

Town of Isle La Motte Annual Informational meeting

Feb. 27, 2021 @ 10:00 a.m.

Informational/Select Board Meeting

Select Board in attendance: Paul Zera, Selby Turner, Rustam Spaulding

Legal voters in attendance: Sidney Martinez, Anne Jobin-Picard, William Deo, Carol Bohannon, Deborah Spaulding, Sylvia Jensen, Cathy Tudhope, Maureen Turner, Sarah Noble, Michael Inners, Peter Brzozowy, Robert Varga, Cindi Varga, Mary Catherine Graziano, Barb Larvey, Erin Gilligan, Pat Saylor, Audrey Bromley, Elizabeth Lee, Carmine Centrella & Mary Brennan Centrella. (Some attendants via zoom)

Meeting called to order at 10:00AM by Chair, Selby Turner

Article 1. To hear and act on the reports of the Town Officers as published in the town report?

Turner had discussion; We have somewhat of an issue in that the rules on budget meetings is basically that we are supposed to have the budget printed and ready for the voters within 20 days of the vote, and then we can send the ballots out any time after that. What we did was had the budget ready and was ready to mail absentee ballots out. The board then became concerned with the timeline that we would be mailing them out, that they may not have the time for out-of-town people who winter away from Isle La Motte. We went to the Secretary of State at the recommendation of the Attorney General's Office, we then spoke with the director of elections about this time line. He stated that we were probably legally okay, but understood our concerns.

"first thing to do is hold today's meeting, secondarily at the select board meeting on Wednesday the 3rd of March, we will reset the budget land warning. We will warn a new date and that date will be 30 days after the day after the warning. Putting it to April 2nd, 10 days prior to that we will warn a second informational meeting. Please note that an in-person polling place must be available. The reason for doing this is partially due to the concern of not getting the ballots out. We originally were not going to send ballots to all voters just do the usual absentee requests. The governor made it clear that the state wants all voters to receive an absentee ballot by mail, that's is when the time frame turned into a problem. The other thing I should mention here is that Sylvia presented a complaint to the Attorney General office that we had not warned a couple of our working sessions. After the Attorney General's office got involved and did an investigation. (See attached) in the future we agreed to warn all future meetings and we have signed a cure agreement. The Attorney General office has that agreement now and is satisfied with and is also satisfied with the Secretary of State's agenda.

Sylvia Jensen had discussion; just for clarity, the law says if you have a concern about the open meeting law to file a complaint, which I filed on the Jan. 29th. I did that because there was no response for over a month and the board has ten days to respond, you gave the impression that I went straight to the Attorney General, secondly, they said you took no questions on the budget on Jan 26th.

Turner had discussion; this emailed complaint was sent directly to Selby without any other board members included. I spoke to the Attorney General's office and VLCT; there is a specific form you must fill out, I did respond at that meeting, and at some point, you and I had a discussion and you said maybe we could agree to disagree. Please stick to the warning strictly dealing with the budget. This issue can furthermore be discussed as an agenda item during the upcoming select board meetings

Turner read articles 1-19, with the opportunity for questions afterwards.

All money articles are included in the Select board budget which is voted by Australian ballot on date to be set at March 3, 2021 Select board meeting.

Charlie Andrews had discussion; Why is the sheriff's budget so low? There has been a study done and there were hundreds of tickets given out in other towns in Grand Isle County and we only had 18. The national average is to have 2.4 officers on patrol per thousand people.

Spaulding had discussion; We've had a sheriff's study and State Police study and they found that this town has no more speeders than any other town and the two speeders they did find were driving at extremely excessive speeds were actually first responders a call. Did you find the traffic more than usual this Sunday? We've been through this Charlie many times and the board found no real reason to add hours and money to the contract. Charlie noted that his house is very old and near the road. The best idea is to put a petition in requesting a number of hours and proposed money to be allocated to the Sheriff's Dept.

Sylvia Jensen had discussion; just before Charlie's house there is a '35 mph' speed limit sign and there is a 'children playing/crossing' sign right before it, covering the 35-mph sign.

Spaulding had discussion; I believe we should move that sign so it doesn't block the view

Mary Catherine Graziano had discussion; I do want to second the speeding. Why isn't there a cost-of-living increase in the town clerk and treasurer in the budget.

Spaulding and Sarah Noble had discussion; that is something that needs to be voted on, but certainly needs to remain in discussion.

Cathy Tudhope had discussion; question on the BCA budget, why aren't a couple of the other people on this as receiving pay.

Sarah Noble had discussion; It was volunteered time.

Cathy Tudhope had discussion; why are bank service charges so high?

