

**TOWN OF SPRINGFIELD
SELECTBOARD HALL – 96 MAIN STREET – THIRD FLOOR
BUDGET WORKSHOP #2
MONDAY, November 27, 2023**

APPROVED MINUTES

A. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair, Kristi Morris, called the meeting to order at 8:02 pm. Roll Call was taken at the Regular Meeting that occurred before the budget workshop.

Selectboard Members: Chair Kristi Morris, Vice Chair Michael Martin, Everett Hammond, and Walter Martone were present in-person.

Administration: Town Manager Jeff Mobus, Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne, Fire Chief Paul Stagner, Deputy Fire Chief John Claflin, and Public Works Director Jeff Strong were present in-person. Operations Supervisor Don Turner and Library Director Sue Dowdell joined via Zoom.

Budget Advisory Committee (BAC) Members: Doug Johnston, Heather Frahm, Scott Richardson, and John Bond were present in-person. Jim Fog, Tara Chase, and Tre Ayer were present via Zoom.

School Board Liaison: Steve Karaffa was not in attendance

B. Budget Workshop: Presentations by Administration (including SRDC and SOM), Police, and Fire

Administration: *Item moved to following budget workshop at the time of the meeting.

Springfield on the Move (SOM):

SOM Director Jessica Martin in-person discussed that they really appreciate the collaborations with their volunteers, the Town, and other organizations that they have worked with throughout the past year. SOM Director Jessica Martin

added that SOM has done 17 events for 2023 and the 18th event will be this Friday at a downtown holiday program that they are collaborating with the Chamber to do. SOM Director Jessica Martin further added that these events really do impact the economic development in Springfield in the downtown area. SOM Director Jessica Martin continued that she started asking businesses to track how this economic development is helping them just by having events. SOM Director Jessica Martin further discussed that Blake Spencer with Vermont Beer Makers saw a sales increase of 32% over the three Saturdays that SOM held roller-skating events in the parking garage.

SOM Director Jessica Martin discussed that SOM fulfilled their master lease obligation with the Woolson block building. SOM Director Jessica Martin added that they have had full commercial spaces since March of 2003. SOM Director Jessica Martin further added that they are hopeful that the two tenants, Uplift Acrobatics and Sheer Beauty Salon, will renew their leases that are due at the end of this year. SOM Director Jessica Martin noted that they have been excellent tenants and they have thrown their hats in the ring for the storefront window decoration contest.

SOM Director Jessica Martin discussed that they are also working with some property owners on the improvement of their properties, noting some of this work already happening, particularly the Oddfellows building, the Putnam building, and the Wheelers building. SOM Director Jessica Martin continued that Bob Flint with SRD and the Town have really been instrumental in getting things like downtown tax credits and all that taken care of. SOM Director Jessica Martin added that Bob Flint and SRDC are working on the Parks and Woolson building property improvements and the Town is working hard to get the Kingsburg property improved. SOM Director Jessica Martin thanked everyone involved with everything that they're doing, to improve not just the look but also the buildings and properties of a designated downtown.

SOM Director Jessica Martin discussed that in the 22-23 year, we saw two new businesses open, Black River Coffee Bar and Uplift Acrobatics. SOM Director Jessica Martin added that both of those businesses expanded within the next calendar year, and this has increased at least three full time jobs and six new

part time jobs. SOM Director Jessica Martin further added that Springfield Family Eyecare also expanded in the 22-23 year. SOM Director Jessica Martin noted that we did have one business unfortunately close, primarily due to COVID, Flying Crow Coffee, but Black River Coffee Bar has since opened in that space.

SOM Director Jessica Martin discussed that in 2022 she had 184 volunteer contacts with over 600 volunteer hours, noting that is a lot of work in the downtown area. SOM Director Jessica Martin added that they have already exceeded that in November of 2023.

