

SOUTH ALBURGH FIRE DISTRICT NO. 2 REGULAR MEETING

Monday, March 20, 2017

6:30 PM

Alburgh Town Conference Room

Present: Prudential Committee Members John Fitzgerald, Alton Brusco, Tony Speranza

Treasurer Richard Ernst

Admin. Assistant Danielle James Choiniere

Guest Raleigh Palmer

Meeting was called to order at 6:40 PM by Chair John Fitzgerald.

**AGENDA ADJUSTMENTS**

None.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Alton motioned to accept both sets of minutes (1/16/17 & 2/20/17) as printed, Richard seconded, all in favor. So approved.

**VISITOR INPUT**

Raleigh didn't think issuing tax bills (two weeks prior) was legal or morally right. John replied State statute gives fire districts the right to tax, and next year the board was considering making the amount equal for every property in the district versus having it dependent on property valuation. Raleigh thought that was far more equitable. John provided a summarized back story on the loan taken out that now needed to be paid for, and how it was rolled into a 30-year loan at -3% interest, versus needing to be paid in five years as the State of Vermont originally ordered. It was suggested to Raleigh to attend the district's Annual Meeting when rates et al are established.

Raleigh suggested hypothetically moving Coon Point Road. If water was brought down Route 129 and down to the Dunes State Park, the road could be moved with a Town vote. This would make installation costs cheaper (shorter route and reduced working through ledge), increase property valuation (and taxes for town revenue) for homes in that location, and remedy driving on a blind curve and dangerous embankments with no guard rails.

He thanked the board for their service and was on the water committee during conception but left when there was no confirmed water source (original proposals were to contract with North Hero).

**TREASURER'S REPORT / INVOICES**

<u>People's United Bank</u>	\$33,668.86 (Operating Account)
	\$1,002.50 (Project Account)
	\$98,428.35 (Savings/Capital Funds)

**\$310.48:** Admin Assistant's paycheck for Jan

**\$64.77:** IRS for tax withholding on February paycheck

**\$484:** Purchase of stamps for mailing tax bills

**\$3.10:** Alburgh Village for address labels

**\$76.75:** Alburgh Town for printing of tax bills/letters

Alton motioned to approve bills totaling **\$939.10**. Tony seconded, all in favor. Motion carried.

**WATER / OPERATIONS / CORRESPONDENCE / MISC**

Many complaints and questions about tax bills. One resident presented a handout from a water study committee in 2002 that said property taxes would not increase, that: "...It is intended that only users of the water system will pay for the cost of construction and maintenance of the water system". It was not produced by the SAFD2 board, as the handout preceded its creation, so whatever was said in those handouts does not automatically represent the current fire district.

But currently only water users are paying for the debt service of construction and maintenance (West Shore Road and small Route 129 spur). The tax bills are for engineering, permitting, and studies done along Route 2 . There were also a few requests to extend or waive very small tax bills so residents would not have to cut a check and spend more in postage. The board opted to keep the due date intact.

The treasurer asked to clarify where and how to credit tax payments. The board said to use the NEMRC program, and to make deposits in the operating account.

The board will talk to water superintendent about apartment buildings and number of meters/shutoffs.

The board had made a motion in January to put some of its capital fund in an 18-month bank CD at People's for 1.25% interest. However, it was discovered this interest rate did not apply to municipalities. Instead, John talked to NorthCountry Federal Credit Union, which had an interest rate of 1.045% for an 18-month CD. John motioned to move \$85,000 of the district's capital fund to a NCFCU CD for 18 months. Alton seconded, all in favor. Motion carried.

While talking about Phase II, Tony Speranza mentioned several more properties that would seek municipal water if Poor Farm Road were covered. He suggested a talk with North Hero's water board, but the board made no commitments.

Alton motioned for the district to join VT Warn, a free organization that links various water operators in case of need or emergency. Richard seconded, all in favor. Motion carried.

#### **2017-18 BUDGET & ANNUAL VILLAGE MEETING IN APRIL**

Will need to coordinate date and time with Village trustees. Richard will also prepare for budget figures.

#### **TABLED ISSUES**

Remained tabled.

#### **ADJOURN**

Richard motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 PM. Alton seconded, all in favor. Meeting adjourned.

These are draft minutes not scheduled for approval until April 17th.

Respectfully submitted,  
Danielle James Choiniere