

**TOWN OF SPRINGFIELD  
SELECTBOARD HALL – 96 MAIN STREET – THIRD FLOOR  
BUDGET WORKSHOP #4  
MONDAY, December 19, 2022**

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**APPROVED MINUTES**

**CALL MEETING TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

Chair, Kristi Morris, called the meeting to order at 7:58 pm.

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

Administration: Town Manager Jeff Mobus and Parks and Rec Director Chris Merrill were present in-person. Water/Wastewater Superintendent Rick Chambers and Library Director Sue Dowdell joined via Zoom.

School Board Liaison: Steve Karaffa was not in attendance

Budget Advisory Committee: Doug Johnston was in-person. Tre Ayer, Chair Jim Fog, and Corky Bond joined via Zoom.

**A. Budget Workshop**

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed at the last meeting he had proposed changes that would reduce the amount to be raised by taxes by just over \$200,000 and he had printed a new book at the Board's request and distributed them along with the meeting packet. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that the only department head that was not available last week was Chris Merrill from Parks and Rec, noting he did meet with Chris last week and he has some wonderful ideas. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added that he (Chris Merrill) is here to go over his part of the budget, his ideas for Freedom Park, to go over usage at the Park Street gym, and if there are any questions.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed after that he would like to have a discussion and see if they can get an idea from the Board of where they want to be on the paving and sidewalk special articles, noting he had prepared a list of the proposed paving projects he would like to do in the next paving season that he provided to the Board at the time of the meeting. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that he took the most recent five years of the RSMS and chose the ones where he thinks there are more immediate needs while spacing them out. Town Manager further added we get one \$200,000 grant every other year for class II road paving and he doesn't want to do all of the class II paving this coming year because we just used the \$200,000 this year for Giddings Street in North Springfield, so he wants to use the next in FY25 for South Street going out to the Four Corners so he would like to stagger the paving to get as much free money as we can. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that he did go over this list with Jeff Strong and Donny Turner and they are comfortable with this list as well.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus described the proposed paving they would be working on would be Seavers Brook Road from the start of Will Dean up to the Four Corners and the reason for that is we have the water project they want to deal with on the bond on the bottom part of Seavers Brook and we obviously don't want to pave it and then dig it up the following year. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added additional proposed paving being South Street from Clinton Street up to the High School, Breezy Hill Road, French Meadow Road the end towards Route 11, Sunny Hill Road there is a small section that is paved which creates a real problem as you treat gravel and pavement different so this creates a problem with maintenance, Frederick and Autumn that are both off Union Street which we did this year, Trombley Road which is off

Brook Road, and Baltimore Road are the roads they would like to try to do, noting this would be dependent on how much money we have available for paving and pricing.

Chris Merrill Parks and Rec Director discussed Freedom Park they have been having issues with usage of the park such as parking and drug usage in and near the playground, adding that they are thinking of switching the way the park is accessed because the property line goes all the way up to Merrill Street. Chris Merrill added developing a parking lot up there and a couple small trails that can bring you down to each tier so that the current entrance would end up being blocked up but could still access it for maintenance or handicap parking or short-term parking, but it would limit what that parking lot is used for which would make more use of the park as well. Chris Merrill further added that they talked about a possible dog park at the top, noting there has been back and forth on that as some people in the community want it and others do not and they do come with their ups and downs. Chris Merrill further discussed it would get the tennis court/basketball court being more used by turning it into a pickleball court, the playground would stay where it is, and there has been talk about the warming hut would be replaced with a pavilion because of its current condition and that would enable a better picnic/BBQ area for the community. Chris Merrill noted that they have a nine-hole disc golf course set that was gifted by Tammy Stagner, and they are looking at adding three holes in Freedom, three in Hartness park, and three at Riverside so a nine-hole course through Town, eighteen back to bring a more positive use of the park, adding that will be a little more immediate they have plans for this for this Spring.