SOM Director Jessica Martin discussed other projects that they have been working on using the Downtown Transportation fund: they got the wayfinding signs done; the Woodbury courtyard improvements; and the sidewalk on Mineral Street. SOM Director Jessica Martin noted that with the sidewalk on Mineral Street we have just about a mile loop now to be able to walk in the downtown area that's protected on the sidewalk area. SOM Director Jessica Martin added that another large project is the Edna Brown stagecoach mural on the Ellis block building, and the information sign will be up there hopefully in the next couple of weeks. SOM Director Jessica Martin continued that the information sign will have a QR code to look at other historical projects within the downtown area. SOM Director Jessica Martin noted that this complements the Chamber of Commerce's self-guided art tour that they have on their website.

SOM Director Jessica Martin discussed that she and Town Manager Jeff Mobus worked together to renew our designated downtown application and it was approved for eight years. SOM Director Jessica Martin added that we must do certain things throughout these next 8 years so we can continue to get these benefits and being a designated downtown. SOM Director Jessica Martin continued that the State of Vermont is financially supporting each of the 24 designated downtowns with allocating \$25,000, which is an addition to what the State already allocates to each town. SOM Director Jessica Martin added that this vibrancy fund is really used for capacity building, this will help us continue to work on expanding or improving these events that we already do, beautification, and marketing the designated downtown area.

SOM Director Jessica Martin thanked everyone for their support of SOM.

Springfield Regional Development Corporation (SRDC):

SRDC Director Bob Flint discussed that they are the designated Regional Development Corporation for this part of Vermont. SRDC Director Bob Flint added that they are recognized through the Department of Economic Development and the Agency of Commerce and Community Development. SRDC Director Bob Flint continued that means in addition to the work they do for the community, they also have a pathway to State products, services, incentives, and resources. SRDC Director Bob Flint further added that the town funding of \$45,000 goes into operating fund, which is just over \$400,000. SRDC Director Bob Flint further discussed that they have four and a half employees, and four of the six municipalities in our region contribute to their operations. SRDC Director Bob Flint noted that they do pay taxes on all the real estate that they own and for the current year, the amount we pay back to the town is \$72,000.

SRDC Director Bob Flint discussed within their office they try to work with everybody, whether it's a single person starting a business or the largest businesses in the community, and everything in between. SRDC Director Bob Flint added that they have a small business development center and what's now called the APEX accelerator, which is the State government entity that helps with government contracting, helping people be in position to get state federal contracts. SRDC Director Bob Flint further added that they work on issues that affect employment and economic development such as work force development.

SRDC Director Bob Flint discussed that Amanda Sidler had presented the Working Communities Challenge project, which they shepherded supported by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. SRDC Director Bob Flint noted that we are one of the eight regions in Vermont that is participating in that. SRDC Director Bob Flint continued that they also operate the workforce investment for the region.

SRDC Director Bob Flint discussed that one of the other key tenants of economic development is financing, so they work closely with Vita, area banks, the Town's Revolving Loan, and they have their own revolving loan fund. SRDC Director Bob Flint noted that they currently have loans out to seven businesses totaling over \$300,000. SRDC Director Bob Flint added that they are conduit to technical assistance programs too, which was a big deal during COVID and most of those have wrapped up. SRDC Director Bob Flint noted that he and Town Manager Jeff Mobus were involved in helping the new owner of the Oddfellows building apply for the community recovery revitalization program. SRDC Director Bob Flint further added that they have been the point of contact for communities affected by the summer floods.

SRDC Director Bob Flint discussed that a current program they have is participating in the Small Business Technical Assistance Exchange (SBTAE), which is helping small businesses get funding that can be used to get professional services, such as bookkeeping, website design, branding, small grants up to \$4,000. SRDC Director Bob Flint continued that there are Springfield businesses who are vendors in the program, and they have several Springfield businesses that are enrolled in it, noting that he believed they still had one to two more openings still left in the program before it closes. SRDC Director Bob Flint added that they are hopeful that the legislator supports this again so it can be done annually.

SRDC Director Bob Flint discussed that the bus at Parks and Woolson building is gone. SRDC Director Bob Flint added that the work will now start on the environmental front to figure out what can or can't be done with that property. SRDC Director Bob Flint noted that there are two tracks currently, one is there's bad stuff in the building that needs to go away now or at least be stabilized. SRDC Director Bob Flint continued that US Ecology will be on site in a couple of weeks to do that task. SRDC Director Bob Flint further added that separately working with the Mount Ascutney Regional Commission, Weston and Sampson have been retained to do the phase two study which is the actual sampling of what bad stuff is there and how much bad stuff there is.

