

1  
2  
3  
4 **SELECTBOARD MEETING**

5 **April 13, 2022**

6 **Attending the Meeting (remotely):** Merrily Lovell (Chair), Phil Pouech, Mike Loner, Maggie Gordon,  
7 Dennis Place, Todd Odit, Anthony Cambridge, Joy Dubin Grossman, attending remotely: Natacha Luizzi,  
8 Monique Jackson, Caleb Casco & Gabriel Sennott

9 Meeting called to order at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom.

10 Agenda Additions / Deletions

11 None at this time.

12 Public Comment (for items not on the agenda)

13 None at this time.

14 Consider Action on Revised Police Department Budget

15 Merrily began with a brief overview of the proposed Police Department budget. She said that the original  
16 Police Department budget proposal to the Selectboard had a salary total of \$495,148 and that of that  
17 amount, \$44,841 was budgeted for filling shifts with per diem officers, \$26,000 was for the administrative  
18 assistant position, and the balance was the total salaries for 6 FTEs. She said that the Selectboard chose  
19 to level-fund salaries at the Fiscal Year 2022 amount, which cut off \$24,527, which equates to cutting the  
20 administrative assistant position or the shift filling budget by more than half. She said that this results in  
21 \$46,314 left to cut in the salary line item before full-time positions have to be reduced. She said that in  
22 order to make discussion easier tonight, there are four different versions of the budget:

- 23 1. The original, reduced police budget that Todd had proposed, where the administrative assistant  
24 position was cut by 0.125%.
- 25 2. A proposed budget where the administrative assistant position is cut entirely.
- 26 3. A proposed budget where the administrative assistant position is cut and \$50,000 in ARPA funding is  
27 used.
- 28 4. A proposed budget with 5 full-time officers (rather than 6).

29 Phil said that there is a small group of people in Hinesburg who are questioning the police and whether  
30 the Town needs armed forces. He said that some of this comes from the Black Lives Matter movement,  
31 and that many people are having some soul-searching about policing in the United States. He said that it  
32 is a healthy discussion, but does not think that some of these issues with the country's policing are  
33 necessarily issues that have occurred in Hinesburg. He said that there have not been complaints about  
34 police escalating problems or racial biasing in the police department. He said that it is not realistic to  
35 impact the police department if there are no tangible issues. He also noted healthy discussion about the  
36 budget and about the funding of the police department. He said he has heard from many members of the  
37 community about community policing. He suggested that the Town should maintain its current police  
38 force and follow up with a review and needs assessment next year for policing services in Hinesburg, and  
39 then budget according to the results of those analyses. He said he is supportive of the originally-proposed  
40 budget reduction for the Police Department.

41 Maggie agreed with Phil's assessment of constituents' comments, and said that because voters voted  
42 against the budget, the Selectboard needs to respond to that and take it seriously. She said she is  
43 uncomfortable with cutting a position without having a Town-wide conversation, since a cut position  
44 could result in cutting services or hours. She said she is interested in Option #3, which includes using ARPA  
45 funds, though she is uncomfortable with using one-time investment funding to address a budget shortfall.

46 Mike agreed with Maggie. He said that the Selectboard felt confident to give the police department and  
47 the Town Manager the approval to hire a sixth officer last year, which represents a commitment to that  
48 department. He said that they could make an adjustment to that commitment based on a future review  
49 and needs assessment and expressed hesitancy for cutting a position from the police department, since  
50 it would be difficult to bring it back to current levels should the Town find that it needs to do so in future  
51 (especially since other municipalities are having difficulty recruiting and retaining staff in their own police  
52 departments). He said that it does not make sense to add one-time ARPA funding. He said that he would  
53 be supportive of Option #2. He said that the majority of voters do want to see the budget cut, and this  
54 option would address that.

55 Dennis asked Todd why the revenue changes so much for each option. Todd said one difference is that if  
56 they reduce the number of officers, there is less revenue from ticketing that would be occurring. He also  
57 noted that the \$150,000 revenue figure includes the idea of using ARPA funds to offset some of the  
58 expense. He said that revenue projections are estimates. He also said that with 5 officers, there wouldn't  
59 be the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grant, since if they reduced the force to 5 full-time  
60 officers, they would need to terminate the grant. He said that with respect to Option #3, a number of  
61 communities are using ARPA funds to retain and attract employees and that though Hinesburg has not  
62 done that yet, they could budget the use of ARPA funds to offset the cost of the police department.

