentioned that the delinquent tax amounts will be zeroed out from the budget in the future and has been separated out in the Town Report for informational purposes. The paving funds have been placed in a capital reserve (CAP) fund for future projects. Repaving was not completed entirely due to the loss of an expected grant for the work. Sonsalla explained that a budget committee was appointed by the board to help establish the proposed budget with the board and the Town Clerk, Rhonda Cook. Sonsalla thanked all parties for their assistance and discussed the formation of additional CAP funds to anticipate future expenditures on several items in the budget. Sonsalla explained that State highway funds are based on the mileage in Town and is a set value. Sonsalla also explained that the board received 80% matching funds for culvert work on Beanville Road. Cray mentioned that the grant was for approximately \$57,000 and the work was completed under cost by J&J Blake Excavating and the remaining funds will be applied to additional road work in the area. The board thanked the Blakes for their timely and cost effective work.

*Payroll*

Sonsalla indicated that the Selectboard payroll had been increased to accommodate two additional members on the board. Phoenix indicated that the board was provided with documentation last year indicating that the Town Clerk is significantly underpaid in comparison to surrounding towns. Phoenix indicated that the board had made promises to revisit the Town Clerk's pay and no evidence of that was presented in the proposed budget. Cray indicated that there were no funds to increase the pay but that the discussion could be revisited in the future. Phoenix expressed concern in the utilization of funds to increase the board's number while not increasing the Town Clerk's pay. Sonsalla indicated that there was a slight increase in the health insurance for the Town Clerk. The board also discussed the necessity of the increase in the number of the board.

*Town Office*

Cray noted that an outside audit by a CPA has been added to the budget. Hoyt clarified that the Town voted to perform an audit regularly.

### *Public Health and Safety*

Cray clarified that the Law Enforcement/911 fees are for patrol by the Orange County Sheriff's department. The services provided by the Sheriff's department were discussed as well as alternatives. Sonsalla clarified that the fees from tickets issued on Town roads are returned to the Town and fees from tickets on State roads are returned to the State. Sonsalla also clarified that the Town has requested just coverage of Town roads from the Sheriff's department.

### *General Expenses*

Cray indicated that heating costs have gone down significantly due to bidding of the propane provider. The cost of solid waste disposal was also bid out and significantly reduced by \$9,000. The breakout of solid waste disposal costs was discussed. Cray indicated that the board has been discussing combining solid waste disposal services and fees with surrounding Towns. Options for collection sites were discussed. Sonsalla pointed out that the board reduced the number of street lights from 11 to 3. The timeline of the turn off and difference in cost was discussed. Cray also indicated that residents were notified if they wanted to take on the costs to keep their street lights. Cray indicated that seminar and training fees have gone up to help train additional selectboard members. Cray explained that the Community Building maintenance included priority one repairs from structural reports done on the building. Details on the repairs are discussed in the selectboard report at the beginning of the Town report. Additional repair information for the Community Building is available on the Town website at [www.westfairleevt.com](http://www.westfairleevt.com). Repair costs were discussed.

### *Other Services*

Sonsalla indicated that Election-Civil costs were increased to accommodate a bond vote for the Town hall relocation.

### *Highways*

Cray indicated that a line item for anticipated bridge work has been added to the budget and discussed anticipated work. Cray also explained the benefits of applying chloride to the roads. Cray explained that the winter equipment line item had been adjusted to match the needs of the Town. Sonsalla explained that some costs have been shifted to the plowing contract. Cray discussed necessary ditch and shoulder work anticipated in the grating line item in the budget as well as ditch cleaning. Cushman asked for details on roadside maintenance. Sonsalla explained that roadside brush hogging or clipping is utilized at the discretion of the board throughout the year. The ability of the board to proactively schedule the work as well as safety concerns were also discussed.

### *Capital Reserve Fund Contributions*

Cray explained that the board, Town Clerk, and budget committee have reviewed the future project needs of the Town in order to anticipate project costs ahead of time with funds set aside in CAP funds. Cray and Sonsalla discussed potential grants that the Town will be applying for in order to share some of the costs. Many grants require matching funds. Cray discussed road conditions and areas of necessary paving. Phoenix asked why the roads are in disrepair. Sonsalla responded that the structure of the road and

drainage issues cause a lot of the issues. Cray explained that maintaining ditches is important for drainage. McDade noted the importance of culverts on roads as well. Phoenix asked why the Town does not invest in rebuilding the roads over time. Sonsalla discussed the potential expense of performing the work. Phoenix suggested completing a cost-benefit analysis to determine whether the work would be worth doing over time instead of constantly repaving. Cray also explained that capital funds have been budgeted for work on the roads. Sonsalla discussed issues that arose due to budget concerns in the last year, i.e. more expensive necessary repairs were sustained with “band-aids” due to a lack of funds. Aquino suggested increasing patrol on the roads to help raise funds for road work. Gahagan asked if all of the capital reserve funds were new this year. The board responded that many of them are but not all of them. Page 7 of the Town report includes a discussion of the CAP funds. Petersen presented the budget committee goals and provided calculations on the tax impacts for tax payers ranging from \$1 to \$9 depending on property/house values. Cray also introduced John Molesworth, Delsie Hoyt, and Roger Bailey from the budget committee and acknowledged assistance provided by the Town Clerk, Rhonda Cook.

Ash explained that she is the negotiating chair on the Rivendell school board and that the negotiations with teachers and employees have come to an impasse. Additional changes in the school district were discussed.

Sonsalla thanked Cray for organizing the volunteer work completed on the multi-purpose room including repainting and scheduled refinishing of the floors. Cray also mentioned that the Slaughterhouse Road bridge was repaired using materials purchased by the board with all work completed by the snowmobile club. Cray thanked community members for their contributions as well as the Community Development Commission for their hard work.

**Motion by Sonsalla, at 8:00 pm, to adjourn the meeting. Ash seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous in favor.**

Respectfully submitted,

Holly Lewis-Poulin  
Selectboard Clerk