



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

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

**Monday, January 18, 2010
5:30 PM**

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

UNAPPROVED MINUTES

Brad Towne called the budget meeting to order at 5:30 PM.

FY 11 Budget

Patti Lewis stated that she had changed the debt service, set the Capital Budget at \$220,000, added \$110,000 in anticipated revenue, (which would be \$100,000 from undesignated funds and \$10,000 from a bond), added \$50,000 in revenue from sale of highway equipment, and added \$86,510 in expenses for leased highway equipment. The Board discussed the highway equipment costs and revenue. **Nancy Driscoll** stated that after looking at the FY11 proposed budget, she did not see anywhere else that the Selectboard could decrease funding. Roberta Haskin stated that the ambulance cost is still unknown until they approve a proposal and award a contract. She asked if the Board could reduce the funding for the Cemetery Commission. **Jeff Schulz** responded that **Norb Rhinerson**, Chair of the Cemetery Commission, has stated that they are saving money for repairs and it is costly to repair the headstones in the different cemeteries. **Roberta** asked if \$5,000 in the Capital Budget for computers was necessary. **Patti** responded that the office rotates computer updates. **Brad Towne** stated that he thinks it is a good idea to keep the \$5,000 in the Capital Budget for computers in case one is needed as an emergency. **Nancy Driscoll** stated that the Board needs to discuss moving away from 100% funding of the Health Insurance Program. **Brad Towne** stated that before the Town could phase in an employee funding of the Health Insurance Program, the Board would need to look at the Road Crew and Town employee wage scale to make sure that those individuals could handle paying a portion of the healthcare. **Susan Gretkowski** stated that moving away from the Town funding 100% of the Health Insurance needs to be completed in steps to make sure that everyone can afford the Health Insurance. **Susan** stated that if the budget is voted down, the Selectboard may revisit cutting the vacant position in the Police Department.

Review of Warrants

The Board reviewed the warrants.

Call to Order

Brad Towne called the Selectboard meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Treasurer's Report

Patti Lewis reviewed the budget status. She stated that the budget is at 50%-51% which is where it should be half way through the Fiscal Year. **Brad Towne** asked how the budget for winter roads was doing. **Patti** responded that the budget for winter roads was at 51% which is high due to the purchase of sand.

Refinance of Equipment Loan

Patti Lewis stated that currently, the Town has three loans for pieces of equipment which vary in percentage rates from 3.64% to 4.27%. She stated that after contacting the representatives at Merchants Bank, the bank was able to give her a rate of 3.09% for 60 months. **Patti** stated that this would mean combining the three loans into one loan, which would save approximately \$5,700 this fiscal year and approximately \$13,000 in saving in FY11 for debt service. She stated that this offer is good until March. The Board asked **Patti** to check with some of the other area banks on percentage rates for these loans before making a decision.

Old Business

Kellogg-Hubbard Library

Jeff Schulz stated that each year the Kellogg-Hubbard Library submits a request for funding through the special appropriations. He stated that the request from the Library is the same amount as last year, but the Library wanted to update the Board on the Library's programs and some changes. **Daniel Pudvah**, Executive Director, introduced **Robin Sales**, Library Director and **Catherine Donnis**, Trustee and Berlin's representative. **Mr. Pudvah** stated that the Library is asking for level funding from all six municipalities this year. He stated that last year the Library had to change the income and expenses by reducing the contribution from the endowment fund as the fund had decreased by approximately 30%. **Mr. Pudvah** stated that he did not have usage figures for Berlin as the Library was in the midst of renegotiating a 3 year contract with employees. He stated that as soon as he has the usage figures for Berlin he will send them on to the Board. **Robin Sales** stated that she was head librarian for the Montreal Children's Library and that she started her library career in Plainfield, Vermont. She updated the Board on the Library's services. **Dan Pudvah** is asking the area town's to help the Library look at the way they put together their budget and see if there is anything the library could do better.

EMS RFP Proposal

Jeff Schulz reviewed the RFP for Emergency Services and the three proposals received from Barre City, Barre Town and Berlin. **Jeff** stated that he agreed to let each of these organizations give the Board a brief presentation. **Carl Rogers**, Barre Town Manager, reviewed the cost summary of their proposal. He stated that Barre Town would bill Berlin for 7/8 of the Town's population excluding the Riverton Area which is served by Northfield EMS. **Mr. Rogers** stated that Barre Town EMS currently rents space in the Berlin Fire Department at a rate of \$10,980 per year and if Barre Town was to lose the contract with Berlin, the Fire Department would lose that amount in income. He stated that Barre Town EMS has been serving Berlin since 1996 with a full time crew of 1 paramedic and 1 EMT on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. He stated that Barre Town EMS is the largest EMS service in Central Vermont and they keep progressing and growing every year.