Sarah Noble had discussion; without the information in from of me I can't get you a detail transaction for information. 2020 has brought many returned checks, Canadian returned checks accrue multiple return fees.

Cathy Tudhope had discussion; why has the Alburgh fire dept. not been paid for their services.

Sarah Noble had discussion; they did not invoice, but when they do it can be paid through 'Last year's payable' to reflect correctly.

Cathay Tudhope had discussion; I would like to see an increase the amount in allocated to culverts and ditches, especially on the West Shore seawall culvert. Can I get verification that the culvert will get attention?

Turner had discussion; the problem is that John Yartz is behind a plow truck right now, and he is who has the equipment to clean out the culverts. This culvert is the State and Engineer's suggested sizes to use. The beavers are what is making this culvert such a problem.

Sylvia Jensen had discussion; one thing I noticed, I am comparing the budget to what is recorded salary clerk wage, why is there a difference.

Sarah Noble had discussion; without the proper paperwork in front of me, I cannot get that to you. I assume it's the lapse of year/payroll period. I will look into this.

Sylvia Jensen had discussion; Isle La Motte Fire Co. requested \$2800 less than last year?

Paul Zera had discussion; Yes.

Sylvia Jensen had discussion; Why are the school taxes not included in the budget line items?

Sarah Noble had discussion; those taxes are never included in the budget because they cannot be predicted.

Michael Inners had discussion; the school taxes are a separate issue and that is why it is not listed in a Town's budget.

Sylvia Jensen had discussion; The Town lots; is that the homeowner association dues? One of those lots had two septic systems on them, is there any way to consider bundling those lots together.

Spaulding had discussion; yes, those are the yearly dues. We would sell them as a package deal, but we can't hurry the real estate.

Sylvia Jensen had discussion; what is the status of the Salt Shed Loan?

Sarah Noble had discussion; I cannot get you a detail answer on the loan repayment without the loan agreement in front of me.

Spaulding had discussion; Sylvia you were asked to have all detailed questions to us by Thursday so we could get these answers for you at today's meeting. You agreed, but did not submit any questions to the board.

Maureen Turner; this is unnecessary, this board is being questioned about things that cannot possibly answer without the correct information in front of them.

Sylvia Jensen had discussion; why is there such a decrease on the line item of paving summer roads?

Selby Turner had discussion; the Town did not receive any grant money this past year for paving, so that was taken into consideration. The town also does not have any state roads, making it lower on the list to receive such grants. You agreed to have all of these questions in writing and you did not do this.

Carol Bohannon had discussion; How does the winter roads & snow removal budget compare to other towns? It seems like the \$135,000 is a lot for the number of months and not having to leave the island, can the town go back to John and say this is what we have for a budget can we compromise.

Spaulding had discussion; most towns have a highway dept so there isn't a way to pull out that number exactly. There are many more factors in their numbers.

Turner had discussion; also no one else has been bidding on the snow removal.

Marie D'angelo had discussion; how do we know where the bids are?

Sarah Noble had discussion; they are posted in our normal posting places and also advertised in the Islander News Paper.

Sylvia Jensen had discussion; everybody knows that Martin works for the Town of South Hero, they have 18 miles of Town roads they maintain, their Grand List is much more robust.

Rusty Spaulding had discussion; all points taken, we all agree that it is a lot of money to plow the roads, but this cost will only go up with a full public works dept.

Charlie Andrews had discussion; Rte. 129- the State no longer claims that, is it possible to get the State to take that back, this ceased in the '80s, I think we should have petitioned to the town to give this back to the State.

Selby Turner had discussion; Rte. 129 was not State owned, often times the State used to number Town roads for map purposes, the designation for Rte. 129 is actually just a route marking.

Maureen Turner had discussion; why are we trying to compare apples to oranges, how can we compare the budget of other Towns with state roads when our roads are all municipal roads.

Sylvia Jensen had discussion; Belvidere does. South hero has 18 miles of Town roads.

Barbara Callahan had discussion; I think it would be worthwhile and proactive to look into establishing a public works dept.

Selby Turner had discussion; we would need to purchase trucks; no town wants to buy used equip. as the maintenance is incredible on them. We would need to place another building, the salt and sand shed would need its own front loader, The John Yartz's of the world are few and far between and public works employees would need insurance, benefits etc. We may even have to do some sort of bond for this. This certainly it has to be looked into as it is very possible John could not bid again.

Carol Bohannon had discussion; to get better clarification from John Yartz, is there any way for an itemized list for his cost?

Selby Turner had discussion; his contract comes up this year and those questions are appropriate then.

Sylvia Jensen had discussion; lister revenue, lister surplus, where was the surplus noted. Why do we have a lister surplus? A line item needs to be created to show this.