SRDC Director Bob Flint discussed that they (Weston and Sampson) are working on a work plan that needs to get approved by the State and EPA. SRDC Director Bob Flint added that he suspects the onsite sampling will be after the holidays, and probably looking at March or April before they have a report on that. SRDC Director Bob Flint noted that he suspects there will need to be more studies done beyond that also and anticipates maybe by next fall having an idea when they can get to developing a corrective action plan of what can and can't be done.

SRDC Director Bob Flint discussed that at Park Street School they have around \$6 million and hopefully by the end of the week they will have a path forward to start spending some of that for things like sprinklers in the building, noting the Community Development Block Grant the Town received on their behalf. SRDC Director Bob Flint continued that other code improvements and site work, noting hopefully the entrance will be in the back of the building. SRDC Director Bob Flint added that there should be work soon, weather permitting, digging up an old oil tank down by the Marsh property or what used to be the bus garage. SRDC Director Bob Flint further discussed that they have applications out for other funding when there's ever a federal budget, there's a \$1 million year mark in there for us for that, and they also applied to the State Treasurer to the Local Investment Advisory Committee program for funding to develop the housing portion of the project.

SRDC Director Bob Flint discussed that they sold the lot across the road from J&L next to Gogo or Jake's now, that will be a Dunkin Donuts. SRDC Director Bob Flint noted that they had to do boundary line adjustments in that area. SRDC Director Bob Flint added that on the main J&L property environmental work was done assessing the slab this spring, the corrective action plan taking that information into account is being written now and they hope it's going to be completed by the end of the year. SRDC Director Bob Flint continued that leads to a path where the slab comes up next spring summer, noting that some things must happen for that to happen. SRDC Director Bob Flint further added that there's other things going on along the river, which you can't see from the road but there's an

oil pond heading towards the river and there's an effort to suck that up to get rid of that, so it doesn't hit the river.

SRDC Director Bob Flint discussed that he, Town Manager Jeff Mobus, and Chair Kristi Morris met with Buildings General Services (BGS) at the Correctional Facility a couple of weeks ago. SRDC Director Bob Flint noted that prison agreement was mentioned early regarding the Rec Center, and one thing that folks might not remember is there was supposed to be 30 acres going to the Town next to the prison for use for commercial industrial park at the time and that's ever happened. SRDC Director Bob Flint continued that the state still owns the land, and they had a constructive discussion with the BGS about that this time, and shortly thereafter, they got a lead on a potential prospect in the state that would be a good fit for that property conceptually. SRDC Director Bob Flint further added that the Airport Committee was mentioned earlier, and they are plugged into the discussions with VTrans and our delegation about trying to obtain funding for the current runway length as maintained. SRDC Director Bob Flint further discussed that currently the FAA is not willing to provide funding for the runway length as it exists, noting we are about \$4 million short, so they are working to be a liaison to identify funding, primarily working with Senator Welch's office, probably in FY25 on that.

Further discussion ensued regarding the mutual agreement with the former owner of Parks and Woolson and the steps that need to be taken to remediate and assess the needs of the building to proceed forward. Additional discussion ensued that one of the challenges we have in Town is the lack of available turnkey space and that the buildable uncontaminated space is in the Industrial Park, though development there triggers the discussion of what we will do with the Industrial Park access road. Continued discussion ensued that there is space at One Hundred River Street, though it is not currently ready to go, and any use of those spaces would likely need sprinkler system improvements and likely need brownfield work done. SRDC Director Bob Flint added that the space most available and closest to being ready is the space behind the brewery, 5,000 sq ft without infrastructure (power and water).

Fire:

Fire Chief Paul Stagner discussed that everything the Fire Department has accomplished this last year was not specifically because of him and he thanked all the fire crew for their hard work. Fire Chief Paul Stagner added that they did acquire a grant for almost \$100,000 to acquire new bunker gear for all the frontline fire, which is a huge thing because some of the gear was out of specification per the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards 1851 and there were many sets of gear almost 10 years out of spec. Fire Chief Paul Stagner continued that this first became a true issue when he started sending new firefighters to the Fire Academy and they were not allowed to participate due to the increased risk of injury from using aged equipment. The grant getting awarded this grant was a huge, huge thing for us.

