



**Town of Berlin
Municipal Office Building
108 Shed Road**

**Berlin, VT. 05602
Regular Select Board Meetings
1st & 3rd Monday of Each Month**

Special Meeting

**Monday, December 14, 2009
6:00 PM**

Selectboard Members: Brad Towne, Chair; Susan Gretkowski, Vice Chair; Roberta Haskin, Secretary; Nancy Driscoll. Absent: Jonathan Goddard Present: Jeff Schulz, Town Administrator; Patti Lewis, Town Treasurer. All items are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

APPROVED MINUTES

Brad Towne called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Accounts Payable/Vouchers

Patti Lewis presented the payroll vouchers for this week. Motion by **Susan Gretkowski** to approve the vouchers as presented. Second by **Nancy Driscoll**. Motion carried 3-0.

Brad Towne asked how short tax revenue will be this year. **Patti Lewis** stated that she is still waiting for at least three more decisions from the State appeals before she can determine the loss of revenue from property taxes. She stated that if the appeal decisions come in after the Grand List is finalized and filed, the Town will still owe the education portion of taxes. **Patti** stated that as far as she knows the deadline to file the Grand List is December 15th and the Listers should ask for an extension if they need it to finalize the Grand List. She stated that if one parcel affected the Grand List by 1% the Town could recoup the costs; however this is unlikely.

FY 11 Budget

Patti Lewis suggested reviewing the budget line by line. She suggested that they not review the revenues at this time as they are still to be determined and they are not voted on by the residents. **Jeff Schulz** stated that based on the past few years revenues should remain static and the only possibly significant change could be with the State of Vermont regarding highway funds. **Roberta Haskin** asked if the current revenue figure of \$176,475 will hold for the new fiscal year. **Patti** stated that she is sure that the Town could count on at least that much. She stated that she still needs to hear from the Boards and Commission regarding their budget requests for the new fiscal year. **Patti** stated that if the Town does not go forward with the Community Water System the loan funds will need to be paid back and the first payment should be in 2015, but that if the Town goes forward with the Water System, the funds would be rolled over into construction costs and paid for through user fees.

Nancy Driscoll stated that a couple of the budgeted wage amounts have increased. **Patti** stated that this was at the request of the departments involved. **Jeff** stated that when the budget sheets were sent to the different departments they were asked to keep spending down and to level fund if possible. He stated that the Listers showed a wage increase due to having three Listers and extra work. **Jeff** stated that this was the only proposed increase in the Listers overall budget for the new fiscal year. There was discussion on the

Highway budget. **Patti** stated that the Highway wages were over for Summer wages and under for Winter wages. **Nancy Driscoll** stated that she would be comfortable to make the decision to level fund everyone's wages for the new fiscal year at this time. **Jeff** stated that it would be difficult to tell the Town employees that they are not getting an increase this year, but does not see putting an increase in wages before the voters in the tight economic time. **Susan Gretkowski** suggested that if the wages are level funded, it would reduce the likelihood of potential need to lay off any staff. The Board discussed how to save money in the Highway budget for FY 11. **Patti** stated that she level funded everything across the board to start, and the Board could review and discuss where funding could be cut based on actual expenses. **Jeff** suggested asking **Richard Tetreault**, Road Superintendent, to come before the Board to explain the increases in the Highway budget for FY11. **Patti** suggested zeroing the guardrail budget item as there is approximately \$4,000 in reserve for that item that has not been used.

Patti Lewis stated that there is a new insurance plan through VLCT that is a high deductible plan with an employee co-insurance. She stated that she needs to compare more numbers to see if the new plan would be more beneficial to the Town than the current plan. **Patti** stated that under the current plan the premium is approximately \$1,400 for a family plan and under the new plan the premium for a family plan would be approximately \$1,100. **Susan Gretkowski** asked **Patti** to identify the items that are fixed costs on the budget, so the Board can determine which areas to decrease. **Jeff** stated that he doesn't see many areas within the Police budget to discuss since the Chief has agreed to level fund the Police budget. He stated that the Highway budget would have more areas in which to discuss funding decreases.

After review of the Listers budget, **Patti** stated that there was approximately \$3,000 for legal fees that were not used this year and she did not see any reason to keep that much in the legal fee line item for the Listers. **Patti** suggested decreasing this amount to \$500 as the Town does not normally use legal fees for the Listers, except for tax appeals. The Board stated that the wage line for the Listers should be level funded. **Patti** stated that there are reserve funds of approximately \$4,436 for the Tax Maps and another \$1,000 from this year, so the Town could possibly zero out that line item for FY11. **Patti** stated that the funding for Elections could not be decreased as it is at a minimum now. She stated that she had decreased the Annual Report funding as that cost is now shared with the School District.

Jeff stated that he recommends level funding the Zoning budget but cutting out the site visit mileage amount as he generally uses the Town vehicle for those visits. He stated that the advertising budget is generally used for the Development Review Board.

In review of the Planning budget, **Jeff** stated that advertising costs will increase in FY11 for the Planning Commission as they finalize the Town Plan but that the current budgeted amount would suffice for FY11.

Nancy Driscoll stated that there are other options for insurance than through VLCT. She stated that the downside of that is that if you drop out of VLCT, you can not come back to them for at least two years. She stated that if the Board was interested in pursuing this avenue, someone could check into other options to see if they would be viable for Berlin.

The Board discussed the Town's options for Ambulance service. **Jeff** stated that regardless of the outcome of the RFP for Ambulance services, the Board needs to budget for ambulance services for the coming fiscal year. **Susan Gretkowski** suggested that the Board hold a public hearing on the ambulance services to hear inputs from the residents of Berlin. **Patti Lewis** stated that if the Board went ahead with a public hearing, they would need to give all entities that bid on ambulance services a chance to give a presentation. **Jeff** stated that the RFP was advertised and the proposals are due back on December 29 to be opened by the Board on January 4th.

Patti Lewis stated that the Police Department now has 5 vehicles and asked if the Board wanted to decrease the fleet, thereby decreasing the costs to run and maintain those vehicles. The Board decided to keep the Police fleet intact as it is currently.

The Board discussed the 1% options tax to generate revenue for the Town. ~~**Susan Gretkowski** was concerned that the options tax would discourage shopping in Berlin.~~ **Brad Towne** stated that he would be more comfortable with the options tax if Montpelier and Barre were to institute an options tax at the same time.

Motion by **Roberta Haskin** to adjourn the Selectboard meeting at 8:30 PM. Second by **Nancy Driscoll**.
Motion carried 3-0.

For the Select Board:

Rebecca Richardson, Administrative Assistant