Tim Bombardier, Chief of Barre City, **John Craig**, City Manager and **Joseph Aldsworth**, Deputy Chief came forward to review Barre City's proposal for EMS services. **John Craig** stated that Berlin and Barre City shared a natural relationship over the past years. **Tim Bombardier** stated that the City of Barre has made a huge investment in the EMS services with staff, training, equipment and practices. He stated that currently the City of Barre has 3 ambulances and are exploring options for another 4 wheel drive ambulance. **Tim** stated that Barre City has a 10 year capital improvement plan to keep their EMS equipment in top shape. He stated that the City currently has 4 certified paramedics on staff, 1 student who needs to complete the final test required to be certified, and 2 more staff that have just started schooling to be certified. **Joseph Aldsworth** added that the City has seen an increase in their EMS equipment used inside the ambulance and have continued to reach out to other communities with training and sharing of grants. **Tim Bombardier** stated that Barre City has a certified billing representative in house. **Nancy Driscoll** stated that according to Barre City's proposal, there are EMTI's on staff but does not mention paramedics. **Tim** responded that all the emergency service staff, including fire fighters, must be certified EMTI's at minimum and they are continually building the paramedic unit with training. **John Craig** stated that he is a certified paramedic and fills in when needed and Barre City EMS is certified by the State as a paramedic unit. **Roberta Haskin** asked if Barre City currently serves any other town. **John Craig** stated that they do not currently serve other towns as a full time unit, however they have a paramedic intercept service that they offer to two other municipalities. **Patti Lewis** asked where the Barre City EMS is staged. **John Craig** stated that they have full time space at the Public Safety Building in Barre and are open to having a staging set up at the Fire Dept should they be awarded the contract with Berlin.

Nick Garbacik, Fire Chief, and **Scott Bagg**, Assistant Fire Chief reviewed Berlin's EMS proposal. **Scott** stated that he would like to read a letter from **Albie Lewis**, a 25 year member of the Berlin Fire Department

culminating as the Fire Chief. The letter from **Mr. Lewis** stated that, in the past, Barre Town has asked the Selectboard to increase the per capita rate to help cover the operating expenses and that the current proposal from Barre Town reflects that the town has been overcharged for services in the past. **Scott** stated that the Berlin Fire Department could provide full time fire and EMS services for the Town, with 2 ambulances being staged in Town and 3-4 personnel on duty 24 hours per day, 7 days a week. He stated that the Fire Department has pursued EMT classes and State certification for EMS services. He stated that the goal is to provide these services to the residents of Berlin no matter where they live in town. He stated that the Fire Department has been serving Berlin for 54 years and sees this proposal as an opportunity to better serve the residents. **Jonathan Goddard** asked if the per capita rate that Berlin Fire Dept. put forth would cover expenses. **Scott Bagg** responded saying the per capita rate in the Fire Dept. proposal along with revenue generated through transfer fees would help pay for any loan and start up costs incurred. **Nick Garbacik** stated that the Fire Department would need to buy or lease equipment and that lease to own was the best route. He stated that at the end of 5 years, the equipment would still be in Town. **Nick** stated that the other proposals came from entities that have their own equipment already, but that equipment is not Berlin's equipment and could be taken from the Town. **Brad Towne** asked what the life expectancy is for an ambulance. **Scott Bagg** stated that if a new ambulance was purchased every time one wore out, the life expectancy would be approximately 6-10 years, however if you were to remount the ambulance body onto a new chassis, the life expectancy would be approximately 10-20 years. **Jonathan Goddard** asked if the Fire Department would be ready to provide EMS services to Berlin within 6 months. **Scott** responded that the Fire Department would be ready by July 1, 2010 to provide EMS services to Berlin. He stated that they have already pursued certification and EMT classes. **Scott** stated that the District 6 EMS Board has been approached and they have set up a presentation for early February, after answering questions at the local District 6 level, they plan to move onto the State level, which should take 1-3 months to gain certification from the State. **Norb Rhinerson** stated that the RFP set a term of three years for the proposals and the Fire Dept. proposed a five year contract. He asked if a five year contract was necessary for the department's financing. **Scott Bagg** responded that the RFP did not have a set term and the department asked for a five year contract in order to be able to handle the debt service involved. **Norb** asked what equipment the Fire Department owned to put up for collateral for their financing. **Scott** responded saying that many of the Fire Trucks are owned by the Fire Department not the Town. **Roberta Haskin** asked if there was a finalized agreement with a bank for financing of the EMS service with the Fire Department. **Scott** responded that the department had finalized discussion with three separate banks to ensure that they get the best interest rate available but that they had not received any formalized letter of commitment. **Jeff Schulz** stated that the proposal from Berlin stated that if the Fire Department was not able to pay off their debt, there was the expectation that the Town would help pay the debt. **Scott** responded that the department would ask the Town to help make arrangements to pay off the debt. He stated that the department is in favor of regionalization and would work with the Town to make sure that the regionalization service meets the expectations of the residents. **Carl Rogers** stated that the Town of Barre quoted a per capita rate of \$27 not \$29 and that the Town was making concessions to keep the contract with Berlin. Susan Gretkowski stated that the Board could have a discussion regarding the proposals or the Board could go ahead with a motion to accept a proposal. The Board decided on a discussion of the proposals. **Jonathan Goddard** stated that the Board needs to look at more than the cost regarding EMS service. He stated that there are a lot of questions regarding Berlin Fire Department's proposal and that the Board is familiar with Barre Town, as they have worked together since 1996. **Jonathan** stated that it is very important to support Berlin's people and keeping the services at home rather than outsourcing the services. **Susan Gretkowski** acknowledged the work and experience that Berlin Fire Department had put into their proposal, but that she had a lot of questions and concerns in accepting their proposal. She stated that cost is important given the state of the economy, and she would like the Board's decision lead more toward regionalization. Susan stated that she would like assurances from Barre Town that they were not making sacrifices to give Berlin the cost figures they had proposed and that these figures would remain accurate. She stated that she would be more comfortable with accepting Barre Town's proposal. **Roberta Haskin** stated that she has concerns with Berlin starting up an EMS service. She stated that it is a risk that she did not think the Board could ask the taxpayers to take at this time. **Nancy Driscoll** stated that she agreed with the rest of the Board regarding the risks and costs involved in the proposals. She stated that she was concerned with response time for emergency calls and she was not sure of Berlin's figures on response time. **Scott Bagg** stated that Berlin's proposal states that the response time would be under 10 minutes 90% of the time and under 15 minutes 95% of the time. **Susan Gretkowski** stated that in looking over the proposal from Barre City, it seemed that the level of staff paramedics was not as high as Barre Town, and the per capita rate was based on the whole population of Berlin rather than the 7/8 asked for in the RFP.