63 Merrily said that it would be good to maintain the status quo until there's a deeper review and needs  
64 assessment of the Town's policing needs. She said that a study could result in the Town needing more  
65 officers, not fewer, and there is a dearth of information on other Towns that have populations that are  
66 similar to that of Hinesburg. She expressed support for Option #1 and is interested in Option #3. She asked  
67 Todd how the ARPA funding could be used. Todd replied that they are eligible to use ARPA funds to offset  
68 any normal government expense, and that the Town could choose to apply funding to this position and  
69 lessen the cost of the position. He said that because ARPA funding needs to be spent by December 31,  
70 2026, a Town could supplant what is normally spent with ARPA funding and save taxpayer dollars for a  
71 future date.

72 Phil said he is still hesitant to use ARPA funds for this, since there hasn't been a wider discussion with the  
73 community on how to use ARPA funding overall, and also because the ARPA funding is one-time funding.  
74 Maggie agreed.

75 Maggie discussed Option #2, saying that if they reduce the administrative assistant position, those tasks  
76 will fall to the police officers, who will need to devote more time to administrative tasks than providing  
77 policing services. Todd replied that the general feeling is that the administrative tasks could be more easily  
78 spread around the 6 officers. Maggie said she would be supportive of Option #2. Mike agreed.

79 Phil said that he isn't against Option #2. He said that while the police department might lose some  
80 administrative consistency with a cut in administrative staff, it is important to retain the police services  
81 and be responsive to the voters' request for a budget reduction. Merrily agreed.

82 Dennis said he is willing to support Option #2 with the understanding that Hinesburg will try and look at

83 regionalization and working with other towns for policing services in future. He requested additional  
84 information from Town staff on weekly schedules and staffing levels for each shift, asking if there are  
85 always 2 officers on each shift if the police staffing levels are at 6 FTEs. Anthony replied that having 6  
86 officers helps, but they still run single shifts, especially since they no longer have part time (per diem)  
87 positions. He noted that the police department maintains 2-officer staffing on the weekend shifts, and  
88 that they typically have 12.5 single shifts per month (compared to 35 single shifts per month when they  
89 only had 5 FTEs).

90 Todd said that procedurally, if the Selectboard agrees to a budget tonight, the official warning will be next  
91 week, and the election date would be May 17<sup>th</sup>. Maggie asked about worst-case scenario and what would  
92 happen if this budget were voted down. Todd replied that because taxes are collected in November, the  
93 Town could use fund balance to fund departments until they need to send out tax bills (in November),  
94 and that they would need to have an approved budget in place by that time.

95 Merrily opened the discussion up to the public.

96 Natasha said she is supportive of maintaining six police officers and the Town's current coverage. She  
97 noted that the Town voted unanimously to pass the COPS grant (only 53 dissenting votes).

98 Phil made a motion to approve Budget Option #2 (reduced administration position and additional  
99 reductions discussed before) for a budget vote. Maggie seconded. The motion passed with 5 yes votes.

100  
101 Consider Readoption of Selectboard Operating Guidelines

102 Merrily said that there were good questions asked at the last meeting, which led to the drafting of a  
103 Selectboard Code of Ethics in addition to the Selectboard Operating Guidelines.

104  
105 Todd noted several corrections to the Operating Guidelines, including several pronoun changes, and a  
106 struck reference to a nonexistent appendix.

107  
108 Dennis asked about media relations requirements and asked whether it prevents people who are not  
109 the Town Manager or Selectboard chair from getting on Front Porch Forum or Facebook and speaking  
110 about issues. Todd replied that he interprets it as responding to a media inquiry on behalf of the Town  
111 or Selectboard, such replying to a media inquiry from a reporter. Merrily added that the requirement  
112 seems to pertain to media other than social media. Mike additionally added that inquiries from the  
113 media should be directed to Todd, but responding to a social media post should be covered under the  
114 Town's social media/personnel policy. Phil agreed, saying that there is a distinction between providing  
115 information on social media platforms and replying to an inquiry as a representative of the Town or  
116 Selectboard, and acknowledged that there could be a grey area in that section of the policy. Merrily  
117 pointed out that some of these questions are dealt with in the Selectboard Code of Ethics. Todd said  
118 that from a staff perspective, he tends to weigh in on Front Porch Forum with factual information or  
119 corrections, rather than offer his own opinion on a topic.