Fire Chief Paul Stagner discussed that this past year they secured and stabilize the transfer business for five days a week, eight hours a day, plus any overtime that they work beyond those eight hours and that has proven to be a positive revenue source for the Town. Fire Chief Paul Stagner added that next year they will be planning on how to expand. Fire Chief Paul Stagner further added that another huge thing that they accomplished this past year is that he visited every school in town, Two Rivers Supervisory Union, many businesses in Town such as the Packing house, Springfield Area Parent Child Center, Seniors Solutions, and other businesses to discuss some basic fire safety and active shooter actions to take, how to respond and protect themselves in a mass shooting situation. Fire Chief Paul Stagner continued that all our schools and staff and surrounding schools and staff have been trained by the Springfield Fire Department, noting that the School District is leading in the State of being prepared and trained on action to take if the worst of the worst ever happens.

Fire Chief Paul Stagner discussed that in the next couple of years he would like to create a new vision and mission statement for the department which will include getting each member to take an oath to community service, fire service, and emergency services. Fire Chief Paul Stagner continued that the oath will encourage and promote the commitment to the fire department, emergency services, and the Town of Springfield.

Fire Chief Paul Stagner added that he came up with an adjustment to their staffing line but does not have a complete answer to how it might be implemented. Fire Chief Paul Stagner added that the NFPA standard 1710 states that we need a minimum of 4 people on duty regardless of the number of calls. Fire Chief Paul Stagner continued that in 1970 we established the ambulance service in Town and ran 250 calls that year and determined at that time that we need 2 people on duty, we have run almost 3,100 calls this year with a minimum staffing of 2. Fire Chief Paul Stagner further added that he knows there is an issue, and he must address this in a way that is sensitive to the tax base.

Fire Chief Paul Stagner discussed that he must order an ambulance and a fire truck, noting that they take three years to receive once purchased. Fire Chief Paul Stagner added that they should have the funding to do purchase them so that we have our COVID replacement needs realized. Fire Chief Paul Stagner noted that the budget has gone up due to inflation not from additional staffing or new equipment purchases.

Further discussion ensued that the NFPA standards of 4 people on duty are a guideline not a requirement, though it is used in legal matters to compare to. Additional discussion ensued that the number of people on duty does affect the response time and level of service for calls.

Doug Johnston inquired if we were investing the money that we are budgeting to capital since it's going to take two years to get this equipment or if a deposit needed to be made before the purchase. Fire Chief Paul Stagner responded that they will ask for a commitment to purchase but they will not tell us what the end price will be.

Doug Johnston inquired if they had looked at regionalization. Fire Chief Paul Stagner responded that he has attended many meetings regarding regionalization discussions, but in every area, it is defined differently because each area is trying to solve for different issues. Further discussion ensued that dispatch and EMS regionalization discussions are happening Statewide, but each community is sensitive to the increase to the tax base for their citizens and regionalization will cost more money to communities that do not have full-time

staff and are not willing to take on that debt. Fire Chief Paul Stagner noted that regionalization would need to be a statewide initiative to implement.

Further discussion ensued regarding the State initiatives and efforts being made to regionalize dispatch services.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that the payroll lines were put in by Finance and are subject to the Union contracts. Further discussion ensued that our Fire Department is contracted by Baltimore to provide them with services. Additional discussion ensued that the contract increases were generally 4% with step increases.

Fire Chief Paul Stagner discussed line item 10-41 printing, went up due to cost increases and the number of runs for PCRs which is a duplicate form, they were only doing 2600 and they are printing 3100. Fire Chief Paul Stagner added that the cost of telephone services has gone up. Fire Chief Paul Stagner continued that membership dues and the membership dues of all the organizations that they belong to have gone up. Fire Chief Paul Stagner further added that vehicle fuel in all categories 41, 42, and 44, used to be just one line item for the whole department and they separated them to try to track it better. Further discussion ensued that the original vehicle fuel line item was overbudget previously and the Town Manager would provide a history over a couple years.

