

1 **SELECTBOARD MEETING DRAFT**

2 January 3, 2024

3 Attending the meeting; Merrily Lovell, Maggie Gordon, Dennis Place, Paul Lamberson, Joy Dubin
4 Grossman, Kate Kelly, Robert Hyams, Bill Marks, Stevie Spenser, Pat Mainer, Alison Lesure, Andrea
5 Morgante,

6 Attending remotely; Todd Odit, Meg Handler, Kim Reidinger, Steve Gladstone, Amy, Jennifer Decker,
7 Summer Stratton, William Scott, Janet Francis, Lenor Budd, Any Alfieri, Alex Weinhausen, Carl Bohlen,
8 Barbara Forauer.

9 Mike Loner was absent.

10 Meeting called to order at 6:00 p.m. via zoom

11 Agenda Additions & Deletions

12 none

13 Public Comment

14 none

15 Approve Minutes of 12/13 and 12/20

16 Paul moved to approve the minutes of 12/13 as amended. Seconded by Maggie and approved with 4 yes
17 votes.

18 Paul moved to approve the minutes of 12/20 as amended. Seconded by Maggie and approved with 4 yes
19 votes.

20 Selectboard Forum

21 Paul announced he is running for re-election. He also wanted to acknowledge the passing of Bruce
22 Cunningham. Bruce was active in Town and was instrumental in removing the 8% late penalty for taxes.

23 FY25 Operating and Capital Budgets Public Hearing

24 Merrily opened the public hearing.

25 Kate Kelly addressed Act 56 on conserving lands. If we continue with level funding, we will not achieve
26 30% conserved land by 2030. She is asking it be funded at the \$30,000 the Conservation Commission
27 originally requested. They reduced the Natural Resources Inventory request. Merrily said she knows there
28 are people in Town, including herself, that would love to see 30% conserved. But she also is aware that
29 people are stretched and stressed by the tax rate and they hear requests to reduce the tax rate a lot which
30 they have not successfully done. It is hard to expand things. She asked if it is possible to, as the Town
31 Forest Committee had done, ask individuals to fund raise for this. Kate said that is possible but it is still
32 important that as a Town we support conservation. Paul said he agrees with conserved land. As a Board
33 member he is not in favor of adding to the budget, but as an individual will contribute and encouraged
34 them to do more fundraising.

35 Bill Marks said he was a member of the Conservation Commission and involved in some acquisitions of
36 land. He said the CC reviewed the Land Trust requests and made recommendations to the Selectboard on
37 those. His experience is the people involved in selecting these lands are careful in looking at the properties
38 for their value. He said we need to think long term. He is concerned about people finding it more difficult
39 to afford to live in this area. There are also problems with increasing flood possibilities. He said funds
40 allocated to this are not necessarily spent as the CC will make recommendations and the Board may choose
41 to use or not use the funds. He thinks they can raise the money but it is also important to show this is a
42 priority for the Town.

43 Jennifer Decker had suggestions on where money could be saved and then put toward the conservation
44 funds and Lewis Creek Association. She suggests; decrease the Police budget, remove the extra benefits
45 to the police, the percentage of the budget for police is too much. She feels the police displayed a lack of
46 competence in the community recently. Apply for grants for conservation not police grants. Remove raises
47 to the Town Manager staff. Increase percentage staff pay for health plans. Stop funding for the LIA till they
48 stop using procellacor. She would like to spend more on expanding the testing of wells by the old landfill.
49 Give more to the Fire Department and invest in ambulance service. Shis is concerned about the new WW
50 treatment facility if taxes are increasing this much, how affordable will Hinesburg be made. She also agrees
51 with any increased to the agency funding except the Howard Center. We need to support the library.
52 Maintain GMT funding.

53 Alison Lesure said land conservation if a fiscally sound endeavor which benefits the entire community. It
54 is important for the Town to contribute as it provides leverage working with other organizations. Private
55 donations are very important but when going forward with a land conservation project, when a town has
56 that resource immediately available it is huge in terms of leveraging in moving the project forward. She
57 noted the recent designation in the Village of the neighborhood development area which people had
58 varying opinions on but one of the benefits was the access the Town would get for further funding. In
59 terms of the tax rate, it is very challenging now with so many costs so many people are facing. We need
60 to recognize a lot of that tax is out of the Town's control with school costs and health care costs rising. She
61 urged the Board to look at the information on the economic benefit of conserved land; erosion and flood
62 control, mental and public health. Merrily asked Alison if she felt if the Town gave a portion of the \$30,000
63 request and asked to have fundraising would that show a commitment by the Town. Alison said any
64 amount helps. She also noted towns that have conservation funding included as part of the tax rate.

65 Amy Alfieri said she fully supports land conservation in Hinesburg and thinks it would benefit the Town in
66 many ways. She likes the idea of the Town funding a portion and raising the rest from donations but thinks
67 the Town needs to show commitment to conserving land financially.

68 Pat Mainer echo's what others said about the importance of land conservation. She noted how the funds
69 for the Carse addition to the Town Forest became available and helped obtain grants.

70 Paul noted there is still \$7,500 in this budget and asked what amount is available now. He was advised
71 they have \$14,000 currently. He feels having \$20,000 ready for the next opportunity is acceptable.

72 Meg Handler said if we value land conservation it has to be reflected by money. The money reflects the
73 Town values and needs to be there when opportunities arise. She feels \$7,500 is not sufficient. We need
74 to view the environment as essential. Also agrees with Jennifer's comment about LIA. The large amount

of growth in the Village needs to be balanced by preventing sprawl in the rest of Hinesburg and can be done by encouraging land conservation.

Todd said in FY 22 the amount was \$1,500 and increased to \$5,000 in FY 22 and now increased to \$7,500.