Motion by **Susan Gretkowski** to accept the bid from Barre Town for EMS service to Berlin for the next 3 years. Second by **Nancy Driscoll**.
Motion carried 4-0.

Tax Stabilization Policy

Jeff Schulz stated that at a previous meeting there was discussion on a recommended tax stabilization policy from the Economic Development Committee. He stated that if the Board accepted the recommendation, a tax stabilization policy would be placed on the ballot for the voters' consideration at Town Meeting. **Pat McDonald**, Economic Development Committee Chair, stated that Montpelier, Barre Town and Barre City currently have a tax stabilization policy in place. She stated that if a business comes into the municipality or wants to expand there would be a tax stabilization agreement made with them. **Pat** stated that the policy recommended by the EDC would give the Selectboard the authorization to enter into a 5 year tax stabilization agreement with that business. She stated that if the investment was quite large the Selectboard would need to go to the voters for authorization to enter into an agreement for anything over 5 years. **Nancy Driscoll** asked if there was a possibility to put a small explanation of the policy on the warning. **Pat** responded that **Rob Halpert**, Town Attorney, felt that it would become confusing to put forth an explanation on the warning, but that there is a possibility to have a handout ready for the public or to conduct some public hearings before Town Meeting. **Jeff Schulz** stated that the explanation would come from the policy that could be handed out at Town Meeting and have a member of the EDC to answer any questions regarding the policy. Motion by **Nancy Driscoll** to add a Tax Stabilization Policy to the Town Meeting warning. Second by **Jonathan Goddard**. Motion carried 4-0.

Charter Changes

Jeff Schulz stated that the Board had held three public hearings on the Charter Changes and had discussed adding language similar to the changes for the Treasurer position on a hiring committee. He stated that he revised the position title to assessor rather than appraiser. **Jeff** stated the other change is to state a date for the changes to become effective should the Charter changes pass. There was discussion on the effective date of the proposed changes. **Pat McDonald** reviewed the process of the changes being heard and passed by the legislature. **Patti Lewis** stated that because the Listers are elected, if this proposed change passes, the Board could institute an assessor's wage and a smaller Listers wage budget to reflect the phase out of the Listers.