Fire Chief Paul Stagner discussed line item 41-651 clothing, he researched and figured out what it costs to bring on new people. Fire Chief Paul Stagner continued that it cost the department \$14,150 minimum to bring a new hire in, equip them, and train them to get them ready to be full service. Fire Chief Paul Stagner added that contractually, it costs \$7,700 just to get new uniforms every year. Fire Chief Paul Stagner described the wear and tear to EMS pants and boots and that line item has been increased to bring it in line with the actual.

Fire Chief Paul Stagner discussed Building Maintenance that was proposed \$10,000 and he raised it \$4,000, noting the building is 53 years old. Fire Chief Paul Stagner continued that he was able to get new bay motors and lifters doors last year and they are anticipating future repairs to the bay doors, noting that the springs started failing this year. Fire Chief Paul Stagner added that he has the

windows that we budgeted to replace two years ago, and we haven't replaced yet because of other extenuating expenditure and the building needs works and the building maintenance line item will need to continue to go up. Fire Chief Paul Stagner described repairs needed to the building such as the windows, apron, antenna structural components need to be replaced.

Fire Chief Paul Stagner discussed line item 42-631 auto maintenance parts, parts have become hard to get and costs of parts have skyrocketed, so there is an increase of \$2,000. Fire Chief Paul Stagner added that the equipment fund \$125,000, he would like to add \$25,000 to this to be contributing \$150,000 per year to this fund.

Scott Richardson commented that fire overtime in 22-23 was budgeted for \$105,000 and they only spent \$70,000 and inquired why it was increased to \$110,000. Fire Chief Paul Stagner responded that Finance would need to be asked this question.

Fire Chief Paul Stagner discussed line item 43-500 is a new line item that references the costs of services when we need to request assistance from other Towns, noting that currently we spent less than \$1,200 this year. Further discussion ensued that the requested amount would get determined and presented later. Fire Chief Paul Stagner added that line item 43-545 other equipment is increased because they included their billing software which has a yearly cost, as well as their added stretcher maintenance, which floated around in different line items previously. Fire Chief Paul Stagner further added that non-durable goods the costs have gone up and they are using more due to increased calls.

Fire Chief Paul Stagner discussed line item 42-620 was up \$8,000 based on history of what they spent. Fire Chief Paul Stagner added that vehicle maintenance was increased by \$1,800 due to what was spent in the past.

Fire Chief Paul Stagner discussed that the line-item bad debt expense was \$50,000 but it is budgeted based on projections based on the part we don't get paid for automatically by Medicare or Medicaid we know we're not going to get paid for or the items that we write off each year is considered bad debt.

Further discussion ensued that the same people that cover the fire trucks also cover the EMS services, so overtime should be looked at together. Additional discussion ensued that the ambulance service revenue may be underbudgeted and previously it had been kept lower to keep the budget more stable. Continued discussion ensued that they are getting more three call instances at a time recently.

Further discussion ensued regarding the increased call volumes and the increased overtime and drawbacks to being short staffed. Fire Chief Paul Stagner added that we have an opioid issue, but the primary issue is due to a mental health emergency in the State, we do not have enough facilities, staffing, or training for emergency services to deal with all mental health emergencies that they are exposed to. Additional discussion ensued that non-emergency transfers have also gone up.

Further discussion ensued regarding the constraints of the current fire station regarding increased staffing. Additional discussion ensued that the revenue side of non-emergency would be looked at and adjusted.

Police:

Police Chief Jeff Burnham discussed there are not a lot of changes. Police Chief Jeff Burnham added that the department has been working diligently to improve its reputation and market itself. Police Chief Jeff Burnham continued that he has hired 5 officers and has lost 2 officers due to personal reasons. Police Chief Jeff Burnham further added that he has in the works a non-certified officer interested in going through the hiring process, a part time officer interested that they have discussed as possibly testing the waters as a recruiting technique. Police Chief Jeff Burnham noted that he also has a certified officer that has expressed interest as well.