Chris Merrill discussed Park Street he has increased usage this year he has about doubled what was used last year, noting that there are some challenges with Park Street as the access is through the school district areas and the bathroom, they do not have any within the Park Street School gym area so if the school district closes off their bathrooms there are some challenges there. Chris Merrill added the middle school soccer coach between seasons wanted to get a group of middle schoolers in and play indoor soccer before basketball season started so they have been trying to get those kinds of groups in there just using it as an additional resource space. Chris Merrill further added that going forward with some of the problems he does not know how to really maximize the use of Park Street School, noting they have locker rooms with no bathrooms in them.

Walter Martone commented that Bob Flint reported to them they got a whole bunch of new grants for doing things at Park School and inquired if any of those things are for doing anything to the gym. Chris Merrill responded that he was aware of what was said to him in a conversation, but from his perception it was not going to improve their use of it, noting it was mentioned a possible indoor drone obstacle course. Town Manager Jeff Mobus inquired if it was good to have two gyms and if we needed to have two gyms. Chris Merrill confirmed that they absolutely do need two gyms based on their programming, noting that previously they had been doing almost every Saturday four games down at Park Street all winter. Chris Merrill added that by adjusting to where we have some openings to schedule games at the community center, they pushed some practices to Park Street so that is one of the ways they increased usage of Park Street where previously it was only wrestling and K-2 basketball.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus inquired about volleyball. Chris Merrill responded that volleyball is just getting started and should be able to get them started at the community center this week and as that program builds there is a possibility of getting them into Park Street, noting it still includes the same challenges as access and restrooms. Walter Martone inquired if the place that was occupied by The Space if they are utilizing that for something else now. Chris Merrill responded that they still have some things in there and have not finished moving all of their things out, noting that some of the things they are looking at doing there is they are trying to start some sort of speaker series and it could be anything from a general coaching clinic, but have it as a classroom and be more sports or recreation oriented and offer it as an additional meeting space for rentals.

Everett Hammond inquired if the pool had been put to bed for the winter and if it was more or less ready for use next summer. Chris Merrill responded that the pool has been tarped and winterized so it is ready to go in a much better starting position than this last spring. Chris Merrill added that he still has not been able to contact an inspector of commercial

pools because they can't really inspect it until the pool is operational. Chris Merrill further added they did not spend any of their chemical money this year so their plan is to get an order in so they get it in ample time to get it in operation and should be able to buy the majority if not all of the chemicals that will last them well past July. Everett Hammond mentioned he had heard complaints about the state of the restrooms when it was opened previous years. Chris Merrill responded that one of the things they worked on this summer in lieu of them being open they had a staff of four lifeguards which is a third of the normal staff, and they had them scrap the paint off the bathroom floors, cleanup the bathrooms, replaced the changing room curtains with new reusable washable curtains, and they spent most of their time cleaning up the pool house itself and he does not believe they spent more than \$200 on it, noting their goal was to do elbow grease type work.

Further discussion ensued regarding the drain of the pool and Gurneys had done the dig safe, but Chris Merrill was not sure if they had dug the drain and cut and capped the pipe for the discharge drain yet. Additional discussion ensued to clarify that they used all the chemicals that were ordered on last year's budget with the money they had leftover they were trying to get an order in July but had supply chain issues and they are out of chemicals and had not spent any money from this year's budget for chemicals. Chris Merrill added that they had requested \$5,500 in the budget and they had not spent anything from this budget year so going into the Spring their first order can be one big order that should get them through the entire summer and if not, they requested a little more to help buffer that with the increased cost because it was never budgeted for.

Everett Hammond inquired about how the cracks in the floor of the pool were. Chris Merrill responded that as far as any cracks that were in the pool itself the liner 10 years ago or so has alleviated it, noting if there are any leaks it's within the intake and jet transfer which is part of the decking issue, they have been aware of as there has been money put towards that the last couple years. Chris Merrill added when you do see a noticeable drain it stops at the intakes, so they believe it's in the piping somewhere, but it does operate. Chris Merrill further added that the goal of going into this next year with having the pool evaluated is to see if that is all the pool needs and if that is all the pool needs what is the life out of it.