Rusty Spaulding had discussion; we will need to look into detail to get an exact answer to you.

Sylvia Jensen had discussion; and the audit cost of \$7000? Has there been any entertainment on changing the fiscal year? Could we save substantial amount of dollars by having a fiscal year.

Rusty Spaulding had discussion; I've worked on school budgets and town budgets, and fiscal year is much more complicated. You're making it sound simpler than this actually is.

Robert Varga had discussion; under Town Hall, repairs and maintenance. \$675 for last year and the budget for coming year is \$1000, this doesn't sound like enough.

Selby Turner had discussion; we have had to contract with an exterminator for the buildings rat problem.

Rusty Spaulding had discussion; in the Town Hall you cannot socially distance at 48 sq. feet.

Sylvia Jensen had discussion; the electricity for the Town Hall should not include all of the street lights the town pays for; those should have a separate line item.

Carol Bohannon had discussion; it is still an expense whether it's separated out or not.

Maureen Turner had discussion; the Town offices doesn't have the emergency setting that is required for the Town.

Sidney Martinez had discussion; are we going to conform to Roberts Rules of Order?

Spaulding had discussion; we aren't doing any voting this year, so we have not initiated Robert's Rules because State law supersedes.

Selby Turner had discussion; our road budget is under \$300k which has been like that for years. We are lower than most of the other towns.

Barbara Callahan had discussion; last summer I came to you with a proposal that would cost \$3800 to put Isle La Motte quarry stones at the head of the island. You told me it would have to be put in as an article to be voted on. The porch put on the Town Hall cost a little over \$10k, there was no vote or motion to do it. It was just done, why can't we find \$3800 in the budget

Rusty Spaulding had discussion; the building had sunk some and the elections crew stated we needed to remedy it to be handicap accessible, I don't find putting stone at the head of the island as important as handicap accessibility.

Selby Turner had discussion; the other purpose of that porch is that Betsy refused to go outside in the weather to post information, also the school children needed a place to sit out of the weather as it is a bus stop. You came to us with an \$8K-\$9K bid to do this ground work without the stone work, why can't a community committee offer to beautify the beginning of the island. Every year this needs to be maintained by the way. I feel like this amount of money would be better spent on the roads.

Article 20. To transact any other business proper to come before this meeting and to discuss any article to be voted on by Australian ballot on date to be set at March 3, 2021 Select board meeting.

Carol Bohannon had discussion; just asking from what I have educated myself in the past few weeks about the use of the school. Why are we not here? Why are we still pouring good money into bad at the

town hall? \$40k for siding, why would be continuously pay this amount on this building. In the year 2023 we will have the opportunity to purchase the building for \$1. On that \$1 if at that time, the state has not rescinded the portion of cost of construction, \$.33 is the amount of a penalty. To get the current Town Office up to code would cost \$100ks, it's too small to begin with, why would we spend this money?

Rusty Spaulding had discussion; that's why we're asking the voters, it can be voted down if it's not wanted.

Sylvia Jensen had discussion; point of clarity, we don't know if the school building is going to be for sale.

Carol Bohannon had discussion; it absolutely is. spoke with Michael Cark this morning about the articles, this building is used as a field trip aspect. They do not feel as if they have the ability to get people here and whether it is a sensible aspect for them to do, in 2023 CIUUSD has the ability to come back to the town and say we are not going to use this building for educational purposes. So where are you disputing this, what is the fight?

Sylvia Jensen had discussion; I have been listening to the school meetings for the last 6 months. They will be doing a cost analysis.

Debbie Spaulding had discussion; I spoke to Michael Clark, yes, they will be looking into it for the two classes that have personal bathrooms and their own exterior doors, but that is it.

Maureen Turner had discussion; there is no argument.

Sylvia Jensen had discussion; what about the \$14,500?

Rusty Spaulding had discussion; clearly you don't understand that, if we go back the Town has always paid a yearly amount to ensure the use of the building for meetings and an emergency shelter. In 02 we gave the school over \$46,000.00 in today's dollars it would be over \$70,000.

Sylvia Jensen had discussion; who owns this school now?

Rusty Spaulding had discussion; CIUUSD.

Sylvia Jensen had discussion; expenses are not bored by just Isle La Motte tax payers, it is now shared by 3 towns. Was the facility cost part of the budget?

Rusty Spaulding had discussion; this has nothing to do with ownership of the building.

Maureen Turner had discussion; I thought part of the \$14500 was to ensure we have access for town meeting, select board meetings, voting and for emergency services?

Rusty Spaulding had discussion; Yes.

Motion by Spaulding to adjourn meeting at 12:03PM, 2nd by Zera-- All in favor.

Attest: 

Town Clerk/Treasurer