

Dorset Selectboard Meeting Minutes
December 20, 2021
In person & via Zoom

Present: Megan Thorn, Henry Chandler, Jim Salsgiver, Liz Ruffa

Others Present: Rob Gaiotti, GNAT-TV, Seth Bongartz, Cyndi Gubb, Marilyn Kinney, Rosalie Fox

Megan Thorn called the meeting to order at 7:04pm

November Minutes:

Jim Salsgiver moved and Henry Chandler seconded to approve the November Minutes as presented, motion passed 4-0.

Public Comment:

None

Northshire Fieldhouse Presentation:

Cyndi Gubb and Seth Bongartz gave a presentation about the concept for the Northshire Regional Fieldhouse. They covered the background, opportunities, funding, and intermunicipal agreement for the project. The building will be roughly 75,000 square feet and offer a host of recreational options. With regard to funding, a large donor has been the catalyst for the design and up to \$3.5 million for construction with the Town of Manchester putting in \$3 million and the rest coming from area Towns and private fundraising. A formula was presented listing the area towns and what the funding level would be. For Dorset it was listed at \$1.3 million, which could be bonded for 30 years at an annual cost of around \$59,000 with current interest rates. The goal of the presentation was to ask the Dorset Selectboard to add advisory vote language to the 2022 Town Meeting warning that would gauge interest of Dorset residents. After that vote, the Towns that have positive feedback would then negotiate an intermunicipal agreement prior to holding a bond vote for the project.

Discussion ensued about benefits, funding, long term stability, and governance. It was noted that if approved Dorset residents would be treated the same as Manchester, with the lower annual fee and priority status for use etc. It was also noted that if other towns don't participate, the group would have to raise additional funding as the dollar amounts they are asking from towns would not change. Additional questions were posed about revenues, shortfalls, where estimates came from, and operations/personnel management of the field house. It was also noted that the board had concerns with governance and potential future shortfalls becoming the problem for the towns. The intermunicipal agreement will have to outline and address all these items. The general consensus of the Board was to review language for an article at the January meeting, and possibly include dollar amounts in the advisory article to facilitate better discussion at Town Meeting.

COVID Guidance:

Rob Gaiotti presented options for COVID related mask guidance etc. Discussion ensued about what most businesses and public spaces in Dorset are doing already. Jim Salsgiver presented an example from Bennington that was more of a recommendation and provided signage templates that could be used. Further discussion was held about purchasing masks and reviewing sources for residents to access test kits, as the State is doing a lot on this front. Jim Salsgiver moved and Liz Ruffa seconded to approve the mask recommendation similar to Bennington, motion passed 4-0. Rob Gaiotti is to post and make information available.

FY23 Budget Presentation:

Rob Gaiotti presented the FY23 municipal budget draft as of 12/20/21. He noted all the changes to expenses and revenues. One of the largest items in the budget was the succession planning for the Town Clerk's position, as Sandy will be looking to retire. Discussion ensued about personnel, capital purchases, and other items. Expenses were up around 3%, which included a New Town Office partial bond funding to ramp up to the level of the payment over a couple years. A public hearing on the budget will be held in January.

Old Business:

Rob Gaiotti presented updates on various ongoing items that the Town has been dealing with, including: flooding at Read Farm Lane, East Dorset Village improvements, work at Raptor Lane, status of New and current Town Office projects etc.

Declaration of Inclusion:

Henry Chandler moved and Jim Salsgiver seconded to adopt the declaration of inclusion for Dorset, motion passed 4-0. Declaration will be posted on the website and in the next newsletter.

The Town of Dorset condemns racism and welcomes all persons, regardless of race, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, age, or disability, and wants everyone to feel safe and welcome in our community.

As a town, we formally condemn all discrimination in all forms, commit to fair and equal treatment of everyone in our community, and will strive to ensure all of our action, policies, and operating procedures reflect this commitment.

The Town of Dorset has and will continue to be a place where individuals can live freely and express their opinions.

Finance Report & Town Manager Report:

Rob Gaiotti gave the monthly financial report for the Town, noting that the town is roughly 58% through the fiscal year and 55% expended. He also noted the monthly activities of the Town in the manager's report. Grant funding was received for debris removal in the Battenkill, and the Dorset Fire District waterline project funding is looking positive.

Upper Hollow Road Land Gift:

Rob Gaiotti noted that he had met with a local realtor to discuss the value and options for selling the 10 acres on Upper Hollow Road. It was noted that a water/waste water permit would make the property more valuable for residential development. The comparables provided were from \$200k-\$400k but range pretty widely. Jim Salsgiver noted that the timing was really good now to have a chance to sell land, and not too long ago, it wasn't great at all. Discussion ensued about options and best benefit to the community. Rob Gaiotti noted that it could cost around \$7,000 to get the permits needed to make the property marketable to neighbors or other buyers. Jim Salsgiver moved and Liz Ruffa seconded to approve spending up to \$7,000 for permits to help sell the property. motion passed 4-0.

There being no further business to discuss the meeting stood adjourned at 10:05pm

Respectfully Submitted

Rob Gaiotti
Town Manager