Motion by **Susan Gretkowski** to approve the proposed charter changes and adding the changes to the March Ballot with the effective date of July 1, 2010. Second by **Robert Haskin**.
Motion carried 4-0.

New Business

Water Supply Project – Engineering Services Agreement

Jeff Schulz stated that the Board received a draft engineering services agreement with Otter Creek Engineering for the more detailed full testing of the water wells A, C & D on the Dodge Farm property. He stated that this is an amendment to the current engineering agreement and the amendment is for an \$61,000 and lists the scope of services to coordinate the testing of the wells, conduct the step test and put together the report to the State to get the wells approved as a public water source. **Jeff** stated that Otter Creek provided a total of contracted costs. He stated that the original agreement was for \$12,000 with amendments for \$4,900 and \$7,000 for a total cost of \$84,900. **Jeff** stated that the other part of the testing is for a well driller to set up the pumps and conduct the actual draw down testing with the total cost of \$57,000. He stated that the Town would seek loans from the State to cover these costs.

Motion by **Nancy Driscoll** to approve the amended agreement with Otter Creek Engineering for a cost of \$61,000. Second by **Jonathan Goddard**. Motion carried 4-0.

2010 Certificate of Highway Miles

Jeff Schulz stated that the Agency of Transportation asks the Towns to certify how many miles of roads are located within their town. He stated that this is used to calculate the amount of highway funding the Town receives from the State. **Jeff** stated that Berlin has approximately 76 miles of roads and the Town receives \$110,000 from the State annually for maintenance of its roads. He stated that this document becomes more significant if the Town adds or discontinues any roads. **Jeff** stated that the Selectboard needs make a motion to accept this certification and to sign the document. Motion by **Jonathan Goddard** to approve the Certificate of Highway Mileage for 2010. Second by **Nancy Driscoll**. Motion carried 4-0.

Town Administrator Report – Jeff Schulz

Jeff Schulz stated that an article that appeared in the Times Argus detailing the difficulties of the Solid Waste District. He stated that the Solid Waste District has decided to hand over the depots to a commercial entity.

Jeff stated that the Town has a signed contract with Pike Industries and the bid was lower than expected which would let the Town pave Paine Turnpike close to what was originally proposed. He stated that the paving should start sometime in early May or June and be completed by July 1st.

Jeff stated that the deadlines for petitions to run for office is Monday, January 25th at 5:00 PM.

Approval of Liquor & Tobacco License(s)

Motion by **Nancy Driscoll** to adjourn the Selectboard and convene the Liquor Control Board. Second by **Roberta Haskin**. Motion carried 4-0.

Jeff Schulz stated that there are 4 liquor licenses for the Board to review, from the Wayside Restaurant, Kinney Drugs, Price Chopper Supermarket and Short Stop Convenience Store. He stated that there 3 Tobacco licenses, Price Chopper, Kinney Drugs and Short Stop. **Jeff** stated that he had talked to the Police Chief regarding the liquor licenses and recommended approving these licenses.

Motion by **Nancy Driscoll** to approve the liquor and tobacco licenses from The Wayside, Price Chopper, Kinney Drugs and Short Stop as presented. Second by **Susan Gretkowski**. Motion carried 3-1.

Motion by **Susan Gretkowski** to adjourn the liquor control Board and reconvene the Selectboard. Second by **Roberta Haskin**. Motion carried 4-0.

Approval of Licenses, Permits, Vouchers and Applications

Motion by **Susan Gretkowski** to approve the licenses, permits, vouchers and applications as presented. Second by **Jonathan Goddard**. Motion carried 4-0.

Approval of Minute(s) of Previous Meetings

After review of the minutes of January 4, motion by **Roberta Haskin** to approve the minutes as presented. Second by **Nancy Driscoll**. Motion carried 4-0.

After review of the minutes of January 11, motion by **Susan Gretkowski** to approve the minutes with changes. Second by **Nancy Driscoll**. Motion carried 3-0 with 1 abstaining.

After review of the minutes of December 28, motion by **Susan Gretkowski** to approve the minutes as presented. Second by **Roberta Haskin**. Motion carried 3-0 with 2 abstaining.

Roundtable

There was no round table.

Executive Session

Motion by **Nancy Driscoll** to enter into Executive Session to discuss personnel issues at 9:30 PM. Second by **Jonathan Goddard**. Motion carried 4-0.

Motion by **Susan Gretkowski** to exit out of Executive Session and adjourn the Selectboard at 10:00 PM. Second by **Nancy Driscoll**. Motion carried 4-0.

For the Select Board:

Rebecca Richardson, Administrative Assistant