Jim Fog via Zoom commented that it was mentioned during the regular committee meeting that Trails Committee have agreed to a cut of \$5,000 in their budget and just so the Town doesn't get the impression that they've lessened their commitment to trails and their accessibility he asked Chris Merrill to give an update on some of the many things they have achieved this year in terms of the trails. Chris Merrill described that since April John has continued his great work of keeping the trails clear of leaves and debris, he blazed the trails with the color-coding to match the new mapping system, they got the gate to the water tower fixed at a cost of about \$30, they got with public works to have the parking lot near the water tower leveled to improve parking at that location once they get the road regraded to be able to access trails from the water tower area, with the work of the committee they got the picnic tables out and a bench, and tons of post to go out still. Chris Merrill added that even with the \$5,000 cut the work on the trails is not going to be lessened.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed the other question when he met with the BAC was what the Board wanted to do with paving and sidewalks, noting that under the RSM this year the RSM recommended that they increase special appropriation from \$700,000 to \$800,000. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that the Budget Advisory Committee's concern is that we are looking at an increase in the budget that is significant, and this money comes out of the same pockets. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added that they were wondering if they were going to increase the paving from \$700,000 to \$800,000 and if we were going to continue putting on the warrant \$100,000 for the sidewalk work.

Town Manager Jeff Mobus discussed that last year we used it for the sidewalk on Giddings Street, this year we are using it for match on the sidewalk project and what we have leftover we will use it at the end of Union Street towards South Street, noting there is a patch there that is in really bad shape. Town Manager Jeff Mobus added that next year for sidewalks he talked to Jeff and Donny, and he believes that we have to do something about the sidewalk above the Post Office on Wall Street because it is really dangerous. Town Manager Jeff Mobus further added that one of the things they talked about is from Reed Street to Summer Street, making Wall Street one-way instead of putting a lot of money into the sidewalk where it is now it would be more cost effective to move in and make it a one-way street, noting that section of

road is not really good for two-way traffic anyways. Further discussion ensued regarding some of the sidewalks in need of repair.

Doug Johnston in-person commented that obviously there will not be an increase in taxes if the amount is the same as last year, they are just seeing if it is the intention of the Selectboard to increase any of these pots as it will increase tax rate. Chair Kristi Morris inquired if regarding sidewalks the Board and the Budget Advisory Committee were comfortable and on the same page with that was a necessary need and that they would keep it \$100,000. Michael Martin added as a separate warrant article.

Everett Hammond inquired where we stand percent budget increase now if paving stayed the same. Town Manager Jeff Mobus responded that on the operating budget we are at 4.99% increase. Further discussion ensued regarding the increase cost in paving materials and the RSMS recommendations. Additional discussion ensued regarding that a number of these projects we may be able to find grant funding for, but it would not likely be paving.

Further discussion ensued regarding the concerns of increasing paving given the cuts that were requested from the operational departments, concerns of the increased costs of paving, and that we are behind on the recommended RSMS projections, as well as grant funding and State funding that gets provided. Michael Martin requested that the Town Manager Jeff Mobus presents to the Board what he would like to see on the warrant article at the next meeting. Town Manager Jeff Mobus noted that he handed out the list of special appropriations that are the carryovers of \$208,000, noting that Town Clerk Barbara Courchesne mentioned there was one more group that may be submitting a petition to add to this list.

Further discussion ensued to check in if they were still on schedule to get the Budget Advisory's recommendations before January 9<sup>th</sup> so the Board could be ready to react as well as they (the BAC) are a bit ahead of last year and they just need to do the site visits as the next step.

The meeting adjourned at 8:58 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carrie M. Kellow, Recording Secretary