

Approved 2/6/19
TOWN OF WEST TISBURY
SELECTMENS MEETING
Wednesday, January 23, 2019 4:30 p.m. – 6:05 pm

Present: Selectmen Cindy Mitchell, Skipper Manter, Kent Healy, Jen Rand

Also Present: Russ Hartenstine, Bruce Stone, Kathy Logue, Larry Shubert, Prudy Burt, Dawn Barnes, Richard Saltzberg

Minutes: *S. Manter motioned to approve the minutes of 1/02/19. K. Healy seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimous in favor.*

Code Red Policy: Russ, Emergency Management Director, said he had created a policy for the use of Code Red after lessons learned a few weeks ago when the problems with the 911 system triggered the use of Code Red. He said the Sheriff has asked that the Communication Center be informed when a message goes out in case it results in an uptick of phone calls. Russ said from here forward the Sheriff's office will review the language, if there are major changes proposed he said the Town will ultimately make the decision if they think the language should be changed. In addition, if Code Red is used the other town Emergency Managers will be notified.

Russ also said that Emergency Managers have been asked about warming shelters for the homeless. They do not feel that is in their purview, rather they operate warming shelters during majors storms when loss of power is likely to occur. They feel the other need is a health and human services issue.

Budget Review: *K. Healy motioned to support line 210, Police Department Budget. C. Mitchell seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was KH & CM in favor, SM recused himself.*

S. Manter motioned to support line 220, Fire Department Budget. K. Healy seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimous in favor.

S. Manter motioned to support line 292, Animal Control Budget. K. Healy seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimous in favor.

K. Healy motioned to support line 241, Building Department Budget. S. Manter seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimous in favor.

Skipper said in the narrative for the Highway it was not correct that the stipend increase was only for 2 years, it will remain until the stipend is at an appropriate amount. He added that he is not in favor of the department taking over mowing town properties.

K. Healy motioned to support line 422, Highway Department Budget. S. Manter seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was KH & CM in favor, SM opposed.

S. Manter motioned to support line 423, Snow & Ice Budget. K. Healy seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimous in favor.

Animal Control Officer Appointment: *S. Manter motioned to appoint Anthony Cordray, Katherine Hoffman and Kimberly Andrade to the position of Animal Control Officer for one year. K. Healy seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimous in favor.*

Town Reports: *S. Manter motioned to approve the Selectmen and Cemetery annual reports with edits. K. Healy seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimous in favor.*

Community Preservation Committee (CPC) Grant Agreement: The Board asked why they have to sign this document. Larry said the State had recommended to the CPC that each project have this agreement in place detailing the limited use of the funds. The Board felt this was not a good use of time and effort for

town projects. Bruce noted that in this case there was not a “project” but simply a transfer of funds. Jen was asked to reach out to the CPC outlining the conversation and requesting the policy be revisited.

S. Manter motioned to sign the CPC grant agreement. K. Healy seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimous in favor.

Short Term Rental Tax: Jen said that the Financial Management Team (FMT) had met and discussed recommendations for the Board for town meeting regarding the local options for rental tax. She said she had spoken with a local realtor and found that the Community Impact Tax of up to 3% for multiple units with a single owner that are professionally managed would be unlikely to have any real impact in West Tisbury, it is possible there are no units that currently fit that description. Because this tax is collected directly by the town, and is unlikely to have any real impact the FMT did not recommend that be put toward a vote. It would likely cost more to administer than it was worth. Regarding the rooms tax, Jen said the FMT firmly and strongly supported asking the voters for 6%. She said there were a number of factors which led to that decision, primarily, the fact that the town’s revenue is nearly flat and expenses keep rising. This is the only new source of revenue for the town and would provide tangible relief to the taxpayers. In addition, she noted that there are other requests for 3% of the tax for a defined purpose; this would then leave only 3% to tax relief to homeowners. Finally, she said if the voters wanted to amend the article, it likely could be amended down, it is very likely it could not be amended up; historically the moderator has ruled that increased expenses in a warrant article are outside the scope of the article. Skipper disclosed that he had a rental unit that would be taxed under this program but he didn’t feel that was a conflict. He then said he wasn’t in favor of new revenue streams because people would just spend the money. He would only be in favor if it went to directly reduce the tax rate. He also said he would support asking for 2% but 6% was too high. He asked if the money would go into the general fund. Bruce said yes unless the town passed an article dedicating at least 25% of the funds to go to a specific stabilization fund, such as the highway roads maintenance fund, that would then require a 2/3 vote to spend. Jen said Bruce suggested the Board hold a public forum prior to town meeting to help educate voters about the tax bill and the financial impacts. Kent expressed concern over the complexity of tracking units. Jen said that was up to the State to handle, not the town. Larry supported the request for 6%, he noted that all other towns have this tax, without the tax even more houses could be turned into weekly rentals if the demand goes up. Kent said he had mixed feelings about the tax but the voters should have a chance to decide. Cindy said the FMT had been asked to look at this and bring a recommendation; the Board should listen carefully to their advice. She felt the most flexible option for town meeting was 6%, the other options could be explained. Prudy supported a request for 6%. Kathy said for those collecting rental money now it would be easier for them to refund and over-collected tax than chase later if it was allowed to be amended up on the floor. Skipper asked if either the Board could phase it on with 2% the first year, 4 the next and 6 the next or alternately have the 6% sunset in 3 years so it had to be re-voted. Jen said this law was already extremely complicated; these options would likely be too confusing to the voters.

S. Manter motioned to put the article on the warrant at 6%. K. Healy seconded the motion. The vote on the motion was unanimous in favor.

Welles Property: Jen said that the time had come for the Board to take some further action on the Welles House moving to secure it against the elements. She said Town Counsel had advised writing a letter to ask for permission for whatever we wished to do versus taking a more formal legal process. She said that she would like to add locks to the house, barn and camper, put plywood on the interior of the windows as many are broken and the Fire Chief would like the propane tanks removed. Skipper said he thought it better to just have plastic on the windows so you could see if anyone was inside. Jen will proceed with that work.

Airport Expansion: Prudy asked the Board if they were following the proposed airport expansion. Cindy said as a Board they were not. After some discussion the Board asked Jen to draft a letter for the Board asking the Airport to make sure there was extensive public participation.