

TOWN OF PEACHAM
MINUTES OF THE SELECTBOARD MEETING
Wednesday, December 15, 2021
APPROVED

Selectboard Members: Beatrice Ring, Peter Craig, Richard Browne
Public: Town Clerk/Treasurer Thomas Galinat, Road Foreman Jeremy Withers, Selectboard Clerk Rebecca Washington, Janie Carle, Dave Stauffer, Laurie Kozar, Jake Thomas, Ron Craig, Bob Hansen, Dart Thalman, Mark Clough, Carol Fox

1. The meeting was called to order by Chair of the Selectboard Beatrice Ring at 7:01pm.
2. Additions to the agenda
 - a. Gym use procedure
 - i. Moved to agenda item 12.
3. Information exchange with School Board
 - a. School Board Chair Mark Clough applauded the town for taking over the afterschool program when it was an excess spending threshold issue and saving the taxpayers money.
 - i. Now that the school has the Esser Funds, it will be able to handle the town giving up the program.
 - b. Because there was some confusion over who would be handling the afterschool program in 2022, discussion ensued on how the Selectboard and the School Board could communicate more effectively in the future.
 - i. To improve communication regarding topics of shared interest, the Selectboard and the School Board plan on touching base more regularly. This may involve a member from each board attending the other board's meetings on a regular basis to share information.
4. 2022 budgeting
 - a. The Selectboard and Galinat reviewed the current draft of the 2022 budget.
 - b. With the 2022 budget as presented, which included the removal of the afterschool program, the inclusion of Fire Department salaries, and the inclusion of cost-of-living raises across the board, the town tax rate would increase by 1.75%. If the school's budget stays flat as expected, the total homestead tax rate would increase by 0.47% and the total non-residential tax rate would increase by 0.51%.
 - c. The amount to be raised by the town in taxes in 2021 was \$887,309. With the 2022 budget as presented, the amount to be raised in taxes in 2022 would be \$902,760.
 - d. Discussion ensued on the possibility of the town offering family health insurance plans.
 - i. There are currently only two employees who would be eligible for a family plan. Budgeting for two employees to switch to a family plan would result in a 3.57% increase in the town tax rate. The total homestead tax rate would increase by less than 1%.
 - ii. Budgeting for three employees to switch to a family plan would result in a 4.26% increase in the town tax rate. The total homestead tax rate would increase by 1.15%.
 - iii. Budgeting for all employees to switch to a family plan would result in a 7.34% increase to the town tax rate. The total homestead tax rate would increase by 1.99% and the total non-homestead tax rate would increase by 2.14%.
 - iv. P. Craig pointed out that more and more municipalities are offering family plans and that offering a family plan would help keep Peacham attractive to current and future employees.
 - v. Galinat pointed out that a change in the health insurance offerings would require a change to Peacham's Personnel Policy.
 - vi. Because the topic was not an agenda item, the Selectboard will include it on the agenda for the end-of-year meeting and discuss it further.
 - e. The Selectboard will finalize the budget at the end-of-year Selectboard meeting.
5. Committee updates
 - a. Development Review Board
 - i. The Selectboard reviewed the Development Review Board update submitted by DRB Chair Rusty Barber.
 - ii. The DRB consists of Rusty Barber, Morris McCain, Marilyn Magnus, Matthew Kempton, and Rick Scholes.
 - iii. There were three DRB hearings in 2021 and there are two DRB hearings scheduled for January 2022.
 - b. Zoning Administrator
 - i. Zoning Administrator Bob Hansen explained that he processed 23 zoning applications in 2021, which was six more than 2020.
 - ii. Hansen processed one boundary line adjustment, which required a survey and legal descriptions to be recorded in the land records.
 - iii. One of the newer applications he referred to the DRB was for an ag overlay issue on Katherine Siner's property in the village. Siner also applied to have a farmstand and to hold events in her barn, which requires a change of use.
6. Burrington zoning violation update

- a. Hansen explained that he heard from Vince Chiorgno, the state salvage person, that the state's legal team is overbooked and there will probably not be any action on Burrington's situation any time soon.
 - b. Recently, Burrington brought in a mobile home and has been trying to build a parking lot for cars.
 - i. Hansen explained to Burrington that he was not permitted to do that.
 - c. Although the fines are adding up, Hansen thinks that the only way to stop the zoning violations is to get a court order, which would require hiring a lawyer.
 - d. There are many residents that are upset about the situation and worried about what's going on.
 - e. Thomas suggested budgeting \$5,000 a year into a reserve fund for legal fees so that a legal situation with a large expense wouldn't be as daunting.
 - i. P. Craig explained that there was a plan to budget for a legal retainer in 2022.
 - f. Browne is following up with the attorney who is reviewing the Personnel Policy draft and will ask him what he thinks it would cost to take this to court.
7. PCH update
- a. Thalman explained that Peacham Community Housing is looking into a commitment with Rural Edge, the leading housing developer and manager in the NEK. Rural Edge would finance an assessment of the Science Building and its potential for rehab for affordable housing, as well as an assessment of the Academy Apartments and a market survey. Following completion of the assessments, further planning, an agreement for a partnership, and Rural Edge coming up with the necessary funding, the property ownership would be transferred to Rural Edge. PCH would continue its role as an advocate for the residents.
 - b. Discussion followed on the benefits of having a professional management company on board, as well as the potential concerns that residents might have.
 - i. One concern was for the ability for continued use of the green that is currently used by the farmer's market and other organizations.
 - a) Thomas explained that, at this point, everything is still on the table and that the preferences of the town will be taken into account in the agreement.
 - c. PCH plans on keeping the Selectboard informed as the project progresses.
8. Grand List adjustment
- a. The Selectboard reviewed the Grand List adjustment presented by the Peacham Listers.
 - b. **Browne moved to approve and sign the Grand List adjustment. P. Craig seconded. All in favor. So moved.**
9. Approve minutes
- a. **P. Craig moved to approve the minutes of December 1, 2021 as presented by the Selectboard Clerk. Browne seconded. All in favor. So moved.**
10. Review and approve bills
- a. **Browne moved to approve and pay the AP and three payrolls as presented. Ring seconded. Majority in favor. P. Craig abstained because one of the AP checks was for his business. So moved.**
11. Review correspondence
- a. Correspondence included VLCT's 2021 Compensation and Benefits Report, which will be in the Town Clerk's Office for review.
12. Gym use procedure
- a. Gym use requests are infrequent and will continue to go through Ring.
 - b. Gym users have to check out a key for each use and COVID waivers have to be signed.
13. Executive session for personnel
- a. **Browne moved to enter executive session for personnel. P. Craig seconded. All in favor. The Selectboard entered executive session at 8:11pm.**
 - b. The Selectboard came out of executive session at 8:36pm.
 - c. No action taken.
14. Adjourn
- a. **P. Craig moved to adjourn. Browne seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:37pm.**

These minutes were approved as written by the Peacham Selectboard at its regular meeting on 1/5/22.

Rebecca Washington, Selectboard Clerk