Police Chief Jeff Burnham discussed that the promotional process implemented a lieutenant, a sergeant, and a corporal. Police Chief Jeff Burnham continued that gave people structure that they hadn't had because he can't work 24 hours a day, noting that the officers have questions, need mentoring, want guidance, want coaching, want reassurances, and having a supervisor doing that fills these

needs. Police Chief Jeff Burnham added that additionally, when there's little things, such as disagreements and personality clashes these supervisors can handle these situations at their lowest level.

Police Chief Jeff Burnham discussed that the evidence room is going well with the upgrades and all the evidence has been cataloged into the new system with a part-time evidence officer regularly processing evidence. Police Chief Jeff Burnham added that in the future he would like to do a community policing type programming that he has started with officers in the schools. Police Chief Jeff Burnham noted that their presence helps increase the visibility and familiarity with the officers in non-crisis situations.

Police Chief Jeff Burnham discussed that he is interested in doing self defense courses in the future when staffing permits it. Police Chief Jeff Burnham added that they are working on a significant dispatch computer console upgrade. Police Chief Jeff Burnham continued that Burlington Communication is supposed to start the upgrades this coming month and hopefully be done by the end of the year. Police Chief Jeff Burnham noted that the new system will go into a longer discussion about making that a resource or a fund generating revenue source, where we could be good neighbors and subsidize some of the expenses because it's very expensive.

Police Chief Jeff Burnham discussed that he would like to shift gears into Project ACTION which is a project to get into the undertones as to why we have violence and drug issues in town. Police Chief Jeff Burnham added that this is part of the governor's 10-point plan to address this. Police Chief Jeff Burnham continued that he is hoping to take the lead to take the next step forward. Police Chief Jeff Burnham noted that one of the concepts he is working on is a community service officer, a non-certified police officer that answers the calls that are not law enforcement or safety related, adding that Rutland and Bennington are currently doing this.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed that this year the hope was that we would be at 13 officers and work towards 15, but we are not there so the budget is based on 13 officers. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that utilities were based

off a three-year average by the Finance Director. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added that the other big thing is the equipment and building fund there is a \$40,000 increase in the capital plan. Police Chief Jeff Burnham added that the increases are due to some age issues with the building, noting they spent a significant amount of money for repairs to the elevator. Police Chief Jeff Burnham continued that the other building needs are to replace some air conditioning units that are no longer working, structural needs to the building to the walls to the right of the entrance, and this does not address the attic area which is currently used as storage. Police Chief Jeff Burnham further added that he also requested a quote for a women's locker room, which he would like to have as a bargaining tool for the future for more diversity, noting the quote was \$80,000.

Further discussion ensued that the call volume for just calls that require response is 5,000 calls a year and they are staffed at 11 officers. Additional discussion ensued that the addition of the Animal Control Officer has worked out well.

Town Clerk:

Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne discussed that the Town Clerk budget provides for a lot more elections, the August primary, the November general and federal, and the Town Meeting. Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne noted that she provides messages about what line items will increase and why. Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne added that regular pay and overtime are broken out to be more transparent, and temp pay is for the election officials that are spending 12 hours a day at the polls and with the increased elections it will increase.

Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne discussed that the outside services have increased, as Avenue our land records provider have shifted some of the consumable costs onto us and the other increase is linked to Municode supplements, there have been a lot of ordinances being passed which creates supplements which cost money to the printed and online versions. Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne added that printing is an area that some cost shifted in from the printing of the annual report which was previously in the Managers budget.

Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne discussed that the State has shifted onto us printing of envelopes for local elections. Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne added that advertising came down a little. Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne continued that postage went up about \$500, noting that the State pays for the postage of the November election, but the primaries and local elections are on us. Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne further added that memberships have a slight increase in the VMCTA membership dues, and she added Carrie Kellow, Town Clerk Assistant, into the mix to start accumulating points and attending classes. Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne continued office supplies she tries to stay true to the budget.

Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne discussed the revenues: there was a little bit of an increase by \$1,000 in the recording fees that were received; marriage licenses increased from the State; impounding fees have increased, noting that we have received more reports from officers with fines attached; passport fees increased, due to increased travel.

Further discussion ensued that the Town Clerk budget is cyclical and goes up and down based on election years.

The meeting adjourned at 10:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carrie M. Kellow, Recording Secretary