Andrea Morgante addressed what is now an increase to \$7,500 noting if you look back at how much was budgeted to be voted on by voters. In a democracy our values are represented by how much we spend. The increase to \$7,500 is going back to what had been a \$5,000 fund beginning in the early to mid-1990's. It is important to keep up with inflation and the increasing size of conservation projects. The amount the Town puts into a project is a token amount compared to private fund raising. Dennis asked how much land has been conserved in the last 10 years. Andrea said 300 acres were added to the Town Forest and about under 1000 acres elsewhere. Dennis said he thinks 1300 acres is a good commitment from Hinesburg. He added people are saying they are strapped and we need to take a break from this.

Paul said the budget is not zero there is money allocated and asked how does an individual donate. We need to get that information out to residents. Andrea said typically fundraising is most successful when they have a project to present. There has to be a certain amount of privacy during negotiations. Once a contract is completed an application to access Town funds can be made. The land trust always accepts donations but it is much more successful if they have a specific project.

Maggie said she is 100% in favor of conserving land. When we say the Town needs to make a statement are we talking about the 5 people sitting at the table working on the budget or the whole Town. She suggests a separate item to be voted on to see how many support this.

Janet Francis asked about the landfill budget. Her questions are about monitoring and testing. She noted there is \$45,000 in the line for monitoring and testing which is a \$10,000 increase, and \$30,000 for POET system maintenance. She asked if the \$30,000 includes testing. Joy said any testing is under testing, maintenance of the POET system is only for maintenance. Janet asked If the \$45,000 is the cost to test the 4 systems. Todd said that is not known so they budgeted a best estimate. The letter she just received with testing results stated testing of her well had come to an end. Will the testing of the landfill itself going to continue. Joy said that will continue. Janet added that people with wells in the affected area would like testing to continue as they are not confident the results will stay the way they are. She would also like funds included for the homes that have never been tested by the Town. She added that the neighbors involved would like to continue discussion with the Town about this.

Jennifer said she strongly agrees with continued testing.

Andrea asked about funding for sidewalks. Todd said there is \$20,000 in the capital budget.

Merrily closed the Public Hearing.

Selectboard Discussion on Draft FY25 Operating and Capital Budgets

Todd said if the Board includes the full request for land preservation the tax rate will increase to 4.8% from 4.3%.

Paul said he appreciates everyone's comments and while he supports the land fund, he supports level funding as he continually hears from tax payers that the taxes are too high.

Todd added there is potentially money in the capital budget that is not in the land preservation fund.

113 Merrily said she has been convinced that this is important for the Town to take a stand. She is not looking
114 to put in the full \$30,000 but increase from the \$7,500.

115 Paul asked what is the mechanism of the money in the capital fund being used if a project came along
116 mid-way through the year. Todd said it is completely at the Board's discretion. The Board can take funds
117 set aside for specific purposes and move to other purposes. Paul asked what the general fund balance is
118 now. Todd said he does not have an exact number. There is \$10,000 being transferred to that this year
119 added to money from last year and the year before.

120 Dennis said he feels the Town has done a good job with conservation and unless taking funds from another
121 area does not want to increase.

122 Maggie said the \$30,000 is a big ask and when thinking about the possible 18% increase in school taxes so
123 cannot support \$30,000. Maybe an increase but not that much.

124 Merrily asked Todd about making this a separate article to be voted on. Todd said that can be done and
125 warned as a separate article. Paul said they need to decide on an amount to be asked for in that article.

126 Paul and Dennis want to stay with \$7,500. Merrily and Maggie want to increase the amount. This will be
127 decided at the next meeting when there are 5 Board members to make the decision.

128 Carl Bohlen asked if he could submit his comments to the Board about Affordable Housing as well as some
129 general questions since he missed the public hearing. Todd said he can do that as the Board will be looking
130 at the budget again at the next meeting.

131 Barbara Forauer said she will submit written comments about conservation and other areas.

132 Jennifer Decker asked the Board to schedule meeting to go over Police and other budgets. Paul pointed
133 out the Board has been doing this for the past two months with separate agenda items, presentations
134 from different departments. These meetings are still available in the archive of zoom meetings.

135

136 Discussion of Potential FY25 UPWP Projects

137 Alex reviewed the three project options. Maggie asked about the culvert replacement project and if Alex
138 thought choosing that project would get the culvert taken care of sooner. Alex said he did not know if it
139 would help move it along. This is a way to tell VTrans the planning work has been done.

140 Paul asked if there is a chance our planning would be ignored and they would duplicate it. Alex said it is
141 possible but VTrans works collaboratively with the Regional Planning Commission.

142 Andrea spoke about the UPWP process. She said VTrans has said they will not replace a culvert till is
143 structurally deficient. This will still be a low priority and she does not feel it is worth the administrative
144 work to do one more study that VTrans will not put on a priority list. There may be other ways to deal
145 with the flooding if we address the whole Patrick Brook and Canal and would like to move forward with
146 that.

147 Merrily moved to support option 2 Route 116, Patrick Brook culvert assessment. Seconded by Paul and
148 approved with 4 yes votes.

149 Consider Approval of Loan Agreement RF3-541-1.0

150 Joy explained this is the step 1 planning loan to look at what it would take to bring water up to the landfill
151 area homes.

152 Merrily moved to approve Loan Agreement RF3-541-1.0. Seconded by Maggie and approved with 4 yes
153 votes.

154 Town Manager Report

- 155 • A group of people will be submitting a Community and Urban Forestry Grant for plantings in
156 Creekside

157 Approve Warrants and Payroll

158 none

159 Adjourn

160 Merrily moved to adjourn at 7:45 p.m. Seconded by Paul and approved with 4 yes votes.

161 Respectfully submitted,

162 Valerie Spadaccini, clerk of the Board