120  
121 Dennis asked if there should be clarification in Guideline #8 about who can respond to media posts and  
122 inquiries. Todd said that for language around the Selectboard, the Chair is the designated spokesperson  
123 and that is clearly laid out in the policy. He said that for Town employees, there is language allowing for  
124 the Town Manager's designee to issue communications, as well as another separate document on  
125 personnel and social media policies for staff that outlines requirements.

Phil made a motion to readopt the Selectboard Operating Guidelines. Maggie seconded. The motion passed with 5 yes votes.

#### Consider Adoption of Selectboard Code of Ethics

Merrily reviewed the code of ethics. These include that the Selectboard will represent the needs and interests of all Hinesburg residents, the Selectboard will create policies and assure accountability, the Manager will lead the Town, the Selectboard will lead by example, the Selectboard will hear each opinion but act as one, the Chair or designee will speak as the official voice of the Selectboard, the Selectboard will be aware of the different roles each member plays as individuals (Selectboard member, citizen, voter, and taxpayer), the Selectboard will maintain open communication with each other, the Manager, and the community at large, all Selectboard members shall uphold the highest ethical standards, the Selectboard members will act within the scope of their official roles, and that all Selectboard members will respect their peers, constituents, and confidentiality.

Maggie asked for clarification on the requirement around being aware of the different roles each member plays as an individual. Merrily said that she interprets this requirement as not using one's status as a Selectboard member for personal gain. Joy said that from her perspective, each individual plays many roles in a small Town such as Hinesburg, and that Selectboard members need to lead by example due to their visibility in Town, even in their personal lives. Phil said that when personal and professional roles are in conflict, Selectboard members are able to recuse themselves if it's needed. Maggie recommended adding clarifying language to this point about keeping one's roles in mind when speaking. Todd suggested rewording this requirement, since Selectboard members are always in that role first and foremost. He said he would revise this requirement and return to the Selectboard with proposed clarifying language.

Merrily asked how other Selectboard members feel about the requirement around hearing each other's viewpoints but acting as one once a decision is made. Mike said that it is important to include this requirement and is a good way for the Board to operate, but asked about extreme situations (such as if the majority of the Board adopts an extreme white supremacy perspective and policies and an individual Selectboard member is opposed to this and feels no other recourse than to resign out of principle). Phil acknowledged a lot of grey areas in the code of ethics, but said that it is important for the Board to establish this code and agree upon each of its included requirements. Todd said that developing a code of ethics is an exercise in establishing trust amongst the Board.

Maggie said that she would like to spend time reviewing the document and potentially reordering some of the requirements for better document flow. Dennis said he would like to outreach Board members and Town staff if he has questions. Todd suggested that Maggie and Dennis work together on refining a draft for the Selectboard's consideration at its next meeting.

#### Selectboard Forum

Maggie said that the Lot 1 Committee has received 5 responses to the Request for Proposals (RFP) that was issued, and that they will be reviewing and scoring the bids next week.

Phil noted that there was a meeting of the Town Hall Committee to fix its roof. He noted that the initial patching of the roof has occurred, and that they hope to have the initial survey completed within the next two weeks and would like to begin fielding it. He said that the roof repair/replacement effort will

likely be a several-year project, and also noted that the Committee said that the Town will likely need to seek a large meeting space elsewhere (while the Town Hall's large gathering space is out of commission). Joy added that the workers who patched the roof had noted that the slate has deteriorated significantly. She said that one idea the Committee had is to field a survey of people at the time when they are voting on the police budget in the next several weeks. Dennis asked if the roof can be converted to a standing-seam roof. Phil replied that the trusses need to be fixed and that they could switch to a new style of roof.

Dennis said that the Selectboard should take up the topic of impact fees in the next several weeks. Todd replied that there will be an update on impact fees at the Selectboard's next meeting.

Merrily noted that the Hinesburg Tree Warden, Paul Wieczoreck, has received the 2022 Vermont Tree Warden Hamilton Award for significant advancement of the goals of urban and community forestry through successful forestry practices, conservation planning, increased citizen engagement and active public education. Selectboard members congratulated Paul for this accomplishment.

Mike said that he and Joy have been working with the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Work Group to focus on Hinesburg policy and they are looking into writing a grant to the Vermont Community Foundation to conduct a Town-wide cultural survey.

#### Adjourn

Phil moved to adjourn at 8:44 p.m., seconded by Maggie and approved with 5 yes votes.

Respectfully submitted,  
Amy Coonradt, Recording Secretary